



**UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO**

**Colegio de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades**

**The Buen Vivir as a Counter-Hegemonic Movement under Robert Cox's  
Hegemonic Theory**

**Alexander Hessinger**

**Tamara Tronswell**

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**El Buen Vivir como movimiento contra-hegemónico bajo la teoría de  
Robert Cox**

Alexander Ryan Hessinger Pacheco

Tamara Tronswell, PhD

Directora de la tesis

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Andrés González, PhD

Director del programa de Relaciones

Internacionales

---

Carmen Fernández-Salvador, PhD

Decano del Colegio de Ciencias

Sociales y Humanidades

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Firma:

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Nombre: Alexander Ryan Hessinger Pacheco

C. I.:1711639698

Fecha: Quito, mayo 2015

## Resumen

En las últimas décadas la concepción de desarrollo ha entrado una fase de de-construcción tras recibir un sin número de críticas, así permitiendo nuevos discursos ganar espacio y proponer alternativas. El "Buen Vivir" aparece como una alternativa en Ecuador, negando al desarrollo como visión inequívoca para los países a seguir y propone la importancia de imperativos sociales y ecológicos. La pregunta permanece en sí este nuevo discurso puede ser viable como alternativa al desarrollo. Este trabajo contextualiza al "Buen Vivir" como un movimiento contra-hegemónico bajo la teoría de Robert Cox y utiliza el caso Ecuatoriano como plataforma de análisis para el ámbito local y a priori como posibilidad de alternativa al desarrollo en el plano internacional.

# Abstract

Development has long been considered as a lineal path to be followed in order to attain progress; the foundations from which it emanates are well embedded in western standards. For the last decade the conception of development has entered a phase of deconstruction after several criticisms, thus allowing new emergent discourses to gain space in different ways to attain welfare and growth. The “buen vivir” appears as an alternative in Ecuador, which it denies development as an irrevocable action that states pursue and portrays the importance of social and ecological imperatives, but the question is can it really replace mainstream development theories. This work will contextualize the "buen vivir" as a counter-hegemonic movement under Robert Cox's hegemonic theory and use the Ecuadorian case to analyze its possibilities to work locally and further on have a place in the international arena.

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# Introduction

The underlying detriments of modern society have set the foundations for criticism, but they have also established a subaltern portrayal of society. Consequently, the concept of Sumak Kawsay arises in academic debate. Sumak Kawsay is an indigenous guiding principle, which has been introduced into the Ecuadorian constitution. This philosophy creates an alternative vision of how to develop society. It is through the work and theory of Robert Cox, who based his ideas on the initial writings of Antonio Gramsci on hegemony, that I will try to determine if the indigenous “Sumak Kawsay”, currently translated into “The Buen Vivir”, is a counter-hegemonic movement to the current development approach which serves as a universal trend. Analyzing the case of Ecuador will exemplify if such movement can work out locally in order to potentially serve as a global alternative.

This paper will be divided into three main chapters. The first will introduce Cox’s theoretical framework about the existence and limits of hegemony. The second will illustrate the current dominant development paradigm. The last will analyze the “Buen Vivir” as a counter-hegemonic movement in Ecuador. The philosophical roots of the “Sumak Kawsay” will not be analyzed on this paper nor will this philosophy be taken as a sole theory or concept. On the contrary, “Sumak Kawsay” will be analyzed as a rambling discourse of mixed character produced merely from the outcome of the cultural and political interactions that contend hegemony. To contrast the exhibitory challenge of the “Buen Vivir” in the Ecuadorian realm, a retaliatory enunciation of what development means and its origins will be discussed. Moreover, it is important to highlight why “Buen Vivir” is considered the current and dominant hegemon under Cox’s theory. Likewise, consideration must be given to the theories on “sustainable development” as well as the



ecological approaches that launch the BV movement and contribute to the criticism on modernity and current development models.

# Chapter 1

## Robert Cox and Hegemony

According to classical International Relations theory, the concept of hegemony is rather a narrow view of what a State can do under certain economic and material capabilities. In contrast, Robert Cox “broadens the domain of hegemony” towards understanding the dominance of one actor over another as the effect of “consensual order so that the dominance by a powerful state may be necessary but not a sufficient condition of hegemony” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 87). Introducing hegemony under this underlying category of consensus among actors implies the need to understand how social order and the values that organize it come to place and are diffused. Taking into account the creation of such consensus on a local level sets foundations to later open the possibility of changing the level of analysis to the international sphere.

Cox emphasizes that actors whose actions create certain circumstances are not the sole and most important factor to be understood in International Relations. Instead, “the transformations of main forms of state and how these forms change under pressure from above forces (world order) and from below (civil society)” (Unay 2010, 40) must be considered. These types of forces seem to mold and adhere to the international sphere. Furthermore, they tend to have distinct types of economic activities that might endorse new types of organizations, just as the changes that take place due to political deviances one state might have with another in its relations.

Based on the writings of Gramsci, Cox believes the events that took place in Western Europe were different from those in Russia. According to Cox, “the basic difference was in the relative strengths of state and civil society. Accordingly, Gramsci argued that the war of movement could not be effective against the hegemonic state-

societies of Western Europe” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 128). Hence, there is evidence that forces from above and below tend to establish the limits of hegemony. Therefore, the state cannot be contextualized as the protagonist of supremacy. Instead, supremacy is the unification of social forces from different sides that prepare the arena for the rise of hegemony.

Critical theory envisions the above explanation of how hegemony arises. Unay asserts hegemony “does not take the institutions and social power relations for granted. It questions the very origins and improvement potential of the existing patterns of interaction, focusing on the social and political complex as a whole, rather than its separate and fragmented aspects” (Unay 2010, 41). Thus, Robert Cox intends to analyze concepts under their own specific historical circumstances, just like Gramsci did under the influence of Marxism as a current of thought known as the “philosophy of praxis”. In this manner, the concept of hegemony appears unquestionably constructed on formulations where a state must defend an order based on universal conceptions under a continuous dialogical movement among participants.

Andrew Deak’s *The Condition of Hegemony and the Possibility of Resistance* cites Cox regarding the possible outcomes for world order and hegemony. First, “the prospect for a new hegemony based upon the global structure of social power generated by the internationalization of production.” Second, the “non-hegemonic world structure of conflicting power centers.” Third, a “counter-hegemony based on a third world coalition against core-country dominance” (Deak 2005, 49). The last consideration makes the case for the analysis of this paper. Clearly, the appearance of a counter-hegemonic movement from the periphery (Latin America) contrasts a different way of order that is juxtaposed with the internationalization of production, the current form of hegemony.

The critical theory proposed by Cox is neither static nor procedural, but it is a broad domain of differentiated contexts, in which hegemony cannot stand unless there is consensus. The origins of this concept relate to a Machiavellian understanding of power. For example, “where Machiavelli looked to the individual prince, Gramsci looked to the modern prince; the revolutionary party engaged in a continuing and developing dialogue with its own base of support. Gramsci took over from Machiavelli the image of power as a centaur: half man, half beast” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 127). Hence, by shared interest among the individuals of a system, the continuous dialogue that constructs this universal conception of order is confined to a consensual aspect of power, where consent and coercion are two sides of the same coin.

As mentioned earlier, Gramsci contends that a war of movement could not be resolved against hegemonic states of Western Europe. To differentiate contexts among one society and another, Gramsci distinguished two types of societies: “One kind had undergone a thorough social revolution and worked out fully its consequences in new modes of production and social relations. The other kind included societies which had adopted aspects of a new order created abroad, without the old order being displaced” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 129). This was for Gramsci the underlying reason why one society or another could undergo a revolution of change, or what he later called “the passive revolution”.

The societies that had not undergone a thorough revolution and were left with a “new industrial bourgeoisie” were unsuccessful in achieving hegemony (Cox and Sinclair 1984, 129). Thus, Gramsci stated that the failure to stir up popular forces gave rise to what he called the “passive revolution” (Ibidem). According to Cox, building alternatives creates a force within the current hegemon and extricates the “pressures and temptations to relapse into pursuit of incremental gains for subaltern groups”, thus construing a counter-

hegemonic movement. The concept of passive revolution “is counterpart to the concept of hegemony in that it describes the condition of a non-hegemonic society” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 130). Example of this can be countries of Latin America that have adopted developmental policies from the north and which in turn have not created the desired effects.

Andrew Deak describes a term known as crisis in hegemony, which was initially coined by Stephen Gill. He asserts “there are specific instances where a form of passive revolution, which is a component of hegemonic crisis, is directly linked to counter-hegemonic movements, and that there is in fact a certain dynamism or dialectic relationship between the two moments” (Deak 2005, 50). Formidably hegemonic actors, at an international or local level, enter a crisis due to a loss of consent among them. Hence, “persuasive ideas and arguments build on and catalyze its political networks and organization” (Özcelik 2005, 101). Therefore, a passive revolution not only indicates the inexistence of popular forces that forge changes in power but also the potentiality of construing movements that will seek to change the status quo of the hegemon. “When consent or legitimacy of an ethical hegemony is lost, the subaltern groups become discontented. The conditions would be ripe for a legitimate and popular challenge the social order that had marginalized them” (Deak 2005, 50). Thus, counter-hegemony appears unto losses of consent and legitimacy of the hegemon.

Gramsci builds on the concept of *Caesarism* as an element that belongs to a *passive revolution*. *Caesarism* takes place when “a strong man intervenes to resolve the stalemate between equal and opposed social forces” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 129). In the same line, the author distinguishes between two types of Caesarism: reactionary and progressive. The former involves a ruler that stabilizes the existing power, while the latter responds to a “strong rule [which] presides over a more orderly development of a new state” (Ibidem). In

*Production, Power, and World Order*, Cox points out that Ceasarsim does not need to be in the form of Thatcherism, for example, but can potentially be a “caesarism without a Caesar” (Deak 2005, 48).

*Transformismo* is a second element that is a crucial point to the Hegemonic theory. *Transformismo* “worked to co-opt potential leaders of subaltern social groups. By extension transformismo can serve as a strategy of assimilating and domesticating potentially dangerous ideas by adjusting them to the policies of the dominant coalition and can thereby obstruct the formation of class-based organized opposition to established social and political power” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 130). According to Cox and Sinclair, the intellectual and elite talents that exist in the countries of the periphery, and, which could pose a threat, are reabsorbed. Thus, these countries can no longer pose any future threat to the consistency of the hegemonic order.

Cox refers to hegemony as a pillow because it takes in impact and eventually becomes a comfortable place for the “ would-be assailant to rest upon”. Similarly, “transformismo absorbs potentially counter hegemonic ideas and makes these ideas consistent with hegemonic doctrine” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 139). Thus, there is a reasonable difference among hegemonic and non-hegemonic movements. Özcelik states, “hegemonic structures are distinguished from non-hegemonic inasmuch as those in control of institutions do not predominately resort to the use of force. The consent is strengthened if the controllers make concessions to the dominated and express their relationship in terms of universal general interest” (Özcelik 2005, 100). Therefore, transformismo is a fundamental tool to express and maintain hegemony.

Gramsci builds on the term of “social myth” to explain the consistency of hegemonic powers and the existence of a “Blocco Historico” or Historic Bloc. According to Sorel, who coined the term of “social myth”, the interpretation of revolutionary action must be done in terms of social myths “through which people engaged in action perceived a confrontation of totalities- in which they saw a new order challenging an established order” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 131). In other words, the social myth served as a powerful source of collective subjectivity that bars any form of restructuring within the hegemon. An example of this can be development as a “powerful myth: full of glowing and apparently praise worthy ideas, both desirable and even necessary” (Prada 2011, 147), all this is can be taken as a series of indicators or goals such as industrialization, progress, economic wellbeing etc.

Robert Cox argues “the creation of a world order is result of hegemon and the formation of a historic bloc. A historic bloc is organized around a set of ideas- a dominant ideology- that forms the basis for an alliance of social classes”. The author contends that hegemony must be consolidated in such way that it escapes co-optation by transformismo, unity and coherence within the hegemon is a determinant factor. Therefore, the sociopolitical order must be created under a general conceptualization of order, where interests of potential “game changers” are co-opted into the system. When there is no sense of this order and the interests of important actors are not accounted for, a possibility of “a new hegemonic bloc is formed when a subordinate class (e.g., the workers) establishes its hegemony over the subordinate group” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 132). The last mentioned mandates a dialogical process between leaders and followers.

The term “class” appears to be an important aspect to the theory of hegemony. Cox proposes, “hegemony [must be] understood as a form of class rule linked to social forces, as the core collective actors engendered by the social relations of production” (Bieler and

Morton 2004, 89). In the same way, class appears to be a category that remits itself to its historical significance and even more to the identity forged under the process of economic exploitation. Therefore, “changes in social relations of production give rise to new configurations of social forces. State power rests on these configurations” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 90). Bieler and Morton support Cox’s premise by asserting that the “patterns of production relations are the starting point for analyzing the operation and mechanism of hegemony”. In accordance to this principle, production is taken as a whole, not only as the production of commodities but also as the reproduction of knowledge, social relations, morals, and the institutions that guarantee such production.

Consequently, the Historic Bloc is a representation of a diversity of interests that find their way through society. As mentioned before, the Historic Bloc not only entails an economic character but an intellectual and moral as well. This leads to the importance of what Gramsci called intellectuals and their role inside the Historic Bloc. Cox explains, “intellectuals play a key role in the building of a historic bloc. Gramsci saw them as organically connected to the social class. They perform the function of developing and sustaining the mental images, technologies, and organization, which bind together the members of a class and of an historic bloc into a common identity”. Political parties can perform this role such as in the case of *Caesarism*. Clearly, there is no need of Thatcherism, but there is a need for a “Collective Intellectual” to bind together the identity of the Historic Bloc.

A Historic Bloc cannot be conceived without a leading social class because it maintains cohesion and identity under a common culture. Regarding the creation of blocs and new hegemonies, Gramsci distinguished three levels of consciousness that lead to a common culture that spreads coherence and unity. The first level is the economic corporative that is aware of the specific interests of a particular group. The second level is



the solidarity of class-consciousness. Finally, the last level is the hegemonic which brings the interests of the leading class into harmony with those of subordinate classes, thereby incorporating these interests into an ideology expressed in universal terms (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 133).

Having established the origins of hegemony, critical theory foresees different contexts for the elaboration of power and social relations. It claims that material capabilities and economic resources are not the sole factors to be taken into consideration. Societies differ from one another to the extent of their passive or non-passive internal revolutions. This societal difference and the rise of a Historical Bloc or the co-optation through transformismo create a counter hegemonic movement. In the differentiation of non-hegemonic and hegemonic movements, social class is exclusive to establish hegemony. A propagation of a common culture that consolidates a same identity for the generality of actors cannot be attained without social class. Moreover, the modes of production, which encompass economic activity and the morals and values that justify it, must be taken into account when formulating a counter-hegemonic movement.

To propose a counter-hegemonic movement, it is crucial to understand Cox's theory of a hegemon. Cox maintains, "the hegemonic concept of world order is founded not only upon the regulation of inter-state conflict but also upon a globally conceived civil society, i.e., a mode of production of global extent which brings about links among social classes of the countries encompassed by it" (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 136). This mode of production is currently formulated by capitalism and development. Therefore, any form of contestation must find itself under a "globally conceived civil society" which not only sets a revolution that changes the economic precedent inside a state, but also has the energy to exhibit itself outside of state boundaries. Cox affirms, "hegemony at the international level is thus not merely an order among states. It is an order within a world economy with a

dominant mode of production” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 137). Such mode of production perpetrates itself within all countries and defines any other form or mode of production.

Counter-hegemony would then have to encompass a large spectrum to pose a threat. Moreover, “building upon the Gramscian notion of hegemony, Cox contends that to become truly hegemonic, a state would have to establish and protect a world order which is universal in conception” (Unay 2010, 42). In contrast, Özcelik cites Gill and Law’s *The Global Political Economy: Perspectives, Problems and Policies* and establishes that the “Coxian understanding of hegemony implies the necessity of global structural change and world order in terms of “the dynamics and dialectics of their normative (ethical, ideological, practical), as well as their material dimensions” (Özcelik 2005, 101). Counter-hegemony then would appear under a power spectrum where soft power that concentrates under a discourse and ideas has to be reinforced by hard power, or the material dimension as mentioned before.

In accordance to Cox and the prospects for counter-hegemony, it is vital to understand that “the national context remains the only place where an historic bloc can be founded, although world-economic and world-political conditions materially influence the prospects for such an enterprise” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 140). Likewise, any change in world order circumscribes a shift from international institutions to national societies. Cox believes the state is constituted from the “condensation of a hegemonic relationship between dominant classes and class fractions” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 92). Additionally, hegemony is consolidated from structure to the “sphere of the complex superstructures” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 133). This means a state is formed from the constitution of specific interests of a particular group into ideologies and institutions. Similarly, Bieler and Morton claim the “state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains dominance, but manages to win the

active consent of those over whom it rules” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 92). Further on, consolidating counter-hegemony on a local level is the only way to unleash forces to other parts of the system.

Gramsci also mentions the importance of the concept of “organic” in the construction of a counter-hegemonic movement. In this way, “those ideas that organize human masses and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc., [and] are contrasted with ideas that are merely arbitrary, rationalistic, willed, based on extemporary polemics” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 92). In addition, Andrew Deak contributes by saying “if hegemony is based on consent and effective inclusion of subaltern groups, then counter-hegemony would emerge from the contradictions of a non-hegemonic period” (Deak 2005, 50). The supremacy of organic ideas over other arbitrary ones marks a position that allows hegemony to persist and to consolidate an effective Historic Bloc. Cox concludes that if these “ideas reflect a hegemony, these institutions and ideologies will be universal” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 133). This means that ideas will not be regarded as those of a particular sector, but legitimized under the fact that many actors join this same idea. Subordinate groups will only follow the lead of other groups if they find a sense of shared interests and representation.

Under this theoretical framework of hegemony, it is possible to analyze the discourses of “Development” and “Buen Vivir”. Moreover, it will also be possible to estimate the current state of development and the extent from which the Buen Vivir can posit a real counter-hegemonic position. The historical process from which development arises after WWII sets the foundations for the current economic, social, and political models of modern states. On the contrary, the Buen Vivir appears as a local “hegemonic project” which moves beyond specific economic interests and has the capacity of uniting different aspirations and interests of transnational and local movements.

The real question is whether the Buen Vivir is an alternative to development under Cox's hegemonic theory or can it just be considered a discourse co-opted by transformismo to maintain the current hegemonic status. The next chapter will discuss development in a historical perspective and its process towards current debates under the theoretical framework discussed above. Additionally, the chapter will also discuss how various critiques serve as foundation for the appearance of the Buen Vivir discourse.

# Chapter 2

## Development as a Discourse and Hegemonic Apparatus

Truman's "Point Four" speech in 1949 established a sense of "development". This concept of development fostered the "maturity" of certain nations that were motivated to adopt this new idea. In Truman's speech, the fourth point is the most remarkable: "we must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement of growth of underdeveloped areas" (Rist 2010, 71). After WWII, Truman's vision confirmed that it was necessary to analyze the challenges other countries faced and aid these countries to achieve a "sustainable path to industrialization" (Rapley 2007, 1). A new way of seeing state objectives and what was considered desirable for society as a whole had been put into action. As a result, nations became more focused in eliminating underdevelopment.

Until this moment, colonialism had perpetrated the relations among what was considered colonizer and colonized nations.

Until then, North-South relations had been organized largely in accordance with the colonizer/colonized opposition. The new developed/underdeveloped dichotomy proposed a different relationship, which conformed with the new declaration of human rights and the progressive globalization of the system of states (Rist 2010, 73).

Under this notion, states gained political independence, unattained in the past, but had to posit themselves as developing nations. That is, they had to seek development to gain mutual respect among nations. Rapley asserts, "African and Asian countries came to independence poor, and were eager for two reasons to speed up their development. One was the obvious fact they sought to provide better lives for their citizens. The second was the obvious need to consolidate their independence" (Rapley 2007, 2). This can be

equally compared to countries of South America, which sought development for the same reasons.

The declaration of human rights and the guidelines of political and cultural characters that include international and multilateral organizations marked the ambience for states to evolve in a manner that established homogeneity among them. Hence, Andre Gunder Frank examines development as “a policy that comes from the historical experience of the European and North American advanced capital nations” (Frank 2007, 76). Under Cox’s theory, strong capitalist nations that establish hegemony under a capitalist mode of production rely on development theories to maintain an order within the state system. Thus, the formation of a Historic Bloc comes to existence.

Several considerations take ground and assert a number of critiques at how development is overall structured. The first of these parameters refers to the characterization of individual freedom and the maximization of individual potential, where development strategies cannot grasp individual considerations due to the different contexts in which individuals evolve. According to Rist, development refers to individual experiences that cannot be understood by external characteristics. Therefore discussing individual potential and the broadening of individual choices will not help us reach a definition of development (Rist 2010, 9). The second major flaw regarding the definition of development is that it is constructed from the vision of one person or nation. Consequently, the concept of development dwells between two main positions. One stance “as the expression of a wish to live a better life, which seems deliberately to ignore the fact that the concrete ways of achieving it would run up against conflicting political choices, and two the great mass of actions which are supposed eventually to bring greater happiness” (Rist 2010, 11). Under these critiques, development can hardly formulate an

effective plan that can be equally applied among actors, due to the distinct historical background that each one is circumscribed to.

Before continuing on the elaboration of a critique on the hegemon development current, Emmanuel Wallerstein makes some important points to understand the current hegemonic status of development through the capitalist structure among nations. As mentioned before, the development model is taken from a European and North American experience that began at the time of the industrial revolution. This model “defined this change as both process of organic development and of progress” (Wallerstein 1979, 95). Wallerstein believes the existence of stages, reinforced by the idea of progress due to an industrial revolution, is nothing more than to talk about stages of a social system or totality. Furthermore, the only totality are “minisystems and a world-system, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there has been only one world system in existence, the capitalist world-economy” (Wallerstein 1979, 97). Hence, the capitalist world economy has been the dominant mode of production, from which development has fostered its core arguments.

To further explain, minisystems are considered as a complete division of labor with a single cultural framework such as an agricultural society. However, a world-system is recognized as a single division of labor among multiple cultural levels, which may or not have a common political denominator such as empires or a world economy. Under Cox’s analysis, Wallerstein asserts that the representation of diversity of interests can be found in a Historic Bloc or in a World System. This was the case during the industrial revolution. The capitalist countries of the north concluded that the sociopolitical order and coherence of the structure was based on how actors sought to adhere to the capitalist canons of production.

Wallerstein also introduces the concepts of Core, Periphery, and Semi- Periphery to refer to the existence of a capitalist world economy and how it maintains its hegemony among distinct actors. According to him, there are “three major mechanisms that have enabled world-systems to retain political stability: one obviously is a concentration of military strength in hands of the dominant forces, the pervasiveness of an ideological commitment to the system as a whole” (Wallerstein 1979, 105). Wallerstein’s concepts can be juxtaposed with the concept of Hegemony and the Machiavellian perspective that rules by coercion and consent, which are two sides of the same coin (power). Consequently, this coercion and consent confirm the belief “it is generally held that economic development occurs in a succession of capitalist stages and that today’s underdeveloped countries are still in a stage sometimes depicted as an original stage of history, through which the now developed countries passed years ago” (Frank 2007, 76). This is a critique to the initial development concept proposed by Rostow where the “Buen Vivir” discourse will only reaffirm the criticism constructed over the last 20. What is new that it will try to create a new a platform of argumentation to review this linear process based on new ways of seeing society as a whole.

Even though much has changed since the initial belief that countries must perform linear activity, the center platform Cox adheres to as patterns of production, which are the starting point for hegemony, remain untouched. Peter Evans’s text *Counterhegemonic Globalization* asserts the following:

Despite its failures, few would deny that neoliberal globalization remains hegemonic in the Gramscian sense of combining ideological vision of what is everyone’s interest that is largely accepted as common sense even by subordinate and disprivileged groups with the effective ability to apply coercion when necessary to preserve the existing distribution of privilege and exclusion (Evans 2005, 422).



Later, the author mentions that any counter-hegemonic movement must have the potential to undermine “ideological power of existing hegemony and threaten the established distribution of privilege” (Ibidem). It is come clear that changes in hegemony would arise from a change in how ideological and material relations take place. Counter-hegemony then is based on a change of mode of production and the values and interest that propagate such production.

From the days of colonial conquest, relations among nations were depicted from a developed and underdeveloped notion. Thus, the concept of development was defined in a system that portrayed a hegemonic role of capitalist countries. This was emphasized by Wallerstein’ dependency theory in which he delineates the countries that are part of a Core, Periphery, and Semi periphery. This form of organization permitted the existence and longevity of the current Historic Bloc. The search for this form of development by peripheral countries follows the idea discussed in Cox’s chapter on George Sorel’s appreciation of a *Social Myth*, in which progress and development must occur at all costs, and the concept *perse* is a product of a one-sided vision of reality (European Modernity).

The presence of intermediary nations, which do not fall into a categorization of developed or developing, justify the existence of the whole structure. Wallerstein believes that to make sense of the structural differences of core and periphery, it is implicit to be aware of the semi periphery, a third structural position, needed for the success of a capitalist economy (Wallerstein 1979, 105). This intermediate position constantly pressures nations to acquire a cultural homogenization. As Wallerstein claims, “the existence of a third category means precisely that the upper stratum is not faced with the unified opposition of all the other because the middle stratum is both exploited and exploiter”(Wallerstein 1979, 106). Similarly, when Cox defines the term of passive revolution, he mentions that the functioning of the capitalist world system depends on

nations, and “this effect comes when the impetus to change does not arise out of a vast local development” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 134). On the contrary, it is the diffusion of ideology from the core to the periphery based on premises of international developments what defines the capitalist world system.

### ***The United States as a Hegemon***

To fully understand the causes of development discourse under a capitalist hegemonic system, it becomes useful to understand the role of the United States as a former hegemon. Under the rise of a new dichotomy based on universal values, the old colonial empire saw its demise, but only on grounds of political influence, because the gap that separated these same nations remained the same. Gilbert Rist contributes to this argument by claiming, “decolonization may be seen as the price that France, Belgium and Britain had to pay for the US involvement in the WWII”. To this extent, the “development/underdevelopment couplet maintained a gap between different parts of the world, but justified the possibility- or the necessity- of intervention on the grounds that one cannot remain passive when one is confronted with extreme need” (Rist 2010, 76). This new concept of intervention, based on the need to confront economic needs, put forth development as the Holy Grail of politics, which further promoted becoming rich and prosperous.

In accordance with Cox’s views, the concept of hegemony relates not only to the role of states and the relations among them but to other actors as well. Cox argues that the “regulation of inter-state conflict but also upon a globally conceived civil society, i.e., a mode of production of global extent which brings about links among social classes” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 136) is also important. The United States proved that the strongest indicator to determine the wealth of a nation is gross domestic product. Along similar lines, Rist emphasizes that the US finally “asserted its hegemony by means of a generous

proposal that claimed to be beyond the ideological divide between capitalism and communism. The key to prosperity and happiness was increased production, not endless debate about the organization of a society” (Rist 2010, 76). The ideological commitment among states to attain prosperity through increased production set forward the possibility for industrialized states to become a model to be pursued by the rest.

The common link among nations was that of production. Currently, this link remains the same. Wallerstein claims that marketable production is the most important aspect in a capitalist world-economy. The main objective of this type of economy is to maximize profit. As long as production remains profitable, production will increase (Wallerstein 1979, 101). Clearly, development is the key concept for nations to acquire such profit because “development is a state characterized by affluence, by wealth that keeps growing and is never exhausted, by resources that have only to be mobilized and brought into play”(Rist 2010, 76). Consequently, the terms of “development policy” are evaluated according to the notions of growth and aid as the solutions. This was cherished when “first world donor agencies began pressuring third-world governments to make similar changes in their policies (attack on the state). Thus, many third world governments acceded reluctantly” (Rapley 2007, 3). Moreover, the rapid influence of international organizations in countries of the periphery justified the hegemonic presence of the capitalist mode of production on the countries of the north.

In accordance with Cox, international organizations aid in conveying the norms of a world-hegemony. Zadik Unay contributes to the last stated and asserts that international organizations facilitate “the expansion of dominant economic and social forces” (Unay 2010, 42). Therefore, it is no surprise that international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF had a leading role for the reconstruction and development of nations after the end of WWII. Furthermore, they promoted universal values of human dignity and

liberty under the premise of development for nations. It was not until the appearance of post-development theories, that development theory was “charged with being unconcerned about prosperity; rather, it was said to be geared toward establishing external control over citizen’s lives” (Rapley 2007, 4). Development had lost legitimacy among actors where its objectives no longer were highly shared and international organizations had to reformulate their strategies.

Andre Gunder Frank acknowledges that development cannot have a universal character. Applying solutions to foster development circumscribes more than general measures. Gunder Frank claims, “we cannot hope to formulate adequate development theory and policy for the majority of the world’s population who suffer from underdevelopment without first learning how their past economic and social history gave rise to their present underdevelopment” (Frank 2007, 1). For example, the economic crisis originated in Asian nations in the years 1997-1998 had as protagonists the IMF and the US treasury department. These organizations “exploited moments of weakness in the East Asian governments to force upon those nations a neoclassical theory...here was never a developmental-state model as such, but simply variants of a common theme that seemed peculiar” (Rapley 2007, 5). Consequently, the immersion of external actors guiding the development process was now firmly questioned. The development model had now entered a phase of reevaluation.

The erosion of the development model serves as example of how fostering capitalism many times created an evil in itself. Frank concludes “underdevelopment is not due to the survival of archaic institutions and the existence of capital shortage in regions that remained isolated from the stream of world history. On the contrary, underdevelopment was and still is generated by the very same historical process that also generated economic development” (Frank 2007, 80). According to Gill, the crisis in

hegemony does not demonstrate “a decline in US power, but instead [it is] marked by transformations of the structures of power” (Deak 2005, 50). These transformations circumscribe the scenery for new actors to challenge the established order. These actors either produce a radical change in the social relations of production or shift the balance of power. Rapley states the following:

Scholarly opinion around needs of both people and poor countries, away from programmatic commitments to better governments occurred when the shift of power among poor and rich countries changed: a) rise of China and India- in which in hand expanded globe’s manufacturing capacity” (Rapley 2007, 8).

The last mentioned resonates as a shift in the power relations of the hegemonic order, where new actors through a change of modes of production seek to change how development was being conceived.

As new actors set the foundations to achieve development and the problems in the periphery worsened, it seemed a possibility for development “to bounce back via the new Western fashion of ecology”. Because nations had undergone major structural adjustments, sustainable development saw its perfect timing. Moreover, sustainable development seemed to be the perfect solution considering “industrial development...consumed more resources than it generated, a waste exacerbated by inefficient states (Third world economies growing more slowly than required to meet the needs of citizens)” (Rapley 2007, 3). Thus, the destruction of natural resources due to rapid industrialization could now be transformed into desirable and marketable products. In this way, contamination was reduced through recycling incentives.

This new vision did not take for granted the way states tended to economically grow, but focused on a dual vision of “poor” and “rich” nations and how their actions affected the environment. With this advocacy for change came several transnational

movements and through their international agenda pressured to obtain different results in regards to how development was conceived. For Gilbert Rist, this concept

Meant reconciling two opposite concepts: for on the one hand, it was precisely human activities- especially those stemming from the mode of industrial production synonymous with development...and on the other hand, it seemed inconceivable not to hasten the “development” of peoples which did not yet have access to decent living conditions (Rist 2010, 180).

The consideration of any form of production entailing a form of destruction, as well as the failed development strategy of obtaining industrialization at any cost served as platform to create sustainable development.

Development took a human perspective. Prosperity and growth were not the ultimate goals. For development to have a more complete perspective, it needed to include ecological concerns and the welfare of future generations. Cox’s theory contends development has shifted in its discourse, but the modes of production and relation have remained the same. In addition, the capitalist driven structure has co-opted many of the ecologist, feminist, and other movements that have pressured for changes within the system. In conclusion, modernity is heavily criticized due to its unsustainable practices. Therefore, new concepts such as the Buen Vivir are worth revising and examining for their possible counter hegemonic positions and plans of action.

From its starting point, development policy has aimed to set similar standards and goals among states. On the contrary, underdevelopment equates to everything undesirable, as nations had ceased to even consider it as a possibility. To support this view Rist confirms “from 1949 onwards, often without realizing it, more than two billion inhabitants of the planet found themselves changing their name, being “officially” regarded as they appeared in the eyes of others, called upon to deepen their westernization by repudiating their values” (Rist 2010, 79). It is clear, movements against globalization evoke their historical and national character to reevaluate the premises of modernity and evoke the

possibility of a distinct society based on different values. The Buen Vivir, as a criticism to modernity and the need for a new perspective on development, aid Cox's view to create within national boundaries a counter- hegemonic movement.

# Chapter 3

## From Development to the Buen Vivir

The needs for alternatives regarding development to mitigate criticism have leveraged grassroots movements around the globe. In particular, the Buen Vivir discourse based on the Sumak Kawsay indigenous cosmovision and its political ideals have marked a new perspective. The inclusion of indigenous political movements in 21<sup>st</sup> century politics have given rise to several questions regarding the concept of development. However, the problem with development is the following contradiction: “on the one hand, the policies described as development by the state and the international aid community, which have had negative impact; and on the other, the indigenous cosmovision of co-existence with nature as a new view of development” (Prada 2011, 145). Development under the Buen Vivir discourse can no longer set nature as the tool to obtain progress, but it now resides as an entity with equal rights that cannot be exploited freely.

Throughout the last chapter, it is clear that development in accordance with western canons has sought to mark and cherish how states must accomplish progress and growth. In the same line, in accordance to development critiques, this model has also limited the way in which individuals lead their lives. For Walsh, it is “paradigmatic” in the sense that it is a “frame against which the Global south in general and Latin America in particular have both measured themselves and been measured. It is the developed west against and, at the same time, the model for the rest” (Walsh 2010, 15). Therefore, the inclusion of an indigenous cosmovision into the constitution of a nation (Latin American or from the south) becomes a decolonizing act. This to the extent that for the first time indigenous values and elevating nature to a subject with rights is taken into account when creating the



Magna Carte. This does not guarantee that the Buen Vivir will be practiced effectively; there is still much distance between theoretical considerations and praxis.

To acquire a non-western vision of society and a re-arrangement of the state based on indigenous values is, indeed, an act that breaks precedents on how countries can obtain responsible growth and a broad perspective on citizenship. The corollary follows the premise that states base themselves on traditional economics, which in turn “Teaches us that growth is good. It promises more jobs, more consumption and more satisfaction of personal needs” (Thomson 2011, 448). But its plausibility as a determinant factor to engender prosperity has its limits, especially when “unlimited economic growth has brought us to the brink of the closely related financial and climate crisis” (Ibidem). Hence, Sumak Kawsay proposes a different concept. Whether its original definition transmutes into the “Buen Vivir” discourse or not, what comes relevant is how the latter can contest a change. This change addressed unto the erosion of both development policy and modernity vision as the main vector of ideology.

### ***Emergence into the Political Sphere***

From the year 1949 with the recent end of WWII and the beginning of the economic restructuring of Europe, there was an “official” change of distinctiveness in nationalities. Western Develop mentalism from that point on started to establish a change if not a loss of identity of individuals who were not able to assimilate into the develop mentalism mode. Severine Deneulin in her text the “Contribution of Latin American Buen Vivir social movements to the idea of justice” cites Deborah Yashar and finds a parallel significance of appearance for the indigenous movements around the same decade. Yashar “situates the roots of indigenous mobilization today in the 1950s and 1960s, when states enable people to mobilize among class lines and incorporate interests. Indigenous peoples started to organize in peasant federations to represent their group interests” (Deneulin,

2012, 4). Yashar also mentions how neo-liberal citizenship government “gave already organized peasant organizations the freedom to come together no longer as peasant but as indigenous” (Ibidem). This allowed indigenous people to group themselves in political movements in the beginning of the 90s decade.

To make a recount of official indigenous political movements that have gained influence in Latin America is to speak about the “communities self-organized at the national level in the case of Ecuador (CONAIE, since 1986, or CIDOB, since 1982) and, more recently, at the regional level (CAOI, since 2006). These communities have become essential political actors in the process of renewed state building” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 56). The contextualization to evaluate the emergence of the indigenous grassroots is to reconsider, as posited before, the extent to which development policy and modernity ideology have eroded relations within states and among states. Therefore, “the emergence of these indigenous voices result from the empowerment of indigenous communities in the Andean countries, but also from the affinity of their worldviews with those of different national NGO’s and global contemporary social movements” (Ibidem). The internal struggle that most of the indigenous movements carry out seem to be assisted by transnational movements that share some of the same interests, such as land preservation.

This erosion was a direct result of how “Latin American countries undertook drastic economic liberal reforms. The overall share of the extractive industry in the economy grew significantly. Indigenous people were particularly affected as they lived on resource rich land, which agro-business and mining companies were coveting” (Deneulin 2012, 4). This served as a platform for the consolidation and contestation of indigenous movements. They soon gained political influence and marked a change in how to elaborate the political agenda of South American countries. It was now necessary to broaden the domain of political discourse and reach the large fraction of society that felt

unprotected. This political emergence established a local and regional revolution. In the same way, Cox's framework claims that any change in the hegemonic order must pass from the structure to the sphere of complex superstructures (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 133). Hence, indigenous movements should seek to elaborate ideologies and build institutions.

According to Vanhulst and Beling, this political mêlée of indigenous movements “came to participate- driven by their particular recognition struggles- in the global debate around sustainability and development”. In the same context, the authors establish that the Buen Vivir discourse “started gaining importance in Ecuador and Bolivia- two countries whose populations are mostly of indigenous origin and strongly identify with their ancestral traditions- to the point of becoming a central reference for the new National Constitutions” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 56). Similarly, Walsh believes that incorporating these indigenous values in the constitution is historically significant. Therefore, “in a country (Ecuador) that has long exalted its mestizo character, favored whitening and whiteness, and looked to the North for its model of development, the incorporation of buen vivir as the guiding principle of the constitution is historically significant” (Walsh 2010, 18). To the last mentioned, it is clear that it is an unprecedented moment because interests of a segment of the population that had never been taken into account are now to be the guiding principles of the society.

### ***The Sumak Kawsay***

The Sumak Kawsay seeks to accomplish equilibrium between the human being and nature. Prada explains that “For indigenous and Andean people, expresses a sense of satisfaction in achieving the idea of the community by feeding and nourishing itself through its own production. Not just nutrition in the sense of food consumption, but through the equilibrium between the living forces of Nature and the commonwealth of the community” (Prada 2011, 146). However, it is important to take into consideration that

throughout the vast territory of Latin America and its various ethnical segments, the concept of Sumak Kawsay varies from one place to another. Thomson asserts that the definition of the concept is based on a plurality of vision, where at “risk of simplification, proponents of indigenous cosmovisions such as ‘sumak kawsay’ is centered in indigenous communities, which have resisted colonization for centuries” (Thomson 2011, 449). This resistance has been possible only through protecting cultural and historical memories and establishing alternative ways of living in society.

Severine Deneulin claims that this ancient cosmovision does in fact share several common points with different communities in Latin America. Thus, it is possible to construct a unified perception. First, Severine Deneulin believes “to live well is not a linear progression into the future but an ongoing process always making, done and undone [where] social improvement is a category in permanent construction”. Second, the importance of nature as a subject of rights is fundamental because “to live well is to relate to nature as a subject which encompasses human life. This entails that all economic and social objectives have to be subordinated to the well-functioning of ecosystems”. Third, harmony among people will enable humans to live with dignity. Fourth, “buen vivir does not separate the material from the spiritual dimension of life” because the existence of a spiritual world is always present. Fifth, “manifestations of good living are specific to a particular culture, language, history and social, political and ecological context”. Last, this indigenous cosmovision “is a way of life in construction”, to the extent where there is no unique way of seeing life (Deneulin 2012, 3).

The detailed explanation of the “Buen Vivir” and its Sumak Kawsay roots are implicit to generate the current discourse. According to Vanhulst and Beling

Attention currently captured by BV is the result of a double process of its emancipation from its original cosmological framework and of its academic and political reelaboration, which makes of

BV a contemporary discourse and places it within the worldview flow of discursive interactions around the imperative of sustainability and the idea of development (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 56). This cosmological framework does not resonate into the objective of this paper. Instead, it emphasizes that the discursive field of Buen Vivir can represent both a counter- hegemonic movement to development and a capitalist paradigm.

Radcliffe states “while SK origin lies in the political-cultural concerns of Ecuador’s indigenous movements, as a development model it reflects the outcomes for grassroots ‘insurgent’ alternatives in the political and economic realities of post neoliberal governmentality” (Radcliffe 2011, 241). Walsh further claims that Buen Vivir as a public policy “is the result largely of the social, political, and epistemic agency of the indigenous movement over the last two decades”. Furthermore, its character is based on the “urgency of radically different social contract that presents alternatives to capitalism and the culture of death of its neo-liberal and development project” (Walsh 2011, 18). Clearly, the “concept of Sumak Kawsay represents a radical ‘new paradigm’ of development that initiates a series of socioeconomic transformations including post neoliberalism, popular capitalism and, eventually ‘socialism of sumak kawsay’” (Radcliffe 2011, 241). Here it becomes clear that the initial principles of the sumak kawsay become diffused unto different connotations such as popular capitalism and socialism, which falls far away from its initial ethos.

### ***The Buen Vivir and the Ecuadorian Case***

Vanhulst and Beling view the buen vivir as the guiding principle for Movimiento Alianza PAIS’ political platform. This political agenda “articulates the struggle for social justice, equality and the abolition of privileges, with the construction of a society that respects diversity and nature” (Beling and Vanhulst 20014, 57). To exemplify and mark the course of the Buen Vivir discursive field in Ecuadorian politics, it is worth mentioning

the important events that led to its governmentality in the constitution and its realm of action. Radcliffe points out how “antineoliberal electoral victory led to putative postneoliberal macroeconomics, as well as social movement input into constitutional change and social policy formulation, and in turn how these translated into an emergent post neoliberal governmentality” (Radcliffe 2011, 243). This moment was perfect for the unification of distinct members of society that looked for the same changes, in this way the creation of counter-hegemony became an easier task.

Furthermore, Vanhulst and Beling determine there are three main factors that contribute to the emergence of the Buen Vivir discourse in the last four decades. These factors include “the Latin American social movements of the time, the convergence between the said movements and the ideologies of certain global movements, and the widespread disenchantment with the idea of development” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 56). Prada points out that in order to build a new view of society two levels in the Buen Vivir need clarification: experience and practice as well as ethics and politics. According to Prada, it is impossible to come up with one single concept for experience and practice “because experience is linked to Bolivia’s regional, social and cultural plurality” (Prada 2011, 146). However, ethical and political dimensions can propose a new view of society based on pluralism. Ecuador’s political contestation in the year 2006 based on different factions and movements and its consolidation in the 2008 Magna Carta are perfect examples of this type of diverse society.

By establishing a historical contextualization of indigenous movements and their stance on development, it is clear that these movements have become more visible in the political dimension. In particular, the Ecuadorian case requires further analysis on the degree of participation these movements have had. On the one hand, the 1998 constitution had been historically considered a text that contributed and fostered certain concessions

rather than a political charter that addressed the rights and needs of the most impoverished. On the other hand, “constitutional lawyers view Ecuador’s 2008 constitution as offering a model that overturns twentieth century European social democratic states, by moving deliberately beyond liberal citizenship” (Radcliffe 2012, 243). Other forms of constitutional models, which held the maximum categorization, placed individual rights under a lower stratum compared to property rights.

The 2008 constitution presents itself as “intercultural” and “plurinational” to the extent that it transforms the link between citizens and their territory in three fundamental ways:

- (1) A multicultural society that respects and promotes unity, equality, and solidarity among all peoples and nationalities, regardless of cultural differences.
- (2) The refoundation of the state to overcome the monocultural national identity premised upon European norms.
- (3) Plurinationalism commits the state to an agenda broader than poverty alleviation, as it encompasses the recognition of indigenous and black territories and indigenous forms of justice (Radcliffe 2011, 244).

Vanhulst and Beling assert this new change in plurinationality breaks from western ideologies. In a way, plurinationality “performs a dual role as critique of European modernity, on the one hand, and as a proposal for cultural social and political renewal on the other. It includes the idea of interdependence between society and its natural environment and a conception of the universal a plural reality” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 56). Having distinctive roles due to different types of citizenship becomes innovative only to the extent where structure is changed to favor these roles, and it does not only fall into a new constitutional category.

Radcliffe illustrates the concept of differentiated citizenship. According to the author, the BV seeks to overcome

The liberal false dichotomy, between individual and collective rights in legislative and practical ways...in which citizens and their claims and rights are organized around the lines of cultural and social differentiation that exist, rather than around the requirement that all citizens be the same (Radcliffe 2011, 242).

Additionally, Severine Deneulin cites Deborah Yashar in a term she has coined as “post liberal challenge” where indigenous movements have “created a situation where different understandings of citizenship have to co-exist with each other in a state unified by a common national identity”. This has created an insolvable challenge or task in which “indigenous people demand to be citizens of Ecuador the indigenous way, recognizing communal ownership on land and relationship of reverence and reciprocity towards nature, but at the same time, they cannot be such citizens without being Ecuadorian citizens first with a common citizenship” (Deneulin 2012, 5). This challenge is a hard task to convey for the state due to the fact the its highly dependent of an extractive industry, which in turn violates rights of the people that live on that land, unfolding on a controversy of rights.

As an alternative to development, Prada explains that the Buen Vivir unfolds on three premises. (A) Development is no longer single or universal but plural: it is understood to be comprehensive, able to address situations that are not homogenous. (B) Development is no longer merely a quantitative aim, but a qualitative process. It must consider the community’s enjoyment of material goods and subjective, spiritual, and intellectual realization. (C) The accumulation of wealth and industrialization are no longer the aims of a desirable future, but are the means for attaining the harmonious co-existence between communities. (D) The focus on the individual gives way to co-existence, interaction, and intercultural dialogue (Prada, 2011, 148-149). This premise can be exemplified in the “Plan National del Buen Vivir” published in 2010 in which “buen vivir



and development are understood as interchangeable. Development is the realization of buen vivir, and the construction and realization of buen vivir is what enables this new vision of human and social development” (Walsh 2010, 19). Development still is a word that resonates in state objectives, which may be based on different values but perpetrates the idea of a state on path towards a certain place.

The role of the state under the Buen Vivir realm is to ensure the reproduction of its population without harming the regeneration of natural biodiversity (Prada 2011, 147). In addition, Walsh determines that “development is conceived in the context of the State; that is to say, development is the strategy by which state reform will occur, permitting the State to recuperate its capacities of management, planning, regulation, and redistribution. In this sense buen vivir as development is the State” (Walsh 2010, 20). Prada affirms the restructuration of a plurinationalist state is structured as a two way process: “first, transferring competencies from central government to the departments, municipalities and autonomous indigenous territories; and second, by transferring competencies from the bottom up, from community organizations to the regional authorities” (Prada 2011, 150). As a result it is important to say that any lateral form of organization and mode of relation among citizens that is carried without the state is not considered as Buen Vivir. There is a high dependency on the role the state has due to the attributes the constitutions confers to it and in the same way due to the ambiguity in defining the Buen Vivir (allowing instrumental exploitation of the term).

One big question for Ecuador is still unanswered. How can Ecuador shift from a plural economy, based on capitalist mode of production and relations in a world capitalist economy, to a social economy where solidarity is the higher value? According to Prada, Ecuador must leave the current economic structure based on extractive raw material procedures to the industrialization of strategic natural resources. This process is a difficult

task due the high dependency the economy has to natural resources and the low private investment it has to generate jobs. Acknowledging the previous the author believes that this can be accomplished through the transformation of the productive matrix:

- (1) The expansion of an interventionist state, so that it takes active part in the productive apparatus.
- (2) The industrialization of natural resources in order to overcome the dependence on raw material exports.
- (3) The modernization and technological upgrading of small and medium rural and urban production.
- (4) The state as a redistributor and reinvestor of the economic surplus.
- (5) Priority to satisfy the domestic market
- (6) Recognition and promotion of those involved in the community economy as being credit-worthy and subject of rights (Prada 2011, 154-155).

Here again, the economic structure based on extractive raw material is accomplished within the sole role of the state. The change of structure can only be accomplished if raw materials can be left aside as one of the primary exports of the nation, which can be a several decade's process.

The Buen Vivir's economic exchanges "are submitted not to the logic of profits but to the logic of human flourishing and respect of nature. Solidarity becomes the basic value of the economic system. This means that material goods are to be produced and exchanged in view of enabling people to live in dignity and sustaining harmonious relations between people and their environment" (Deneulin, 2012, 3). Radcliffe argues "currently Ecuador development relies highly on exports of petroleum (and to the lesser extent gas), migrants' remittances and agricultural exports (the major ones beings bananas, shrimp, and cacao)". Therefore, if there were to be a change in the productive matrix and a shift in communal

economy, “these forms of development entail enormous environmental and socio-ecological externalities that have never been systematically calculated or taken into account” and should be analyzed responsibly” (Radcliffe, 2011, 241). Inserting values that replace the capitalist way of production and relation means changing the way we have come to think about prosperity and wellbeing for many years.

### ***El Buen Vivir and Its Relation to Development Paradigms***

It is imperative to understand the extent to which the Buen Vivir is different from modern development theories and capitalist ideologies before responding whether it can be a viable alternative to development *per se*. Deneulin’s Human Development Policy does not question the structure of production and is outcome-oriented, not process-oriented. Moreover, human development follows the same logic because the high development achievers set the goal for others, in this case other countries, to catch up on a linear mode” (Deneulin 2012, 8-9). In contrast, the Buen Vivir “breaks away from the reductionist Cartesian worldview to adopt a systemic perspective encompassing the entire ecosphere” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 56), where development “relying just on the capitalist market is viewed as socially unjust and unsustainable, premised on scarcity and resulting in policy’s narrow focus on poverty alleviation” (Radcliffe 2011, 242). This duality of a Cartesian world corresponds to the initial moment of separation of what is considered as political and apolitical, hence between human and nature.

The importance of Nature in the BV discourse has its foundations in the Sumak Kawsay cosmovision, but at the same time in the connection with transnational and ecologic movements of the time. Hence Sustainable Development (SD), arises from the “hybridization of social development and ecological theories... since the late 1960s, given the growing evidence of human responsibility in global environmental change, debates on the relationship between development and the environment increased” (Beling and

Vanhulst 2014, 54). Moreover, throughout the last decades, indicators such as The Human Development Index, the Measuring Progress Initiative and the Better Life Index, to mention a few, have started to see development under distinct perspectives. Deneulin concludes, “unlike these initiatives, buen vivir does not seek to measure progress differently. It rejects a linear notion of progress altogether, and even proposes a moratorium on the word development” (Deneulin 2012, 7). This differs greatly from what Walsh earlier exemplifies as development through the state, at sets forward the clear distance between the ethos of Sumak Kawsay and the Buen Vivir discourse. Hence, it has to be contrasted that although its ethos rejects the word development, the buen vivir discourse emphasizes the realization of development through the state as the precursor of change, as the good living that is sought in the constitution.

Integral and sustainable development, which have their roots on the contributions of Manfred Max-Neef and Amartya Sen, focus on the subject, rather than having an object. This refers to the special focus on personal attributes and circumstances to define development. Walsh elaborates and asserts that this form of development is based on “equity, democracy, participation, protection of bio-diversity and natural resources, and respect for ethnic-cultural diversity” (Walsh 2010, 16). Unfortunately, sustainable development has not been able to overcome the criticism it stirred decades ago. Vanhulst and Beling argue the following:

Sharp inconsistencies resulting from the diverse forms of articulation and appropriation have thus far prevented it from overcoming certain normative and practical limits and this from achieving its central goal, namely to allow for the satisfaction of the needs of all human beings...without jeopardizing the possibility of future generations (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 58).

The buen vivir reconciles some of the major critiques that SD has over development but differs greatly in the fact that it does articulate a path to change and corrects such criticisms, as will be further explained.

Buen Vivir seeks to elevate the condition of nature to that of a subject of rights, and this makes it “bio-centric and ethically relational. There is no separation between human life and the environment, and human lives cannot be separated from each other” (Deneulin 2012, 9). Furthermore, Buen Vivir can be contrasted to the sustainable development discursive field since it “looks at the relationship of mutual dependence between humans and their natural environment in a specific manner. On the other hand, however, it requires overcoming the society/nature dualism, typical of European modernity” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 58). However, the direct connection that Buen Vivir has with the development academia is the opposite. Although for Thomson, for example, the use of contemporary science and the indigenous cosmovision can be a worthwhile connection. Thomson believes that this fusion is “a synthesis, of elements of sometimes overly holistic indigenous wisdom and of excessively compartmentalized western science [which] provide guidance for a way out of the current crisis which threatens the planet” (Thomson 2014, 451). In other words, the author argues that the Buen Vivir as a rambling discourse that is construed by different standpoints serves as plausible change only if this alternative is combined with science.

According to Vanhulst and Beling, the BV is different from other contemporary discourses. Most of these modern discussions are “aimed at transforming the forms of social organization and currently prevailing production and consumption patterns in order to make them compatible with the (social and ecological) sustainability imperative” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 61). Moreover, “the fact remains that 25 years after the canonization of SD, the controversies that gave rise to it remain virtually untouched, and the irruption of BV in the global debates about society and environment aims to contributing to re-contextualize our collective thinking about the socio-economic and ecological drifts of the development project” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 59). It is clear the

emergence of Buen Vivir relates in certain aspects to sustainable development insofar it promotes the search of a higher ideal of sustainability, and by trying to eliminate the dual Cartesian view of nature and men, it sets forward an important step in searching for alternatives.

### ***Analyzing the BV as a Counter-hegemonic movement***

In the initial chapter, Robert Cox's theory was exemplified to elaborate on a framework from which to understand hegemony. After illustrating the various ways in which the development project through modernity and capitalism came to create the current hegemonic bloc, the Buen Vivir was introduced. The latter corresponds to erosion in the current development paradigm insofar that it perpetrates its main critiques and creates a potentiality to conceive society and the state in different ways. Ergo, after considering several of the aspects that conform the discursive field that emanates from the indigenous cosmovision, it is clear the framework from the initial chapter can further scrutinize this discourse and formulate a comprehensive response as to whether the BV stands as a counter hegemonic movement and an alternative to development.

### ***Passive Revolution***

Gramsci distinguished between two kinds of societies: one that has undergone a thorough social revolution, and, another, which imports the model of an external revolution. Wallerstein claims the former can be found in the industrial revolution, which "was accompanied by a very strong current of thought which defined this change as both a process of organic development and of progress" (Wallerstein 1979, 195). In a current perspective, the "indigenous struggles continue. They are not demanding that their lives, their health and livelihoods, or that their indigenous identity and way of life be recognized by the state, but that a new economic, moral, social and political order be established"

(Deneulin 2012, 6). In this case, Cox claims the current situation has brought forward a revolution that demands changes or change in the relations of hegemony.

Radcliffe asserts this demand for change in the relations between State and the indigenous class in Ecuador is the response of a “highly politicized” process. This is due not only as a contestation to neoliberal development projects, but to the fact that conceptualizing, defining, and implementing an indigenous cosmovision into western canons of society is not an easy task. The revolution that can be traced to the early indigenous movements in the 1960’s, when the indigenous were considered peasants, and that in the 1900s gained momentum in the national arena, mark a reconciliation by including the Buen Vivir in the constitution. The Buen Vivir in the national constitution gives the indigenous people potential new space in the political sphere. The 2008 elections mark a historical moment, to which the “constitution provisions were elaborated in the context of sustained electoral support for anti-neoliberal measures in combination with a tense relationship between government and social movements” (Radcliffe 2011, 245).

For the purpose of pointing out changes in Ecuador, and the actors that are responsible of these changes, is to talk about a social revolution in the electoral rally for 2006. The current president of Ecuador emphasizes, “the buen vivir constitution is the outcome of a citizen’s revolution, as if indigenous people mobilized as individual citizens to secure their individual rights” (Deneulin 2012, 5). Consequently, Radcliffe points out that “soon after the 2008 constitution was ratified in referendum, CONAIE and other indigenous confederations left president Correa’s coalition government, pointing to the government’s retreat from key plurinational and intercultural measures in political discourse and practice” (Radcliffe 2011, 246). These two examples confirm a social group can carry out a revolution, but not to its fully extent to generate the desired changes. In this case, Alianza País was an absolute winner for the 2006 electoral campaign that

postulated Correa as President. Cox speaks of a bloc formation when “a subordinate class (e.g., the workers) establishes its hegemony over the subordinate groups (e.g., small farmers, marginal)” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 132). In this case, indigenous movements can be considered a subordinate group rather than a class.

Marisol de La Cadena in “Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes” refers to the electoral results in Bolivia and Ecuador. According to Cadena, these results are considered to be a “continental re-turn to the left, but what is unprecedented is the presence of regional indigenous social movements as a constituent element of these transformations” (Cadena 2010, 334-335). She also asserts the “same reasoning does not apply in Ecuador...as well as the inscription of Nature of Pachamama in the Constitution occurred despite the electoral defeat of Luis Macas, the 2006 indigenous candidate to the Ecuadorian Presidency” (Ibidem). In this way, the Sumak Kawsay becomes a useful tool for creating inclusion among different members of the political rally. Thus, Andrew Deak claims, “if hegemony is based on consent and effective inclusion of subaltern groups, the counter-hegemony would emerge from the contradictions of a non-hegemonic period” (Deak 2005, 50). This period of contradictions is the one mentioned earlier, as a crisis in the neoliberal institutions that set the conditions for change and emersion of new actors.

Indeed, it is possible for several political groups to share interests. This is the case for supporting anti-neoliberal measures, which entered a crisis during the hegemonic period before the consolidation of Alianza País, and which introduced the Buen Vivir discourse. The indigenous cosmovision reproduces itself as a discursive practice of power only to justify the current hegemon “which brings the interests of the leading class into harmony with those of subordinate classes and incorporates these other interests into an ideology expressed in universal terms” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 133). Hence, the leading class Alianza País in the 2008 elections joined subordinate groups with the Buen Vivir



common ideology. Just as Cox states in his work, this shared ideology is an organic commitment that responds to a hegemonic level of consciousness.

### *Transformismo*

The process of BV as a passive revolution merges indigenous concepts into the elaboration of constitutional rights and sets forward an “alternative” developmental program. The result is *transformismo* and co-optation as key elements in this process. Walsh asserts, “in a region by social movement resistance, insurgence, and demands, social inclusion and coexistence are considered useful tools in preventing ethnic balkanization and controlling and managing ethnic opposition, the latter considered an increasing threat to (trans) national security” (Walsh, 2010, 17). The social inclusion is the homogenization of political groups into the same vector or ideology, which finds its support in the constitution.

Any possible group that may pose a threat to the consolidation of power of the hegemon must be domesticated and assembled in the line of the current ideology in power. Cox further states “by extension transformismo can serve as a strategy of assimilating and domesticating potentially dangerous ideas by adjusting them to the policies of the dominant coalition” (Cox and Sinclair, 1983, 130). He later concludes “ideologies will be universal in form, i.e., they will not appear as those of a particular class, and will give some satisfaction to the subordinate groups while not undermining the leadership of vital interests of the hegemonic class” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 133). The Buen Vivir fosters the role of the state, converting it as the strongest actor in the nation, and when the time comes for social movements to interact with it, their demands have a high probability to be co-opted under the current logic of power. Deneulin claims “buen vivir risks being reduced to

a set of statistical targets to be met by a certain date, or being assimilated to human development” (Deneulin 2012, 9). Along the same line, Deneulin categorizes Buen Vivir as “a matter of providing health, education and basic services without allowing forms of life which are incompatible with a liberal democratic political system and a capitalist economy to exist” (Ibidem).

Due to the distance between the ethos and the praxis of the BV discourse, and not considering the even longer distance between BV and the origins of Sumak Kawsay, it is clear the concept is ambiguous. The concepts of nature, reciprocity, and solidarity are not defined and become hard to contextualize in daily life because these concepts belong to a different society, an indigenous society. Under this premise, Vanhulst and Beling assert” semantic contours make BV vulnerable to instrumental exploitation or cooptation with the purpose of legitimizing political decisions and socio-economic configurations clearly alien to this ethos” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 60). Cox relates to the formulation of enduring commitments, so hegemony can be established in universal terms. Furthermore, he quotes Gramsci to explain the relevance of the term organic: “organize human masses, and create the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position...these are contrasted with ideas that are merely arbitrary” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 101). The Buen Vivir then, is highly subject to transformation in order to serve political purposes; its organic character depends on the ambiguity of the concept itself, allowing it to be used for political exploitation.

The ambiguity in the BV discourse can empower the state to determine and argument the considerations needed to achieve certain outcomes. This relates to Cox’s idea of “comprehensive concept of control,” in which the Buen Vivir as the State is “a condensation of a hegemonic relationship between dominant classes and class fractions...leading class develops a hegemonic project...which transcends particular

economic corporate interests and becomes capable of binding and cohering the diverse aspirations and general interests of various social classes” (Bieler and Morton 1983, 92). This umbrella is magnified under the definition of the Buen Vivir discourse and its objective to “include those historically excluded from capitalist markets and those reliant on forms of production and reproduction with different logics to the market and thereby introduces measures to reduce economic and social exclusion” (Radcliffe 2011, 242).

The latter argument is clearly an argumentation from the ethos point of view of the discourse. Moreover, it is contested in the example of language and forms of production of indigenous segments that the praxis falls short. In the first place, state policies “continue to include clear targets regarding increase in oil production...none of the objectives include indigenous demands of recognition of collective ownership of land on their territory, their specific form of public authority and autonomy” (Deneulin 2012, 9). The previous chapter elaborates on the multiple forms the state tries to contemplate citizenship and rights that emanate from nature. However, in daily practice, the state continues to reproduce postcolonial forms of power organization.

In the constitution an important recognition to the instauration of Kichwa and Shuar as official languages in combination with Spanish to propagate a better and more expansive intercultural immersion with the state. Nevertheless, as Radcliffe points out, “this measure did not require Spanish-speaking citizens to learn an indigenous language. The normative status of Spanish thereby remains in place, with a concession made to non-Spanish speakers in areas where indigenous languages are widely spoken” (Radcliffe 2011, 247). Vanhulst and Beling contribute with the idea that “even if the discourse of respect for and worthiness of cultural differences has become indispensable...political decisions rarely emerge from popular and communal proposals, but rather from standardized repertoire of best practices fitting the mainstream discourse of development” (Beling and Vanhulst

2014, 59). These practices justify the cooption of cultural difference under the state logic to maintain development discourses.

### ***Forming a Blocco Historico/Hegemony***

For Cox to discuss hegemony and the construction of a Historic Bloc, it is first necessary to discuss a revolution, where “it not only modifies the internal economic and political structures of the state in question but also unleashed energies, which expand beyond the state boundaries” (Cox and Sinclair 1983, 136-137). In the second chapter, by analyzing the hegemony of the United States, it becomes clear that capitalism, as an ideological vector that promotes production and consumption under the premise that development is the road to prosperity continues to be the current mode of relation. Gilbert Rist points out that social relations are “not free from the rule of commodity and exploitation—that is, from exchange-value determined by supply and demand” (Rist 2010, 15). The Buen Vivir as an alternative paradigm to development must seek to change the way we see development under certain parameters that are not predominant to social relations.

The Buen Vivir pursues complementary economic activity with nature, the latter being subject to Constitutional rights that guarantee its preservation. Unfortunately, regarding BV canons and political charters that enunciate and preserve Nature’s rights, the reality has been far away from the heart of the whole discourse. To illustrate the point, countries like Bolivia and Ecuador according to Vanhulst and Beling suggest that both nations “increasingly resemble textbook illustrations of neo-extractive economic agendas”. For example, “the administrations of President Correa in Ecuador and President Morales in Bolivia are currently following a pathway of economic development that reinforces well-

worn (neo) extractivist practices (mainly oil exploitation but also large-scale mining)” (Beling and Vanhulst 2014, 60). The presence of a high dependency on natural resources is an element that has haunted developing countries from its early years, which in turn only respond to the capitalist structure itself.

Subsequently, national interests of resource exploitation and the rights of people who live in the area are in constant conflict. Radcliffe explains, “indigenous representatives are not granted direct representation in all state bodies, and their rights over extractive industries established only a right to prior, free and informed consultation” (Radcliffe 2011, 246). Hence, the state is the sole promoter and protector of decisions that require citizen consultation, even though it is a “plurinational state”. Furthermore, public policies have sought to

Include clear targets regarding increase in oil production, metal mining and passenger air transportation. Ironically the constitution that “makes a grand case for buen vivir, also claims that mining decisions are not subject to the consent or veto of indigenous people, because the indigenous only have consultative power (Deneulin 2012, 5).

Changes in mode of production accompanied by ideology can clearly foster change in how the hegemon is structured. Clearly according to Cox’s theory, “changes in the social relations of production give rise to new configurations of social forces. State power rests on these configurations” (Bieler and Morton 2004, 89). Any change in hegemonic structure means a change in production relations. Wallerstein coins a term known as “Ethnic-consciousness”. This term has a distinctive meaning in periphery countries from those of the Core. The reason for this difference is the following:

Political struggles of ethno-nations or segments of classes within national boundaries of course are the daily bread and butter...but their significance or consequences can only be fruitfully analyzed if one spells out the implications of their organizational activity or political demands for the functioning of the world economy (Wallerstein 1979, 106).

This view emulates Cox's structuralist understanding. If the Buen Vivir discourse is a plausible alternative, it can change the economic relations that precede it. On the contrary, reality has differed greatly due to the fact that inserting alien cosmology in the Ecuadorian society, based on different principles, would mean a change of market, state and society.

Many of the elements that seek to be changed still remain in place, and even some have been reinforced. Radcliffe claims "the state remains in practice of a colonial state, unwilling to cede autonomy and territorial rights to collective citizens...the government continues to interpret and prioritize certain constitutional principles over others in ways that serve to reproduce postcolonial hierarchies" (Radcliffe 2011, 248). Similarly, Vanhulst and Beling conclude that the BV "unthinkingly reproduces a form of elite postcolonial modernity that continuously denigrates other ways of knowing and practicing development". Hence, there has not been a change in the mode of production. In contrast, the current mode of production is a neo-extractivist agenda that denigrates indigenous rights and reproduces the same economic structure prior to the instauration of the BV in the constitution.

The Buen Vivir as a public policy represents success for indigenous that have socially and politically worked for a recognition from the State. On the contrary, as a counter-hegemonic movement the lack of a social class which can exhibit the enough influence to change the modes of production is lacking. We are in presence of a type of Caesarism represented by a collective Intellectual who has been able to politically exploit the Buen Vivir for its own purpose. The logics of demand and supply are the mentality of western economics, any change based on reciprocity of solidarity is clearly alien to our system and means a change in the market. It has to be mentioned that establishing nature as a subject of rights in the constitution sets forward a first stance in the search for alternatives to the capitalist-destructive way of thinking.

# Conclusions

- The development concept has opened its boundaries for debates on several grounds, but the problems such as fostering capitalist modes of production, remain untouched.
- The Sumak Kawsay concept is different from Buen Vivir in the form that the latter gains political rigidity to conceptualize an ideology that could be put into action. Hence, it is completely opposed to the tenets of the former, which dictate constant change.
- Introducing alien cosmology into western society under constitutional rights demands a total transformation of the state, market, and society.
- Under Robert Cox's concept of hegemony, the discussion of BV as a counter hegemonic movement includes three levels:
  - Passive Revolution: the leading class Alianza País in the 2008 elections summoned subordinate groups into the same ideology. As Cox states, the Buen Vivir was an organic commitment that responded to a hegemonic level of consciousness.
  - Transformismo: The BV fosters the role of the state, converting it in the strongest actor in the nation. However, when the time comes for social movements to interact with the state, their demands have a high probability to be co-opted under the current logic of power (e.g., CONAIE).
  - Formation of a Historic Bloc: the state continues to portray a postcolonial modernity, conserving the current structure of power,

through a Collective Intellectual (Alianza País) in the practice of Caesarism.



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