

Buen Vivir / Vivir Bien and associated concepts.

Introduction and Definitions of Buen Vivir/Vivir Bien, and the indigenous context.

"Buen Vivir breaks with conventional concepts in several ways, in that it relies on indigenous traditions and visions of the cosmos; it breaks with traditional concepts of development; it focuses on the relationship to nature." p. 17

"Like any complex concept, *Buen Vivir* eludes simple definitions. Eduardo Gudynas rightly points out that *Buen Vivir* is 'a concept under construction' that is unfolding in a wide variety of contexts and that is characterized precisely by its plurality. ...

The indigenous traditions are an obstacle to an immediate understanding of *Buen Vivir* for those who do not share in them. Yet the constitutional processes in Bolivia and Ecuador can also be seen as an attempt at communication between indigenous and Western concepts thanks to their intention of integrating indigenous concepts in the design of the state.

Buen Vivir is sharply distinct from the idea of *individual* good life. It is only conceivable in a social context, mediated by the community in which people live.

Buen Vivir incorporates the human relation to nature, aiming for harmony with nature and condemning the excessive exploitation of natural resources. As Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca Céspedes puts it, 'the excessive and unbridled industrialization resulting from Western accumulation models does not offer humanity a solution'... .

Buen Vivir is a **culture of life** [MB emphasis] based on the ancestral knowledge of indigenous peoples that aims to strike a balance, striving for harmony between humans and nature alike, and which foresees a return to a way of life that had been suppressed by colonization. 'We must return to **being**, because colonization has made us into "wanting to be". Many of us want to be, but as of yet, we are not. We now want to return to our own path to our being' [Choquehuanca].

The recognition of the plurality of the indigenous communities is a fundamental building block of the concept. *Buen Vivir* is a rejection of cultural and legal monism. It relies on the much longer tradition of indigenous thinking over the Western Christian tradition, which it rebuffs as self-centered and Eurocentric."

p. 19.

Fatheuer, T. (2011). *Buen Vivir a brief introduction to Latin America's new concepts for the good life and the rights of nature*. Berlin: Heinrich Böll Foundation. Retrieved from <http://montreal2012.wordpress.com/2011/10/19/buen-vivir-a-brief-introduction-to-latin-america%E2%80%99s-new-concepts-for-the-good-life-and-the-rights-of-nature/>

"In Aymara we say '*suma qamañatakija, sumanqañaw*', which means 'to live well or fully (vida en plenitude), first you have to be well (*estar bien*)' To know how to live implies being in harmony with oneself, 'being well' or '*sumanqaña*' and then, to know how to relate or live together with all [the other] forms of existence.

The Aymara term 'suma qamaña' is translated as 'living well' (vivir bien) or '**a full life**' (vida en plenitud), that in general terms means 'living in harmony and equilibrium, in harmony with the cycles of Mother Earth, of the cosmos, of life and of history, and in equilibrium with all forms of existence.'" p. 21.

"'Vivir Bien', as a concept in Spanish [and thereby 'Living Well' in English - MB], is a poor translation for what our ancestral language expresses. 'Vivir Bien' is too short to express the essence of *suma qamaña*, from an understanding of the Aymara language." p.22.

Huanacuni Mamami, F. (2010). *Buen Vivir / Vivir Bien: Filosofía, políticas, estrategias y experiencias regionales andinas*. Lima, Peru: Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas – CAOI. Retrieved from <http://www.reflectiongroup.org/stuff/vivir-bien> Translation by M Burton.

"There is not really any English equivalent [of *buen vivir*] in the idiomatic sense. 'Good living' does not have the same sense, partly because terms like it and the 'good life' have all been tainted by the egoistic and consumerist culture of capitalist civilization, explained in the paper. There is a term from the period of transition from feudalism to capitalism, '*commonweal*.' It is the source of the word Commonwealth, as in the British Commonwealth [or English republican Commonwealth after the defeat of the Stuart Monarchy - MB]... But its original meaning was much similar to the indigenous concept of *Buen Vivir*, that is living together and sharing the wealth, conceived not just as consuming things but enjoying social life in the community of associated producers and members. The Oxford entry for the term: commonweal /kommnweel/noun (the commonweal) archaic the welfare of the public. Oxford uses the term welfare in its sense of "well being", not charity or government handout."

Cunningham, M (2012) People-centred development and globalization.

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/SForum/SForum2012/presentations2012/keynote_Cunningham.pdf p.1.

"...in the Andean countries of Bolivia and Ecuador, indigenous peoples represent a large proportion of the population.... in the case of Bolivia they are the majority. In an effort to overcome the colonial past that has marked South America's history, indigenous movements are pushing for new guiding principles. Both Bolivia and Ecuador have recently adopted new constitutions that enshrine the concept of *Sumak Kawsay*—the Quechua expression that can be translated into Spanish as *Buen Vivir*, and in English means Living Well. This perspective recognizes plurinational states and regards nature as a legal entity that has rights.

Buen Vivir, as a concept under construction aims to shift the mindset of production and consumption against growth-based development. It is a response to years of colonial and neocolonial rule based on the exploitation of natural resources in detriment of the planet and the indigenous communities living in areas rich in oil, gas, minerals, and biodiversity..."

"*Buen Vivir* is rooted in communitarian thinking and the key principles are:

- a. A criticism of the consumer and individualistic society.
- b. A proposal for ecological awareness that emphasizes the need to build a harmonious relationship with nature."

Lanza, M. (2012). *Buen Vivir: An introduction from a women's rights perspective in Bolivia* (No. 2). Toronto: The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). Retrieved from

"For us in CONAMAQ, we are the promoters and creators of Buen Vivir. ...We have set it out in accordance with the wisdom of our achachilas, our forefathers. Since they lived in harmony with nature, they did not need wealth, minerals, or technology; now, this does not mean that we should not use technology if we have it. For us in CONAMAQ*, technology and ancestral wisdom has to be combined in connection with respect for mother earth. Buen Vivir relates to self-government, this is the great struggle of the original indigenous peoples. We want to achieve autonomy, for us to be able to determine what to do with our resources" (Benito, GMT and Curasavi, AMT, interview with M Lanza 2010).

*CONAMAQ, The National Council of Ayllus and Markas of Qullasuyu, a Bolivian indigenous organization.... Its organizational form corresponds to the ancestral community structure of the *ayllus* (grass roots communities) and *markas* (groups of *ayllus*). The strength and mobilization capacity of this organization has made it one of the cornerstones of the current process of change in Bolivia.

Lanza, M. (2012). *Buen Vivir: An introduction from a women's rights perspective in Bolivia* (No. 2). Toronto: The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). Retrieved from awid.org/content/download/138877/1543706/file/FPTTEC_LivingWell%20March%20ENG.pdf

"'We should live in a simple way for others to be able to live as well'.

Mahatma Gandhi

'He who is richer is not who has more, but who needs less.'

Zapotec saying, Oaxaca, Mexico'..

"Living Well is not the same as living better, living better than others, because in order to live better than others, it is necessary to exploit, to embark upon serious competition, concentrating wealth in few hands. Trying to live better is selfish, and shows apathy, individualism. Some want to live better, whilst others, the majority, continue living poorly. Not taking an interest in other people's lives, means caring only for the individual's own life, at most in the life of their family.

"Our Living Well proposal emphasizes on harmony between humans and with nature, and the preservation of 'natural capital' as primary concerns. It is well known that the protection and preservation of balance in the natural world, including all its living beings, is a primary goal..."

"Living Well also means unplugging the TV and internet and connecting with the community. It means having four more hours a day to spend with family, friends and in our community, i.e., the four hours that the average person spends watching TV filled with messages about stuff we should buy. Spending time in fraternal community activities strengthens the community and makes it a source of social and logistical support, a source of greater security and happiness....

"Among presently over-consuming societies, less really will be more. Basic compliance with Living Well conditions include sufficient food, shelter, clothing; good health and the values of strong community engagement; family security; meaningful lives; and the clear presence and easy access to a thriving natural world."

From *The concept of "Living Well" - a Bolivian viewpoint*. Article distributed in English by the

Bolivia delegation at the UN. April 2010.

<http://www.energybulletin.net/stories/2010-10-08/concept-%E2%80%9Cliving-well-%E2%80%9D-bolivian-viewpoint>

The government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia sets out ten key elements for Buen Vivir as part of Saving Planet Earth to Save Humanity:

1. Eradicate the capitalist model.
2. Denounce and end wars.
3. Develop relations of coexistence, not subjection, among countries. A world without imperialism or colonialism.
4. Water is a human right and its privatization must be prevented, since water is life.
5. Development of environmentally friendly energy, to end the squandering of energy.
6. Respect for Mother Earth.
7. Basic services, such as water, education, health, communication, and collective transportation should be borne in mind as human rights, they cannot be a private business, but rather a public service.
8. Consume what is necessary, prioritize what we produce and consume what is produced locally. Put an end to consumerism, waste and luxury
9. Promote diversity of cultures and economies.
10. Live well in harmony with Mother Earth, which means not living better at the expense of another.

Translation by M Lanza

Lanza, M. (2012). *Buen Vivir: An introduction from a women's rights perspective in Bolivia* (No. 2). Toronto: The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID). Retrieved from awid.org/content/download/138877/1543706/file/FPTTEC_LivingWell%20March%20ENG.pdf

"[Buen Vivir] ...offers a historical grounding in the indigenous world, but also in principles that have been defended by other Western currents that have remained subordinated for a long time. It responds to old problems such as how to overcome poverty and defeat inequality, together with other new ones, such as the loss of biodiversity and global climate change."

"Buen Vivir has its quota of romanticism, but at the same time it offers a vigorous dose of realism. Remember that these lifestyles, that advocate harmonious relationships between human beings, and between them and the natural world, with all the consequent limitations, were the basis on which the indigenous cultures could resist more than 500 years of colonisation and exploitation. Buen Vivir, in the end, offers an orientation to construct modes that are different and alternative to that [fixated on] material progress."

Gudynas, E., & Acosta, A. (2011). El buen vivir o la disolución de la idea del progreso. In Rojas, M (Ed.), *La Medición Del Progreso y El Bienestar. Propuestas Desde América Latina* (pp. 103–110). México DF: Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico de México. Retrieved from <http://www.gudynas.com/publicaciones/capitulos/GudynasAcostaDisolucionProgresoMx11r.pdf> pp 109-110. Translation by M Burton.

"The grandparents of the ancestral peoples cultivated a culture of life inspired in the expression of the multiverse*, where everything is connected, inter-related, and nothing is outside but rather 'everything is part of...'; the harmony and equilibrium of **one** and **all** is important for the community.

*'Multiverse' comes from the concept that there are many truths and not just one (universe)". p.15

Huanacuni Mamami, F. (2010). *Buen Vivir / Vivir Bien: Filosofía, políticas, estrategias y experiencias regionales andinas*. Lima, Peru: Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas – CAOI. Retrieved from <http://www.reflectiongroup.org/stuff/vivir-bien> Translation by M Burton.

Extended concept of community – the *ayllu*.

The concept of community is often limited to an abstraction, conceived sitting at a desk, that has little to do with the reality of people, who live beset by problems of marginalisation and subject to internal conflicts. The community is in no way the idealised entity that pre-exists the arrival of agents of change. From our perspective, what matters is that the community is not postulated from outside its boundaries but is constructed from within. It is not a physical territory, nor the aggregate of inhabitants who ought to act in a certain way according to a theory, but the result of the combined effort of people who live in the same place. It is something that is created collectively... a product that is always under construction...

The Aymara "community" (and the same could be said in relation to the Quechuas, Guaranies and others) refers to the basic social unit of the native cultures in the rural areas that, in the Aymara case, is the *ayllu*. The *ayllu* includes the geographical environment, kinship relationships, organisational forms, relations with the natural world, social obligations of reciprocity and the psychosocial identification of the members of the Aymara "community".

For the urban Aymaras of the first generation who have spent their childhood or their adolescence in the countryside, the formation of an urban community on the basis of the Andean model of the *ayllu* is not only possible, but, from our experience, turns out to be effective in dealing with urban demands and solving in a collective manner the problems of adaptation that confront migrants, including the economic difficulties arising from their condition of poverty and marginalisation and the family or individual psychological problems that stem from their uprooting and the false identity that indigenous urban people have to assume in the city. It is in fact a matter of reconstructing the mechanisms, obligations and traditional organisational forms that are usually perceived as inadequate to the urban environment by the migrants themselves on their arrival in the city..."

Mendoza, J., & Zerda, M. (2011). Psicología comunitaria social en Bolivia. In M. Montero & Serrano García, I (Eds.), *Historias De La Psicología En América Latina: Participación y Transformación* (pp. 65-90). Buenos Aires: Paidós. (pp71-72). Translation M Burton.

Buen Vivir and concepts of development

"The introduction of development among the indigenous peoples slowly annihilates our own philosophy of Vivir Bien, because the communal and cultural life of our communities disintegrates, from the liquidation not only of the subsistence base but also of the capacities and knowledges for us ourselves to satisfy our needs." p. 19

"We insist: the crisis of capitalism is not conjunctural but structural; it is a

crisis of life itself." p. 38.

Huanacuni Mamami, F. (2010). *Buen Vivir / Vivir Bien: Filosofía, políticas, estrategias y experiencias regionales andinas*. Lima, Peru: Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas – CAOI. Retrieved from <http://www.reflectiongroup.org/stuff/vivir-bien> Translation by M Burton.

"Development can be a disaster

"Consequently, Living Well is contrary to capitalist development and goes beyond socialism. For capitalism, what matters the most is money, making a profit. For socialism, what matters the most is the man, because socialism tries to meet the increasingly growing needs of man, both material and spiritual.

"Within the Living Well framework, what matters the most is neither man nor money; what matters the most is life. But capitalism does not care about life, and the two development models, the capitalist and the socialist, need rapid economic growth, causing a dissipation of energy and an insatiable use of fossil fuels to boost growth.

"Therefore, development has proved to be a failure, as evidenced by the crisis of nature and the severe effects of climate change. It is now the leading cause of global crisis and the destroyer of planet Earth, because of the exaggerated industrialization of some countries, addicted consumerism and irresponsible exploitation of human and natural resources.

"The industrialization and consumerism of Western "civilization" threatens Mother Nature and the subsistence of the planet, to such a degree that it must not be spread to the whole of humanity, because natural resources are not enough for all of us nor renewable at the same pace in which they are being exhausted."

From *The concept of "Living Well" - a Bolivian viewpoint*. Article distributed in English by the Bolivia delegation at the UN. April 2010.

<http://www.energybulletin.net/stories/2010-10-08/concept-%E2%80%9Cliving-well-%E2%80%9D-bolivian-viewpoint>

"Living well, then, is an alternative to development, but it is a more elaborate version, more far-reaching geographically and politically, than most earlier alternatives: 'From the perspective of living well, we, the original indigenous peoples, are questioning the term development and all that it implies; as for our peoples, development has meant the destruction of nature and our communities. The term development is tied to exploitation, marginalization, depredation and dependency; as in the logic of the West, development involves winning at the expense of the other' (Huanacuni Mamami, 2010: p.36)."

Garcia, E. (2012). Degrowth and *buen vivir* (living well): a critical comparison. Presented at the International Conference on Degrowth for Ecological Sustainability and Social Equity, Venice. Retrieved from

http://www.venezia2012.it/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/WS_20_FP_GARCIA.pdf

"...*Buen Vivir* implies a substantial break with the appropriation of the natural world to feed a development understood as economic growth, and a progress understood as evolution in a straight line (*evolución lineal*)."

Gudynas, E., & Acosta, A. (2011). El *buen vivir* o la disolución de la idea del progreso. In Rojas, M (Ed.), *La Medición Del Progreso y El Bienestar. Propuestas Desde América Latina* (pp.

103–110). México DF: Foro Consultivo Científico y Tecnológico de México. Retrieved from <http://www.gudynas.com/publicaciones/capitulos/GudynasAcostaDisolucionProgresoMx11r.pdf> pp 109. Translation by M Burton.

"To understand what Buen Vivir implies, which can't be simplistically associated with "[the] western [concept of] wellbeing", it is necessary to begin by recovering the world view of the indigenous peoples and nations, an approach that is also taken in the Bolivian constitution. That though emphatically does not mean rejecting the possibility of modernising society, particularly with the incorporation in the logic of Buen Vivir of many of humanity's valuable technological advances. More than that, one of the fundamental tasks lies in a permanent ,constructive dialogue between ancestral knowledge and wisdom with the most advanced universal thinking, in a process of continued decolonisation of ideas (pensamiento)."

Acosta, A. (2010). El buen vivir. una utopía por (re)construir. In *Enfoques Sobre Bienestar y Buen Vivir*. (pp. 11–28). Madrid: Centro de Investigación para La paz (CIP-Ecosocial).

Retrieved from

http://www.fuhem.es/media/cdv/file/biblioteca/Dossier/Enfoques_sobre_bienestar_y_buen_vivir.pdf p. 13.

Translation M Burton.

"All this [recognition and celebration of ethnic and cultural diversity] is assumed as part of a deep cultural transformation that profoundly questions the individualist and destructive hegemonic patterns of western/capitalist civilization. It proposes a radical divergent path from that of the ideas of *progress* and *development* that have been dominant in the modern world. These are not conceived as imaginary utopias, but as alternatives that are deeply rooted in the rich plural cultural diversities and traditions existing in these countries, all subsumed under the idea of *sumak kawsay buen vivir*, or a good life.

"In the case of Bolivia, this is expressed in the following way:

'The state assumes and promotes as ethical-moral principles of the plural society: *ama qhilla*, *ama llulla*, *ama suwa* (don't be lazy, don't be a liar, don't be a thief), *suma qamaña* (to live well), *ñandereko* (a harmonious life), *teko kavi* (a good life), *ivi maraei* (earth without evil) and *qhapaj ñan* (a noble way or life).

'The state is sustained in the values of unity, equality, inclusion, dignity, liberty, solidarity, reciprocity, respect, complementaries, harmony, transparency, balance, equality of opportunities, equal social and gender participation, common well-being, responsibility, social justice, and the distribution and redistribution of social goods and services in order to live well (*vivir bien*).'

(Article 8)

"In the Ecuadorian text:

'The development regime is the organized, sustainable and dynamic set of economic, political, social, cultural and environmental systems that guarantee the attainment of living well (buen vivir) , of sumak kawsay.'

(Article 275)"

Lander, E. (2011). The discourse of civil society and current decolonisation struggles in South America. In J. Heine & R. C. Thakur (eds.), *The dark side of globalization*. New York: United Nations University Press. Retrieved from

Buen Vivir and decolonisation

“... in most of the continent, not much changed with political independence in the first decades of the nineteenth century. In what Aníbal Quijano has characterized as a process of political independence without a social revolution, the basic patterns of the coloniality of power were preserved. The main component of the colonial structure of power, before and after independence, was the hierarchical classification of the population according to their so-called race, that is, their phenotypical characteristics, specially the colour of their skin.” (p. 2)

“In spite of its universalistic pretensions, liberal democracy should be understood as one of many possible historical options. It constitutes a distinct cultural alternative that does not exhaust the possibilities of the construction of plural and democratic coexistence between the human beings. It is the product of a specific historical experience, of a particular mode of production. It is not possible to separate this institutional model of the liberal democracy - with its model of citizenship- from the process of construction of capitalist market societies.” (p.2)

“Based on a lineal universalistic euro-centered conception of history, the model of citizenship constructed by this modern liberal political grammar has been deeply unilateral. Denying the profound cultural/historical heterogeneity in these societies, this monocultural - and thus authoritarian- political grammar has been part of a systematic cultural or civilizational war against those others whose very existence is either ignored, or placed in the past as 'backward' or 'premodern', and thus assumed to have nothing to contribute to the present or future of the nation states where they live. For the excluded majority, but especially for the indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, to aspire to the inclusion in this model of citizenship implied giving up their own culture, identity, community and history.”...p. 6.

“A classic example of the difficulties faced by the left when confronted with realities that do not fit into the eurocentered grammar of the modern policy, was the case of the Bolivian Revolution of 1952. In the world view of the leaders of this revolutionary process there was no clear space for Indian subjects or their demands. The Indian peoples were [therefore] assumed to be peasants, their demands for ancestral territories were translated into demands for agrarian reform and, their traditional communal organizational forms, were translated into peasant workers' unions. Only decades later were the Aymaras, Quechuas, Guarani and other Indian peoples and communities in Bolivia able to rid themselves of these colonial translations and struggle for their rights as Indian peoples. This meant different identities (the right to be Aymaras, Quechuas, Guarani, etc.), different demands (the right to their own cultures and languages, control over ancestral territories, and the reconstruction and/or strengthening of traditional basic community political units: the Ayllú in the case of the Aymaras. This signals a new moment in Latin American politics, specially in the Andean region, one that can no longer be confined within the historical boundaries of the dominant liberal grammar.

In the case of Bolivia and Ecuador today the struggle is for the overhaul of the monocultural colonial-liberal state and the creation of pluricultural and plurinational state.

A very significant aspect of current Latin American political projects of social transformation are the new and complex relations between: a) struggles carried out in the name of democratization and inclusion for all as citizens in a liberal capitalist order; b) anti-capitalist struggles aiming at the goal of constructing what has been called "XXI Century Socialism"; and c) struggles that explicitly aim at the decolonization of society. These different conceptions of the desirable directions for the future of society are present in diverse forms of articulation/tension in the different countries. Frequently these apparently contradictory perspectives coexist in the same discourse or political project." pp. 10-11.

"One initial political and theoretical thread that can be highlighted in these different attempts to decolonize the idea and practice of democracy is a radical questioning of the separations that liberalism has constructed between **nature and society**, as well as the conception of the **political**, the **economic**, and the **social/cultural** as basically autonomous spheres of society. Democracy is thought as referring to the whole of life: ways of being part of nature, in production, in cultures, in knowledge, in languages, in diverse forms of decision making and constituting forms of public authorities. These efforts seek to decolonize the eurocentered dominant conception of democracy -as limited to the political arena and the state- and assume democracy as implying all spheres of existence." p. 12

Lander, E. (2011). The discourse of civil society and current decolonisation struggles in South America. In J. Heine & R. C. Thakur (eds.), *The dark side of globalization*. New York: United Nations University Press. Retrieved from http://www.tni.org/sites/www.tni.org/files/download/the_discourse_of_civil_society_and_current_decolonization_struggles_in_latin_america.pdf

Contrasting Buen Vivir / Vivir Bien with 21st Century Socialism

"A look at the other constitutional processes in South America and especially Venezuela underscores the special nature of the Ecuadorian and Bolivian paths. They are an attempt to develop a new approach extending beyond traditional leftist perspectives. Strengthening social rights while encouraging growth is the traditional leftist priority in Latin America. Brazil and Venezuela share this path – even if the forms differ completely. Compared with classic development models and traditional leftist discourse, Buen Vivir represents a genuine conceptual innovation. It is therefore not surprising that leftist forces in particular – which Acosta describes as the 'autistic Left', were critical of Buen Vivir as a constitutional principle." p. 17

"In their constitutional processes, Bolivia and Ecuador have redefined themselves as plurinational states – this is a true innovation in South America and an approach that is clearly distinct from the socialism of the 21st century in Venezuela. The conscious orientation toward the indigenous Andean tradition is the special feature of the processes in Bolivia and Ecuador. It also represents the historical and social context of the Buen Vivir concept." p. 14.

Fatheuer, T. (2011). *Buen Vivir a brief introduction to Latin America's new concepts for the*

good life and the rights of nature. Berlin: Heinrich Böll Foundation. Retrieved from <http://montreal2012.wordpress.com/2011/10/19/buen-vivir-a-brief-introduction-to-latin-america%E2%80%99s-new-concepts-for-the-good-life-and-the-rights-of-nature/>

"In the Venezuelan case, for example, from the point of view of the processes of popular participation, of national sovereignty, in the international political initiatives and the strengthening of international relations in the Bank of the South (Banco del Sur) in the ALBA, in the relationship with Cuba, many wonderful things are happening. But, is an alternative society based on petroleum possible? What is a government doing whose plans of development and whose investment in Barrio Adentro [primary care in poor Venezuelan communities in collaboration with Cuba], in its social programmes and in the support of the processes in other countries, are financed by petroleum, when petroleum is part of this cancer of which we've spoken? They are some extraordinary complexities, and that's why it is so important that which is happening in Ecuador and Bolivia. Not because these contradictions aren't present [there] but because there is the possibility of finding answers (*salidas*) drawing from our new paradigm of *Buen Vivir / Vivir Bien*."

Lander, E. (2010). Crisis civilizatoria: el tiempo se agota. In León, I (ed.), *Sumak Kawsay / Buen Vivir y cambios civilizatorios*. (pp. 27–40). Quito: FEDAEPs. Retrieved from http://www.fedaeps.org/IMG/pdf/Sumak_Kawsay_Buen_Vivir_y_cambios_civilizatorios.pdf p.35 Translation M Burton.

"An ordinary anti-capitalist horizon isn't enough, however. Socialism of the 20th Century demonstrated that it was possible, with other property relations, to have a regime that was as predatory and devastating of the conditions of life as that of capitalism. Only a profound transformation of civilisation can make possible the continuity of life."

Lander, E. (2010). Estamos viviendo una profunda crisis civilizatoria. *América Latina en Movimiento*, (452), 1–3, 26. (p. 26) Translation by M Burton.

Critical discussions of, and challenges for *buen vivir / vivir bien*

"From the start, the discourse of 'vivir bien' has coincided with much more concrete expectations of 'living better'; even in the government [of Bolivia] there is talk of a great industrial leap, and a journalist in the state newspaper Cambio could write a long article advocating the salt flats of Uyuni ripped open by enormous nuclear power stations. All this comes from the encouragement of two great hopes: the neo-developmentalism – which imagines an industrial expansion of dubious likelihood of materialising- and the communitarian, based in ideal subjects and an abstract communitarianism, full of rhetorical flourishes but without the capacity to improve the lives of the Bolivians. Between these two extremes, what does exist is a neo-extractivism with real redistribution of income and a State much more active than in the neoliberal era – result of the weakening of internal colonialism through the Plurinational State.

This is no small thing. In fact it is much better than what has been lived through in any other epoch of the history of Bolivia. But what is missing is enormous, not only the construction of 'another civilisation', but to guarantee that nearly half of the population escapes poverty. And in this task making

the indigenous people 'exotic' puts them further from, not closer to, power." Stefanoni, P. ¿Y quién no querría 'vivir bien'? *Cuadernos del Pensamiento Crítico latinoamericano*. Retrieved from <http://www.rebelion.org/noticia.php?id=151300&titular=%BFy-qui%E9n-no-querr%EDa-%22vivir-bien%22?> 20 January, 2012. Translation M Burton.

"... the process of constructing Buen Vivir would seem to be slowing down and there are some looming threats. A first set of problems lies in its banalisation. From one extreme there are conservative critics, with a neoliberal after-taste that consider all this to be simply indigenist demands that encourage idleness and will take our countries backwards. In the middle are quite a few academics, especially in economics, who see this problematic as very distant from their concerns. Finally, from the other extreme, it is reduced to mere ameliorative plans, as is happening in Venezuela, with a plastic card, identical to a credit card, but which has a 'vivir bien' logo.....

"Another set of problems that is holding up [vivir bien] has to do with the interactions between non-governmental groups and the State. Some actors from civil society, at odds with the government, abandon the spaces for debate about Buen Vivir, understanding that this theme has been monopolised by State agencies. Their disagreements are expressed through bandonning the debate. In a mirror image of this situation, there are government actors that would appear to already know everything and to not tolerate criticism, and cut short the dialogue with citizens, without offering opportunities to advance collectively in the construction of Buen Vivir. Here it is the smugness of the State that impedes debate... ...like it or not, the State is a key space for the construction of this concept, for which it is necessary to participate within it (incidir en su seno); the government functionaries should recognise that to marginalise civil society would lead to impoverished ideas and without much social legitimacy....

"...It is time to re-appropriate the discussions about Buen Vivir and relaunch it. ... This is particularly urgent in Bolivia and Ecuador where Buen Vivir appears in their constitutions. It is necessary to require these formulations and explore means of implementation, follow-up and evaluation. In the Ecuadorian case the approval of a national plan for Buen Vivir, with post-extractivist goals, is a great step forward, but nevertheless makes it a priority to specify the content of future proposed steps, and so the task is more demanding and open dialogue becomes indispensable. A similar debate is going on in Peru, but surprisingly the situation has become more complex in Bolivia. In that country within the last development plan conventional strategies predominated."

E Gudynas Buen Vivir: un necesario relanzamiento. <http://alainet.org/active/43010> 14 December, 2010. Accessed 7 February, 2012. Translation by M Burton

"No one can expect Buen Vivir to be enacted by decree. The important point is that such provisions condition the state and serve as an orientation. The value of the constitutions in Ecuador and Bolivia is that they do not gear the actions of the state primarily toward growth and stability as in the EU, but toward satisfying the basic needs of life, which have been formulated as rights. That, for example, would prohibit the highly controversial and contested privatization of access to water in both countries.

Naturally, Buen Vivir is not a simple roadmap to a better future. It is important that the concept does not degenerate into a propaganda slogan of the state, and that it remains open and the subject of dialog, without becoming a new

dogma of salvation.

The processes in Bolivia and Ecuador show that new approaches are being sought in Latin America that differ significantly from the reiterations of old socialist ideas. The fact that countries that are among South America's poorest and that are highly dependent on the extractive sector would attempt to establish a new relationship to nature – at least in terms of their constitutions and laws – is quite remarkable..."

Fatheuer, T. (2011). *Buen Vivir a brief introduction to Latin America's new concepts for the good life and the rights of nature*. Berlin: Heinrich Böll Foundation. Retrieved from <http://montreal2012.wordpress.com/2011/10/19/buen-vivir-a-brief-introduction-to-latin-america%E2%80%99s-new-concepts-for-the-good-life-and-the-rights-of-nature/> p. 28.