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EL BUEN VIVIR

Notions of wellbeing among Indigenous peoples of South America

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Introduction

‘Development,’ the intended blessing for the world’s poorest populations, has not delivered well on its promises. Among those whom it has not blessed, and perhaps even cursed, are the Indigenous peoples of South America. In this chapter, I would like to pay some attention to who these people are, spotlighting their traditions of reciprocity and collective action; to consider briefly the trajectory that ‘development’ has taken in dealing with them along with the rest of the ‘underdeveloped’ world; and to explore how their evolving practices, such as community-based enterprises (CBEs), may contribute to a *buen vivir* that may be seen as an alternative to ‘development.’

Who are the Indigenous of South America?

The Indigenous population of South America is estimated at anywhere from 30 to 36 million. The breadth in estimates stems partly from the variety of criteria used by governments and agencies in estimating the numbers, but also from cultural, political and social discrimination associated with self-identification, which is a commonly used criterion (Canessa, 2007; Layton, Patrinos, & Shapiro, 2006). Nevertheless, it seems clear that the Indigenous may account for as much as 14 percent of the total population, but – significantly – for as much as 40 percent of the rural populace (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2015).

The distribution of Indigenous peoples is highly varied. Bolivia (about 41%), Peru (about 30%),¹ Ecuador (8%) and Chile (8%)² have the largest populations of Indigenous peoples. Most of the Indigenous population are the Quechua and Aymara peoples who live mainly in the Andean mountain region. The Amazon rainforest is another region with significant Indigenous population and ethnic groups, with a smaller number living in the coastal region. These countries (except for Chile) all have a large number of *mestizos* (mix of Spanish and Indigenous and in some regions black peoples), populations that are not represented in these percentages.

In Colombia (3.5%), Argentina (1.5%), Venezuela (2.0%), Paraguay (1.7%), Brazil (0.4%) and Uruguay (‘practically non-existent’), the Indigenous population has been considerably more reduced than in the above countries. The Indigenous populations of these countries live mainly in the Amazon and in the Gran Chaco region and to a lesser extent in the Andes.

While the Andes host most of the Indigenous population in South America – mainly Quechua and Aymara peoples – the Amazon region concentrates the largest number of distinct Indigenous groups and languages: more than 400 of them (Greenpeace International, 2015). Among the largest known groups are the Guarani, Shipibo, Yanomamo, Yaruro, Jirabos and Aguaruna. Many Amazonian ethnic groups remain ‘uncontacted,’ i.e. living in voluntary isolation. Of these, Brazil has the largest number (seventy-seven) (Butler, 2006).

Poverty has long been deeply entrenched in the Indigenous populations of South America, with the average income of the Indigenous poor significantly lower than that of the non-Indigenous poor (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 1994). Since the 1990s, poverty in the region has seen some general decline, but among Indigenous people there has, with few exceptions, been either a negligible decrease or a descent into even greater need (Hall & Patrinos, 2006; Ñopo, 2012; World Bank, 2011, p. 105). The evidence is that economic crises, which are not uncommon in South America, affect the Indigenous quite disproportionately, with a lower initial impact but a much slower recovery and a harsher net effect. Researchers conclude that these crises can be particularly detrimental to Indigenous wellbeing, and that policies successful in reducing poverty for the general population are less effective in addressing the plight of the Indigenous (Hall & Patrinos, 2006, p. 222).

The disadvantage of the Indigenous persists in the area of education. Years of schooling average two or more years, less for South American Indigenous in comparison with their non-Indigenous fellow citizens (World Bank, 2011, p. 107). This education gap shrank during the 1990s, but the poverty gap did not. The return on added education is smaller for the Indigenous than non-Indigenous, which may reflect on the quality of education received by the Indigenous and/or racial discrimination.

The disadvantage is similar with respect to healthcare. In general, Indigenous people make less use of medical services even though their needs may be greater (WHO, 2010, p. 8). South American Indigenous women, for instance, are much less likely than their non-Indigenous counterparts to receive antenatal care or give birth in a healthcare facility (World Bank, 2011, p. 108). In general, health indicators such as maternal mortality, life expectancy and vaccination are systematically worse for the Indigenous peoples. Particularly worrying are the very high rates of Indigenous childhood malnutrition in these populations (Hall & Patrinos, 2006, p. 228).

Despite public declarations and legal agreements, the access of Indigenous peoples to their own land and resources has been increasingly threatened by government initiatives, spurred by a neoliberal agenda, to secure investment in industrial agriculture and extractive industry (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2015). In the last twenty years, there has been a marked increase in South American Indigenous peoples’ mass mobilizations aimed at defending their rights to land and other resources that are being affected by these policies.

Traditions of solidarity and reciprocity in the Andes

Twenty-five years ago, as a graduate student of anthropology, I went to Acara, an Aymara community in the southern Peru. My intention was to study the impact of rural credit in a rural Indigenous community. Traditionally, the national Agrarian Bank had given subsidized agricultural loans to the large *haciendas* in the coast areas, which produced sugar cane and cotton for external markets. A year before my arrival in the Aymara community, the new government of Peru met with thousands of Indigenous leaders in regional meetings called *Rimanakuy* (‘Let’s talk’). There, President Alan Garcia promised to end social injustice in the treatment of the Indigenous peoples of Peru. The young president eloquently read a few passages from the *El Mundo es ancho y ajeno* [*Broad and alien is the world*] (1983) by Indigenist Ciro Alegria. Indigenous

leaders focused intently on every word of the young president. They were hearing the story of their everyday life.

Acara was the first Indigenous community to receive communal credit, loans given to communities which then distribute the funds among their members. The community is located in the highest part of the Andes, the Altiplano, 4,500 metres above sea level, far from the oft-portrayed Andean highlands with their beautiful and colorful mountains. Surrounding Acara, there was mainly thick, brown grass and bitter cold, with houses scattered here and there through the hills. From far away, they looked close together, but they were not. The distance between them increases when you are pursued by dogs with an intense sense of territory, as I was. During my first day, I was unable to get close to anyone's house. I knew it was harvest season, so I expected it would not be hard to get something to eat. As the day went on, I asked several people I encountered on the road if they would sell me something to eat. All were courteous, but told me something like 'I am sorry, I do not have anything; maybe the next one has.' No one would sell me anything, even if I offered money. 'What is happening?', I wondered. Were they not poor? My friends from the NGOs and the university talked about 'development' for these people: increasing their income. Here I was offering – according to my *mestizo* and urban view – an opportunity for profit, for development. Why were there no sellers?

A month later, I was working with the families harvesting potatoes. The situation was quite different. They provided me with potato, *chuño* (dry potato) and cheese, but would not accept money in exchange. I was being introduced to the most important concept in understanding how Andean Indigenous people survive. Initially, I called it 'the Andean insurance.' Acara was, in its own way, a wealthy community, with complex ways of sharing work and its fruits, and ways of taking care of each other.

I had come with the idea of studying the impact and functioning of credit programs in Andean communities, but I soon realized that there was a much richer system, consisting of large networks of reciprocity and exchange where monetary and non-monetary goods and services circulated and enriched lives of people in the community. In their economic dimension, these systems constituted a way to organize production, redistribution and consumption. These different forms of exchange are embedded in social networks and rituals, and they are hidden from the view of somebody who is just looking for market activity.

At the heart of these systems is the institution of reciprocity (Argumedo & Pimbert, 2010; Rist, 2000) – exchange for mutual benefit and typically based on rates established by something other than forces of supply and demand. 'The economic and cultural analysis of reciprocity allows us to highlight, or at least get a sense of, the whole world in which the Andean peasant³ moves: his habitat, resources, customs, traditions and worldviews' (Alberti & Mayer, 1974, my translation).

Life and wellbeing in the Andean rural highlands depend fundamentally on cooperation. The land tends to be poor; and agriculture, which forms the backbone of the economy, is risky and uncertain. Most families, in order to diversify crops and minimize risk, possess a number of small plots in different areas. The nature of agricultural activity requires most families to depend on outside labor at certain times. Mechanisms of cooperation in this highly risky environment, where there is no state support, diminish overall insecurity and provide a level of food security.

Practices of reciprocity allow Indigenous families to achieve diversification in their diet even if the harvest of one product or another fails. Village commoners – members of the community 18 years and older – live in a context where even better off families depend on cooperative relations. To survive in the highlands, each Indigenous family must develop the ability to mobilize a social network through the careful cultivation of social ties. Individual and family wellbeing are thus secured in the context of community.

The Andean networks of reciprocal practices and exchanges form an historical, socio-cultural and economic system that continues to evolve. There are variations in its practices and the names by which it is known, as well as the extent of practice and the processes of adaptation in response to internal and external challenges that affect Indigenous communities.

In general, we can identify three levels of reciprocal exchange: (a) between families, (b) between families and community, and (c) between humans and other beings. Internally, Indigenous communities are non-homogenous in their access to resources, and there are symmetrical and non-symmetrical modes of exchange. There is also a temporal dimension. Some actions are reciprocated within a short time span, while others take much longer and may even require generations to be fulfilled.

At the family level, there are many mechanisms of cooperation. *Ayni* is a form of reciprocity among families and neighbours with similar access to land and other resources (Argumedo & Pimbert, 2010, p. 344). What is received is returned in a similar form, and the basis of expectation is not a formal agreement but an understood moral requirement. There are asymmetrical reciprocal relations, in which families with not enough land or resources earn their way through *mingas*, or collective work parties. Generally, a *minga* involves a gathering of two or more families working in exchange for a portion of the harvest they help reap (Rist, 2000).

There are many variations of *ayni* and *minga* modalities, and these forms of reciprocity do not apply only to agriculture. Families build a number of work relationships to reciprocate, barter and/or exchange goods and services, including such things as the erection of a dwelling (Peredo, 1995).

Ceremony and ritual are an essential aspect of Andean reciprocity, through which, for example, spiritual kinship is created. Kinship brings with it an obligation to both parties: to well-off families the responsibility to provide work and goods, and to the not so well-off the duty to provide labor in exchange for goods. Spiritual kinship is linked to life cycles of individuals-in-community. For example, when the first haircut of a child takes place at about the age of five, godparents are formally designated in a public ceremony that involves most of the community (Graham, 1999; Peredo, 1995). During the ceremony, the godparents make public promises to support the wellbeing of the child. All those present give a small amount of money to the child and this acts as an economic support fund, which the community will preserve over the years. Godparents' gifts are expected to be larger than anyone else's. Mutual obligations are formed between the godparents and the child and his or her family. The ceremonial kinship thus formed acts as 'insurance' for the child, as the godparents are expected to look after the wellbeing not only of the child but also of his or her family. The standing of godparent and godson or goddaughter is a very important cultural dimension for the social and economic life of the community. Similar ceremonies and promises are made for newlyweds.

At the community level, the community provides commoners access to common land, water and other resources. It also provides entertainment and enjoyment through the *fiestas* and ceremonial celebrations. In exchange, commoners have an obligation to protect the community, serve the community through occupying *cargos* – community leadership positions – and working in the *faenas*. The *faena* is among the most interesting mechanisms contributing to the wellbeing of all commoners. Every head of a household is obliged to participate in *faenas* from time to time, contributing work toward public services such as bridge-repair, construction of schools, cleaning of rivers, etc. *Faenas* often include a celebratory aspect, in which families are working together, women bring food, coca and liquor, and there is a general sense of conviviality.

Relations of reciprocity extend beyond human beings. Celebrations of a sense of reciprocity and gratitude that include a relationship with the *Pachamama* – Mother Earth – and the

Wamanis – the mountains – are major events in Indigenous Andean communities. In those ceremonies, goods such as potatoes, corn, coca and other products are offered as well as sacrifices of animals, in reciprocity for the benefits received from *Pachamama* and the *Wamanis*.

This system of reciprocity may be seen as an ‘umbilical cord’ (Alberti & Mayer, 1974), from which families can draw resources in times of need and to which they contribute in times of relative prosperity. It is common that after the harvest, Indigenous families select and distribute the products: some for their own consumption, some for barter, for gifts, *minga*, others for the market, bearing in mind their multiple relationships.

Beside reciprocal exchanges, there are other exchanges of goods through *trueque* – barter exchanges. Goods in those markets have historically established standards of value and tend to happen among individuals and families from different communities and in regional markets (Argumedo & Pimbert, 2010). It is interesting to note that in times of inflation, Andean Indigenous peoples have protected themselves by increasing barter exchanges rather than cash.

These ancestral systems of exchange and reciprocity continue to be transformed and adapted in response to factors such as increased migration to the city, especially of men. Increased production of cash products is changing the nature of *ayni* and *minga* and the reciprocity relationship among families and community. For example, if women with absent husbands find it difficult to engage in *ayni*, they can participate in *ayni* with another family in the same situation, and/or work for *minga* in exchange for part of the harvest and or salary (Peredo, 1995). A family engaged in cash-cropping might find it difficult to receive labor from *ayni* and or *minga*, and consequently have to pay salaries for the help they receive. Situations certainly arise where reciprocity arrangements are exploited. A well-off family, for example, may manipulate its relationship with blood kin to gain cheap access to products. I once met a well-off man who had more than 100 godchildren, and used those relationships to access alpaca fiber to sell to a large factory in the city. In communities with increased out-migration, the level of participation of young people in the *faenas* is decreasing. Some families begin to pay poor commoners to fulfill their *faena* obligations. At the same time, for working in some communal lands, rules of compulsory *faenas* have been relaxed, as commoners can do *faena* voluntarily in exchange for a share in the harvest.

Despite its adaptation and transformation, the Andean system of reciprocity remains a mechanism that facilitates and provides for the economic, social, cultural and spiritual needs and wellbeing of families and community.

The trajectory of ‘development’

US President Harry S. Truman is widely credited with launching the discourse of ‘development’ and an era devoted to its pursuit (Truman, 2009 [1949]). His commitment was enthusiastically seconded by much of the industrialized world and eagerly adopted by the new international organizations emerging from the post-war dynamic: the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In the more than half-century since Truman’s declaration, international commitment to the development project has only intensified. The understanding of development – both what it is aimed at and the means by which it is pursued – has, however, undergone major shifts.

‘Underdevelopment’ was clearly seen by Truman to be an economic disorder: a ‘primitive and stagnant’ economic life. This view of the problem shaped the means of addressing it. For Truman, and for generations of development advocates, the solution for poverty and its associated conditions lay in addressing the underlying condition by means of economic growth, and that meant industrialization. Modernization theory built on this assumption with a model

outlining a linear sequence of stages through which developing countries must progress on their way to development as defined by industrialized, consumer societies such as the US (see Rostow, 1960). The agents of development in this model are nation-states. Their role is to create a policy framework encouraging savings and investment, which will be enriched by foreign trade and used to promote progress through the required stages of industrialization, which was identified as development.

By the 1960s, it had become clear to many that the hoped-for progression through stages of development was not taking place in many poor countries; indeed conditions were worsening in many (Halperin, 2015). Argentinian economist Raúl Prebisch (1950) launched the view that the economies of 'developing' countries are structurally different from those of industrialized nations, and that the differences in structure place the former at systemic disadvantage in relation to the latter. The structural differences arise from a difference between the industrialized 'centre' of the world economy, which draws on food and raw materials produced elsewhere, and the 'periphery' of the world economy – including Latin America, which produces and exports that food and those raw materials and imports processed outputs from the center. Technological development and the ability to set prices mean that industrialized countries are able to retain a much greater share of the value created in these exchanges. This approach, and the 'structuralist/dependency theory' that grew out of it (Halperin, 2015; Knutsson, 2009), retained the assumptions maintained that economic development was the goal, that industrialization was the means, and the state was the primary agent of development. It rejected modernization's program of free trade and foreign investment, instead focusing inward within nations and regions, developing internally the industry and technology that could allow them to add value that they could retain. 'Import substitution industrialization' was a central pillar of this approach.

Though it generated a spirited challenge to modernization theory and influenced policy in several countries, the structuralist/dependency approach to development failed to produce large-scale improvement (Hettne, 1982). Theorists and policymakers began a shift toward export-driven strategies in an effort to secure a place in world markets, taking advantage of low wages and low levels of domestic consumption to improve competitiveness (Halperin, 2015). The result for many poor countries, however, was spiralling national debt.

Against this backdrop, a dramatic shift began in the early 1980s. The election of prime minister Margaret Thatcher in the UK and President Ronald Reagan in the USA signaled the beginning of a social and political transformation that soon spread worldwide (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism, grounded in advocacy of free market capitalism, produced an approach to 'development' that followed modernization theory in equating development with economic growth. Where it differed was in seeing the nation-state as more often an impediment to development than its agent. In neoliberal thinking, the market replaced the state as the agent of development (Knutsson, 2009, p. 27). Markets need to be free from government control and regulation, which is argued to inhibit the ability of free trade to produce economic wealth, and look to the unfettered movement of capital, goods and services to deliver prosperity.

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund became mechanisms to disseminate, implement and enforce neoliberal strategies (Stiglitz, 2002, p. 14). The World Bank/IMF approach to national indebtedness and underdevelopment is a system of conditional loans known as Structural Adjustment Programs that required such things as reduced social spending, privatization of publicly owned enterprises, reduced economic regulations, reduced trade barriers and so on, to provide a welcome environment to foreign direct investment (Greenberg, 1997). The rise of neoliberalism is coupled with the rise of corporate power to the point that this approach to development could be seen as not really based on free markets but the interests of powerful corporate forces from the industrialized West (Crouch, 2011; Korten, 1995).

It is hard to deny that the result of neoliberal development policy has been devastating for the poor, including and perhaps especially Indigenous peoples. Structural Adjustment Programs pursued during the 1990s and into the early twenty-first century did not have the desired outcomes. Indeed, what seemed aggravated conditions of poverty and maldevelopment attracted a storm of criticism (see Knutsson, 2009, p. 25). The results in most ‘developing’ countries was actually slower growth, increased inequality of income and greater economic instability (Chang, 2007, pp. 26–31; Stiglitz, 2002, p. 18). Perhaps more significantly, the social fallout in terms of unemployment, reduced social services and rising prices, which were meant to be short-term prices worth paying, turned out to be lasting hardships, especially among the rural poor caught in a cycle of export induced mono-cropping, higher input costs and fluctuating world demand (Greenberg, 1997, p. 85).

An influential approach that captured much of the existing dissatisfaction of the previous three decades came to be known as the ‘Human Development’ outlook: a shift from the view that development concerns just economic factors such as income and wealth, to a multidimensional consideration of ‘wellbeing.’ A leading proponent of this point of view, Amartya Sen (1999), sees the goal of development as the “expansion of the ‘capabilities’ of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value” (1999, p. 18). Poverty is seen as a lack of basic freedoms; and while it is often related to low income, that is only one variable and contingent factor in relation to the freedoms that development aims at (Sen, 1999, pp. 87–88). An exclusive attention to income, and economic measures to improve it, are therefore shortsighted and likely to miss much of what is important.

This approach has influenced the United Nations Development Programme in producing a Human Development Index to measure development using comparative rates of life expectancy, literacy and school enrolment as well as income per capita to publish report cards on how well nations were faring in attempts at development.

‘Post-development’ thinking and the buen vivir

‘Post-development’ scholars argue that mainstream notions of underdevelopment and poverty are based on ethnocentric and industrialized assumptions about the good life that simply fail to fit the ‘Third World’ created by this discourse. Even reformed approaches to development, which reduce the emphasis on economic growth and industrialization and embrace human development as the goal, nevertheless continue to apply a single cultural model to the whole world. The development discourse in general is seen as “a regime of representation” (Escobar, 1995, pp. 6, 10, 12, 15, 19), in which the identities of the poor and ‘underdeveloped’ are constructed in terms of Western primacy.

Post-development advocates do not deny that there are social and material disadvantages in the majority of the world’s population, though they would say that many of these are actually created by the joint projects of development and globalization. As a response, however, ‘they are interested,’ as Escobar strikingly puts it, ‘not in development alternatives but in alternatives to development’ (1995, p. 215). Those alternatives are rooted in a rejection of the absolutes of “Western modernity” that ignore the multitude of distinct local realities and cultures that shape the realities in which people live (Esteva & Prakash, 1998, pp. 292–294). What needs to be remedied, and what the remedies might be, must be determined at that level. Escobar observes, ‘A relatively coherent body of work has emerged which highlights the role of grassroots movements, local knowledge, and popular power...’ This approach, he writes, is grounded in “an interest in in local culture and knowledge; a critical stance with respect to established scientific discourses; and the defense and promotion of localized, pluralistic grassroots movements” (1995, p. 215).

The post-development proposal to find alternatives to development finds an application in a Latin American movement built on the concept of *buen vivir*. The movement arose independently of the post-development program, but its approach is deeply resonant with the post-development outlook (Gudynas, 2011, p. 442). The *buen vivir* perspective gained prominence in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries as a Latin American response to neoliberal pressures and classical 'Western' development programs, but it is deeply rooted in the traditional worldviews of the South American Indigenous.

The Spanish *buen vivir* is in fact a rendering of several different Indigenous expressions: *sumak kawsay* in the kichwa language of Ecuador, *suma qamaña* in the Aymara of Bolivia, *kuome mongen* in the Mapuche tongue of Chile, and similar expressions from other Andean Indigenous languages (Gudynas, 2011). Each of these conceptions that have evolved into the concept of *buen vivir* is embedded in its own cultural, historical and political context, and the Spanish concept inherits that variety of nuance. Underlying that variety, however, is a worldview, a *cosmovision*, that sees human life poised at the intersection of material, spiritual and social reality (Rist, 2000). The good life consists in finding a balance that combines these realities into an integrated whole.

The concepts of *buen vivir* that entered Latin America discourse in the late 1990s and early 2000s took shape in current political and social dialogue, including the dissatisfaction with neoliberal ideology and the forms of 'development' identified with Western hegemony. But they inherited from their Indigenous and related antecedents this idea of a harmonious balance, which places human life in a specific community with its accompanying spiritual and material realities (Cerdán, 2013; Gudynas, 2011; Rist, 2000; Walsh, 2010). This approach is fundamentally opposed, therefore, to an individualistic understanding of development and incorporates a sensitivity to ecology that goes beyond seeing it as a resource, even one to be protected. 'Nature becomes part of the social world, and political communities could extend in some cases to the non-human' (Gudynas, 2011, p. 445). Translating *buen vivir* into the English 'wellbeing' fails to capture the enlarged sense of reality that the Spanish expression and its antecedents embody.

Buen vivir is not a single concept, but a fluid conception that allows for different understanding in different settings. The recent inclusion of *buen vivir* in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia reflects the appeal this idea has, but also different ways in which it may be conceived (Gudynas, 2011). It serves as a kind of platform from which a number of alternatives to development may be launched.

In our own way: collective action and wellbeing in the Andes

Faced with environmental, social, economic and political crisis, the Indigenous of South America have found ways of enlisting practices of reciprocity and exchange at the community level to re-energize and rebuild Indigenous ways of life. In the following, I look at five Indigenous communities in the Andean region of Peru that have created self-managed collective enterprises, and through them responded to the negative forces that confront them. Contrary to conventional community development – interventions that focus primarily on outside inputs (e.g. financing, infrastructure building, education, health, advocacy, mass mobilization, training, education, etc.) – the development happening in the Indigenous communities builds upon community strengths.

I have pointed out how the interrelated system of reciprocity is a mechanism that not only provides basic material being and fosters social relationships, but also forms the backbone for nourishing cultural needs through rituals, ceremonies and community *fiestas*. Community cohesiveness and the use of ancestral cooperative practices and values have been the driving force behind the creation of 'community-based enterprises' (CBEs) in Colcas, Accas, Quchu

and Achumba.⁴ They have been built on the foundation of the capacity of local people to pool and mobilize all kinds of resources – human, natural and, to a lesser extent, monetary – to improve their lives collectively.

The roots of community entrepreneurship

CBE is a mechanism for change and an adaptive response to pressing macro-economic, social and political factors that affect impoverished Indigenous communities. It occurs where communities, acting as communities, form an enterprise of some sort that they operate as a community. In effect, they become, collectively, both entrepreneur and enterprise (Peredo & Chrisman, 2006).

CBE arises in response to economic crisis and a lack of opportunities in the countryside, processes of social disintegration, social alienation, environmental degradation and postwar disruption. The factors are interrelated, and many communities suffer from more than one at the same time.

Lack of economic opportunity arises not only from rural isolation but also from social and cultural marginalization as reflected in the deficiency of services in rural areas of the Andes where the Indigenous peoples live. The lack of economic opportunity allies with marginalization to create a catalyst for the creation of CBE. Indigenous peoples living in the rural communities do not seek full-time employment. Rather, they look for opportunities to generate income that complement their agricultural activities, serving as a source of diversification that softens the consequences of uncertain and high-risk agricultural activity. The weekly regional market in Colca – a community initiated and operated enterprise – and the collective *granjas* – collective stockyards – have created income that supports the community's school. It also provides income for individual families who can now sell their products in the main plaza of their community, and allows the Mothers' Club to support itself by selling prepared foods. In Accas, 130 direct part-time jobs have been created by CBEs in the community-owned mine, the bottled water factory, the school, dining center and other enterprises that have flourished there. Commoners welcome these jobs especially for the way they accommodate the agricultural cycles of Indigenous families farming their parcels.

Andean Indigenous communities have long faced diverse forms of social disintegration, especially as a result of migration and increased social stratification. These demographic changes affect traditional cooperative relations and amplify poverty, especially among the most vulnerable: the elderly, women and children. The community of Colcas, in an attempt to overcome its poverty, adopted a process of land redistribution for the purpose of increasing food security, reducing social polarization and strengthening solidarity. In Accas, Colcas and other communities, many young men have returned to their families and to their communities because of the existence of the CBE. One of the benefits of CBE is its potential to reduce the forces promoting migration and strengthen practices of solidarity.

As mentioned earlier, in South America and in the Andean area in particular, there is a close connection between poverty and alienation due to ethnicity. Their ethnic origin places the Indigenous at the bottom of a social, economic, political and cultural ladder.⁵ Alienation and marginalization is reflected not only in macroeconomic terms and policies such as lack of major investment in the area, but also in everyday life. Overall, there is a desire among the Indigenous to gain control over their own lives, especially in Peru where the Indigenous lack political power or voice in national life.

In many communities, men and women tell stories of abuse while living in the city because of their ethnic background. For example, in 1994 I interviewed twenty-two male immigrants from the Quechua community of Cuzno, who were living in the city capital of Lima. Three of

them were working as servants for *mestizo* or white families. All of them complained about the treatment they were receiving from their employers, and the constant references to their origins. Although I did not interview women, it is well known that female servants are often the targets of physical abuse including rape. In spite of this treatment, Indigenous working in the city may consider themselves the lucky ones, as servants at least have a place to sleep and something to eat. Most migrants I encountered were wandering from city to city, begging and self-employed, selling handicrafts such as palm mats, which the family in the village produced during the agricultural off-season. All of them lived in precarious and often violent conditions in shantytowns.

In the communities of Colcas, Accas and Quichu personal experiences of social alienation have drawn people to return and work for the CBEs. In the assemblies convened to discuss the enterprise, they often talked about the painful experiences living in the city. In Colcas, during a special assembly to discuss the CBE, a young man related with tears:

I wanted to be someone. I worked as a servant and I managed to convince my boss to let me go to school at night. So, I decided to go and sign up in spite of the fact that I was so tired. When I was on my way on the bus, my documents were stolen. Shortly after that the police came to check documents and I was arrested. After spending some time in jail, I continued on to the school, but no one would help me since I didn't have the other documents. The person at the front desk told me: "Get out of here, *cholo*."⁶

He wiped away his tears and said:

I lost everything and now I am here. The community has given me land. I have some sheep and my little grocery store. The cities look good from a distance when one is curious. But when we are there, the city doesn't offer anything to people like us. Here the community protects us.

Stories like this are abundant in these communities.

Environmental degradation is a concern in many Andean communities, and appears as an important factor in the emergence of CBEs among the cases studied. It was, for example, clearly a motivating force in the community of Colcas. Severe erosion of the land moved the commoners to restructure their entire communal lands arrangement. The measure was introduced collectively with a view to avoiding future damage to the physical base of their already precarious economy by adding community monitoring of use and degradation, but had the effect as well of reviving and reinforcing traditional forms of collective work that had been disappearing. The restructuring of the land stimulated the creation of a regional market and other communal enterprises as a way of economic diversification beyond exploitation of natural resources.

From 1979 to 1992, Peru was the scene of a bitter guerrilla war. Terror drove many to flee their communities, among them the citizens of Quichu. During the early period of the war, families often escaped to the mountains. "It was cold," said Toribio Quispe, "but we were afraid to stay in our huts, because we never knew when the *Senderistas* [Shining Path guerrilla group] or the military would come." Now, people in Quichu are proud. "We have a soccer field and other facilities. Now the community has been reborn..." A number of young people live there, including a large number of single abandoned mothers. In Quichu, the need to rebuild their community drove the people to organize themselves. During the war years, "We had come to the point where the community had only six families still here – mostly old people determined

to die in their own place.” These experiences led to the cohesion that enabled the community to organize its communal *granjas*. Thus, the formation of CBEs addresses poverty not only as scarcity of material resources, but also as a multifaceted phenomenon including social and political insecurity.

In the communities studied, the population expressed the need to gain control over their lives and over their communities as important dimensions of their wellbeing. The community of Accas lodged protests over *Cerro de Pasco* Corporation’s despoliation of the environment. In creating its own enterprises, they aimed not only to create jobs, but also to control environmental damage, to build economic alternatives, and to generate dividends that will promote social development. The community has challenges in achieving this economic diversification, but the commoners believe at least that they are controlling their own destiny. In other cases studied, the communities similarly tried to achieve a degree of control, and – rather than waiting for the government to step in – to facilitate the establishment of social services and opportunities. It is precisely for this reason that enterprise creation in these communities has been a political as much as an economic process.

Wellbeing and poverty alleviation entail the control of resources, and this requires an organization. The formation of these organizations is as much a political as an economic process. The communities where I observed CBEs arising share a common patrimony, a common history of mobilization and ancestral cooperative traditions that were converted through collective action into the organizational forms that I refer to as self-managed community-based enterprises.

Previous skills in economically productive activities, such as livestock, cheese making, mining, trade, etc. are closely related to the type of CBE that emerges. Some of those skills are based on ancestral Indigenous knowledge, such as livestock and crop management, while others have been developed through working in areas outside of normal agricultural activities. For example, many commoners in Accas prior to the establishment of the Accas Self-Managed Community Enterprise worked for an American mining company, *Cerro de Pasco Copper Corporation*.

It is evident that not every community possessing the above-mentioned assets is capable of maintaining a CBE of the magnitude referred here (e.g. selling minerals and creating schools, pharmacies, and so on); but the ancestral reciprocal relations and common lands that exist to some extent in most if not all communities give an indication of a level of community management, even if the commoners do not call the result a ‘self-managed community enterprise’ and the community does not, as a community, produce goods for the market.

CBE has emerged as a mechanism to boost the wellbeing and health of the community through market participation. Wealth creation in these cases is not the goal in and of itself. Rather, self-reliance and improvement of life in the community through income opportunities, access to social services and support for cultural activities are the aims. These in turn reduce the drive for migration due to economic circumstances. The formation and functioning of CBEs is affected by the ability of a community to combine and adapt in an innovative way – ancestral and new skills, experiences, cooperative practices and values to meet the challenges and engage in a global market.

In sum, typically CBEs are triggered by social, economic and political stress. They draw on cultural heritage, experience of collective action, values toward protection of common patrimony for the common good. In these ways, communities that have engaged the market economy in their own collective ways have been able to gain some control over their lives. They have been able to increase food security, create and direct jobs, build a social infrastructure, increase security and achieve civic democracy. The cases studied reinforce the possibilities of Indigenous, endogenous forms of development that have potential to generate a multifaceted wellbeing.

Challenges: “broad and alien is the world”

CBEs are an instrument rich with potential for improving the lot of Indigenous peoples in South America, but they face significant challenges.

One internal and ongoing task is the need to balance the needs of families with those of their communities. Another is to achieve a balance among the multiple goals characteristic of CBEs, in particular their social and commercial goals. One emerging challenge is a product of management education. Several commercially successfully CBEs have created scholarships enabling their young people to study business in regional universities. The mainstream private business models are not adapted or supplemented to deal with the collective enterprises operating in communities. Young people return, then, with convictions that enterprises should be privatized, and question the pursuit of social, political and cultural goals in the operation of community enterprises.

CBEs face external challenges as well. Commercial competition is a challenge for any enterprise, though CBEs are able to compete by using ‘Indigenous strategy,’ combining non-market with market approaches in order to remain flexible (Peredo, 2012).

Dealing with governments has been difficult. The individualist development model favored by governments clashes with the collective Andean models embodied in such activities as CBEs. The Peruvian government has neither understood nor supported the important role that CBEs play in creating local development. The explosive growth of extractive industry in the last ten years, combined with other projects embodying neoliberal conventions of development threatens the wellbeing and even the existence of Andean Indigenous communities (Bebbington, 2007; Bebbington & Williams, 2008; Bury, 2005). The reports that began more than a decade ago of Indigenous peoples killed or injured as they protest the presence of mining exploration in their territories (Bury, 2002) have only grown more frequent and more alarming (BBC News, 2015a, 2015b; *The Economist*, 2007; Slack, 2009).

In 2007, the Peruvian president’s newspaper article, “*El síndrome del perro del hortelano*” (“The syndrome of the dog in the manger,” Perez, 2007), asserted that the Indigenous communities are “incapable” of using their natural resources “productively.” “They only wait,” he wrote, for “handouts from the State, rather than putting a commercial value on the mountains and lands that are unproductive for them, but if rented or sold could produce the high level of investments and technology that a buyer could bring” [my translation]. The president’s contention that the Indigenous people of Peru are obstructing their own development has only become more strident and widespread in the years since, with little consideration of what the communities might be developing themselves, that they value more than cash and technology. This outlook places CBEs and other forms of endogenous development in Indigenous communities at serious risk. Yes, *broad and alien is the world*. Let us see how *buen vivir* might find its own way nevertheless.

Notes

1 Lima: CVR, 2003.

2 Except for Peru and Uruguay, data come from (International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 2015)

3 In Peru, Indigenous peoples in the Andes are called *campesinos*, ‘peasants’. This reflects a transition outlined by Ferrari (1984) and Spalding (1974).

4 The names of these communities have been changed to respect their privacy.

5 Ethnic discrimination is part of everyday life in Peru. I remember that when I was at school other *mestizo* children seized an Indian girl and cut off her hair. The schoolteacher said: “She should be thankful because now she can look decent.” ‘Decent’ is a term used commonly to describe whites or *mestizos*. Ethnic discrimination against Indigenous people is part of Peruvian mestizo–white society. During my trips through the Andes, especially during the insurgency period (1979–1992), I witnessed how the lives

of the Indigenous were considered of little value. The police harassed them on the road or in buses, often beating them for little or no reason and without any restraint.

6 *Cholo* is a derogatory term applied to Andean Indigenous living in the city.

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