

**Zuzana Lhotáková: Policy of sustainable development in Ecuador in the context of the
region of Latin America**

Abstract

Sustainable development can be defined as a strategy that enables the long-term needs of humanity to be met within the limits of natural resources. Since ecosystems of global importance (Amazon rainforests) and rich deposits of natural resources are located in Latin America, future development of this region is going to have impact on planetary level. Ecuador as a developing country with extreme biodiversity and vast deposits of oil and metals is perfect object for my case study. Constitution of Ecuador (2008) recognizes “Mother Earth” as a subject of law with specific legal entitlements and promotes the pursuit of *buen vivir*² as an obligation of state.

The aim of the study was to analyze how several selected individuals in Ecuador who openly embrace the sustainable development or *buen vivir* concept perceive official state policies in this regard. The following aim was to evaluate how these implemented policies correspond with principles of sustainable development or *buen vivir* promoted in the Constitution. In my thesis I analyze the content of semi-structured interview and participant observation records which I have collected during my field research in Ecuador.

The majority of interviewed individuals perceived the concepts of sustainable development and *buen vivir* as mutually compatible. While indigenous narrators identified closer with *buen vivir* (biocentric perception of nature), the mestizos mostly subscribed to more anthropocentric point of view (environment as natural resources). All interviewees praised the inclusion of “Rights of nature” in the Constitution, but pointed out the inconsistency of nature conservation with extensive exploitation of non-renewable natural resources (a discrepancy present in relevant literature as well). The inclusion of rights of nature and sustainable development in Ecuadorian Constitution itself does not currently guarantee their enforceability in real life. I believe civic society and activity of local communities are about to play a key role in narrowing this gap between the theory and practice of sustainable development or *buen vivir*. Gradual integration of those two concepts into the public awareness in Ecuador may lead to higher enforceability of existing legal proclamations, regardless the lower stage of economic development.

Key words: *Ecuador, sustainable development, buen vivir, sumak kawsay, Constitution of Montecristi, rights of nature*

² *Buen vivir* is a concept derived from culture of amazon-andean natives, which includes harmony with nature