

# **Sustainable Development or Sustainable Economies? Ideas Towards Living in Harmony and Plenitude**

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## **Abstract**

This paper invites a sustained conversation on concepts of 'development' and 'living in harmony and plenitude'. It reflects on three co-existing trajectories: 1) rough (or unsustainable) development; 2) sustainable development; and 3) sustainable economies.

Considering these three co-existing options seriously would lead not only to a multipolar world order, but also to a co-existing pluriversal world order in which emerging and peaceful political organizations would ideally have as much to say as the state, corporations, banks, and extant international institutions. Changing the terms of the conversation would lead to shifting our visions of living on the planet and reducing both rough and sustainable development down to size.

## **1. Sustainable Development or Sustainable Economies?**

At the moment of editing this essay the Amazon was on fire. Pagina 12, an Argentina Newspaper published an op.ed from where I extract the following lines:

Between the first of January of this year and last Tuesday, August 20 232 days passed exactly. In that period almost 80 thousand fires were registered in the Amazonian forests. That is to say: there were about 340 foci of intentional fire, destructive, per day. More than ten fires per hour. At least in that regard, President Jair Bolsonaro (photo) strictly complies with

what he announced throughout his nearly three decades of obscure deputy and reiterated throughout his election campaign: overcome the "environmental psychosis" created and fed by the cultural Marxism that, among other stupidities, invented global warming. <sup>1</sup>

Although the article focusses on Jair Bolsonaro, there is much more that meets the eyes. There are the corporate Brazilian agrobusiness complex and the international corporations that have been anxious to have all those "unproductive land of the Amazon" put at the service of development for the good of the world. Not to talk about the interest of industrially developed nation-states at this point being entangled in the trade war to maintain, in the one hand Western hegemony and, on the other, the economic growth of "emerging" economies that cannot be contained. The Amazon fire is also an indication of the ethos that makes sustainable development almost impossible: current life conditions in the planet are irrelevant and a encumbrance to economic growth. Certainly, it is not "capitalism" is nothing that the will of people running states, banks and corporations. It is their beliefs and convictions that nothing else matters but their own political and economic consolidation to decide on the life of billions of people and of life in the planet. The subjectivity of the rulers is such and their will to power and notoriety is such, that their own pleasure and benefits could not be stopped by "irrelevant" concerns that will prevent development. This is the new global ethos, which is certainly not an encourage one for people who do not care for development but care for living in harmony, plenitude and love. If for a while the economy was part of society (say from 1500-1945), from WWII to today society became part of the economy. For that reason, the good UN's plan for sustainable development seems like nothing more than a mask for rough development.

What is more revealing of the ultraright politics of our time, is using main stream and social media to accuse someone else of the crimes one commits. This was always the case but it was disguised. Now is becoming to the open: Bolsonaro, accused of being

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Nepomuceno, "Jair Bolsonaro: the Devastator", *Página 12*. Augst 25, 2019, [https://www.pagina12.com.ar/214274-bolsonaro-el-destrozador?fbclid=IwAR3L\\_bkKzUbyNM8vOIO6CSMVzJMMWnWnaBe1-S98HU-fgfeDhEpARO9c](https://www.pagina12.com.ar/214274-bolsonaro-el-destrozador?fbclid=IwAR3L_bkKzUbyNM8vOIO6CSMVzJMMWnWnaBe1-S98HU-fgfeDhEpARO9c)

behind the multiple fires, denied his responsibility and accused green organizations and leftist to provoke the fire. The war of accusations is such in our time that provide a useful distraction in the public sphere, while the purpose of the crime ends up in the desired results. Soon we may see massive yellow machinery cultivating the areas destroyed by the fire. Which is another venue in international politics: to destroy in order to build and generate wealth on the ruins of what have been destroyed and the human bodies under the debris of devastated building, roads, schools, hospitals and the like but not many banks and corporate buildings. The 21<sup>st</sup> century story of Iraq runs parallel to what would become the wipe out Amazon.

This essay invites a sustained conversation on the concepts of ‘development’ (whether rough or sustainable), on the one hand and on the Andean concepts of *Sumak Kawsay* (Ecuadorian Kichwa) and *Suma Qamaña* (Bolivian Aymara), on the other. These concepts are generally translated as ‘living in harmony and plenitude’ and it is often rendered as “Bien Vivir” (to live well) and it is distinguished from “Vivir Bien” (to live better). I would argue that “Bien Vivir” (also “Buen Vivir”) presupposes and require “sustainable economy/ies” rather than “sustainable development”. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to change not only the content, but also the terms of the conversation. Which means there cannot be “transitions” from either form of development to sustainable economies but “delinking” of the latter from the former. To change the terms of the conversation is of the essence to delink from the assumptions, presuppositions and visions promoted by development, either rough or sustainable. In what follows, I will explore these three co-existing trajectories: 1) rough (or unsustainable) development; 2) sustainable development; and 3) the necessary shift to sustainable economies.

The debates in South American conversation around *Sumak Kawsay and Suma Qamaña* has two trajectories. On the one hand, Indigenous activists and intellectuals from where the concept originates, are aiming at the reconstitution of the communal that was dismantled first by the colonial intervention of Christianity to transform the Indigenous communal into Christian communities of believers and later on, by the liberal nation-states

and by Marxists salvationism.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, a number of non-Indigenous intellectuals, some coming from the early versions of post-development,<sup>3</sup> and others from the most recent debate on *Bien Vivir*, are connecting “Bien Vivir” to post-development.<sup>4</sup> The same concepts are articulated in two different but parallel destinations: one Indigenous and the other non-Indigenous scholars and intellectuals of European descent. Hence, sustainable economies shall not be confused with post-development, but shall be links with the reconstitution of the communal of which Indigenous cosmo-experiences provides a guide for non-Indigenous projects as well.

To ‘live well’ is not equivalent to ‘living better’. To live better is the implicit philosophy of development, whether it its rough or sustainable incarnations. The result is growing inequality and discontent in the population coupled with increasing conflicts in the inter-state world system. Sustainable economies are being enacted and thought on cosmologies, cosmo-senses and cosmo-experiences, and ideas of reconstitution of the social fabric (e.g., the communal) that are disavowed by modernity and development.<sup>5</sup> To understand my argument, the reader would have to imagine forms of governance and economy parallel to, but detached (delinked) from, the system of ideas, beliefs, emotions,

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<sup>2</sup> Simón Yampara Huarachi, “Andean Cosmovivencia. Living and Living Together in Integral Harmony - Suma Qamaña”, *Bolivian Studies Journal*, 2011, <https://bsj.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/bsj/article/view/42>; Fernando Huanacuni Mamani, *Buen Vivir y Vivir Bien. Filosofía, políticas, estrategias y experiencias regionales*, 2010, [https://www.escrib.net.org/sites/default/files/Libro%20Buen%20Vivir%20y%20Vivir%20Bien\\_0.pdf](https://www.escrib.net.org/sites/default/files/Libro%20Buen%20Vivir%20y%20Vivir%20Bien_0.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Gustavano Esteva and Arturo Escobar, “Post-development@25: on “being stuck” and moving forward, sideways, backward and otherwise.” *Third World Quarterly*, 2017, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01436597.2017.1334545>

<sup>4</sup> Alberto Acosta y Eduardo Gudynas, “El buen vivir o la disolución de la idea de progreso.” 2011, In Eduardo Gudynas web page, <http://www.gudynas.com/publicaciones/articulosacademicos.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Cosmology and cosmo-vision are two Western concepts, one underlining the *logos* and the other the eyes, shattering all other forms of expressing the experience of *Pachamama*, which is the Quechua-Aymara equivalent to the regional Greek *cosmos* and Latin *universum*. Aymara intellectuals talk about ‘cosmo-con-vivencia’, that is, the experience of the cosmos (*vivencia*) as well as living in harmony with the cosmos (*convivencia*, that is, con-viviality). See <http://lareciprocidad.blogspot.com/2009/04/cosmovision-occidental-y-caos-cosmo-con.html>; see also the theoretical and practical work of the Mexican intellectual and activist Gustavo Esteva (2015).

and institutions under which rough and sustainable development have been and are being thought out and implemented.<sup>6</sup>

What the reader should be aware of, today and for the foreseeable future, are the distinct conceptions of living and of being on the planet, and therefore, economies, are not and would not necessarily co-exist peacefully.<sup>7</sup> Sustainable economies are not welcome by States and economic institutions because they cannot be controlled and set examples that there are other ways of living well beyond the illusion of growth and having more, and success and living to work. To make my argument transparent, the reader should also keep in mind that rough and sustainable developments are, in my argument, crossed over by civilizational state politics of de-Westernization (e.g., China, Russia, and Iran delinking from Western institutions and goals) and of re-Westernization (e.g., the efforts of western civilizations [e.d., the US, the EU, and Britain] to maintain the privileges acquired during the past five hundred years of world history).<sup>8</sup> In sum, the world order in the twenty-first century is breaking up the 500 years of Western consolidation, expansion and Westernization. “Development” is on the one hand, critiqued by intellectuals and activists of all persuasions and, on the other, appropriated and re-oriented by the forces of de-Westernization which are and cannot be but a State led undertaking. The current “trade war” between the US and China is one of many signs of the struggle to control development, including the debate on rough and sustainable development.

## 2. The Urge to Change the Terms of the Conversation

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<sup>6</sup> There are many projects underway in this direction of delinking from the managerial control of corporations (and note that, in this case, corporations are the opposition), because it would require that corporations give up their ‘right’ to control and manage ‘natural resources’ and appropriate and expropriate at will. Sustainable economies introduce an option that reduces down to size any economic philosophy based on developmental principles. Sustainable economies are articulated in the vocabulary and philosophy of harmony, reciprocity, and communal (non-hierarchical) organizations.. See for instance the blog *Pachamama Alliance*, available at: <https://www.pachamama.org/blog/reciprocity-in-an-internconnected-world>; see also Richard Missens, 2008; Brenda McLeod, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> The recent ASEAN meeting as well as the G20 have promoted sustainable development agendas towards 2030, following the UN platform. The open question is whether such agendas can be accomplished only through state institutions. For ASEAN see Xinhua, 2016; for the G20, see Yeophantong, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> See my essay on the WPF blog (Mignolo, 2016). See also the essay by Pepe Escobar about the recent meeting of the G20 in China (Escobar, 2016).

Problems could not be solved with the first mindset that created the problems, is one of often quoted Albert Einstein's dictums. And is more than appropriated when the questions are to change the terms of the conversation within the colonial matrix of power (CMP), which is the underlying structure of Western Civilization, and the other is to change the terms of the conversation, which means to think and act detached from the assumptions, discourses, arguments, images, and propaganda that sustain the idea that development is the only game in town and the only alternative is to improve it. For that reason, sustainable economies require changing the terms of the conversation by accepting that development, in either form, has created more problems than solutions. There is ample evidence that this is the case, although there are also abundant narratives underscoring the lighter side of globalization (progress and development in either form) and modernity and hiding its darker side: coloniality.<sup>9</sup>

I am arguing under the assumption that modernity could not exist without coloniality, its darkest and unavoidable side<sup>10</sup> and under the belief that defenders of development only see one side, that of modernity. The conceptual framework, initiated by the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano at the end of the Cold War, founded on the assumption that there is no modernity without coloniality, and that coloniality is the darker side of modernity, is the following schematic narrative:

What is termed globalization, is the culmination of a process that began with the constitution of America and colonial/modern Eurocentered capitalism as the new global power. *One of the fundamental axes of this model of power is the social classification of the world's population around the idea of race*, a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and pervades the more important dimensions of global

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding the first issue, see the study and debates around Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014). Regarding the second, see Jayati Ghosh and C. P. Chandressakhar, 2000. For the second case, see Kishore Mahbubani, 2014.

<sup>10</sup> Since the publication of Anibal Quijano's 'Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality' (1991), translated and reprinted in 2007, a wealth of works have been expanding on and exploring the assumption that 'coloniality is the darker side of Western modernity'. See my own book *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges and Border Thinking* (2000) and my article 'Coloniality: The Darker Side of Modernity' (2007), and also my book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (2011). See also note 7 below.

power, including its specific rationality: Eurocentrism. The racial axis has a colonial origin and character, but it has proven to be more durable and stable than the colonialism in whose matrix it was established. Therefore, the model of power that is globally hegemonic today presupposes...*coloniality*. (2000; italics mine)

Coloniality is a decolonial concept that emerged in the South American Andes and not in Europe. In Europe, it is difficult to sense coloniality. Only modernity is sensed and visible. It is difficult to see that the modern life you are living is possible because of the colonial dimension of modernity. Furthermore, colonialism shall not be confused with coloniality. Coloniality is the underlying logic of all Western and North Atlantic colonialism since 1500. In consequences, coloniality was neither a concept introduced in the social or natural sciences or in the humanities. Neither is it a concept of the North Atlantic (Western Europe and the Anglo-US), but rather a concept created at the edge of the end of the Third World and the emergence of the Global South. Starting from the embodiment of the colonial history that prompted the creation of a concept that brought to the foreground what the narratives of Western modernity has successfully disguised, my argument is consequentially decolonial in the sense that I argue for delinking from the coloniality in which rough and sustainable development are entrapped and relink with sustainable economies that were locally planetary, but not global in the modern sense of the world. Sustainable economies that were dismantled and discredited once the economy of accumulation (that in the eighteenth century was named progress and in the second half of the twentieth century development). Thinking decolonially, the current epistemic (knowledge and belief frame) political (political theory) and economic (political economy) map looks something like this:

a) Rough and sustainable development are two options based on the assumption that transformed the relations politics/society and economy before 1945. Until then the economy was part of the society; after that date society became part of the economy. The current version of the two options, and the concept of development common to both, has its roots in the foundation of Western civilizational cosmology to the benefit of Western states, monarchic until 1750, mutating into bourgeois nation-states since. When nations were expanded, first in the Americas and then in Africa and Asia, and taken up by local actors in

local colonial histories, development began to show its two sides: the promises of salvation and the discontent of dispossessions, neglect, and oppression.

b) When the assumptions that led to the concept of development and modernization were taken up in non-Western civilizational cosmologies grounded on strong States (e.g., in China, Russia, Iran, and other BRICS countries) fighting for de-Westernization, development became a point of political contention in the struggle to control natural resources, on the one hand, and, the need of non-Western civilizational cosmologies to prevent re-Westernization and decide on their own destinies, on the other. Today, sustainable economies are neither aligned with de-Westernization nor with re-Westernization but delinking from both and from rough and sustainable development. The three venues have become, for the time being, co-existing projects. Sustainable economies led by the emerging political society in search of rebuilding the communal (e.g., non-state and non-NGO organizations, such as *Peasant Way* and the *Zapatist* communal organization, Indigenous knowledge and activism). While rough and sustainable development are entangled in civilizational conflicts that evolve around the need of re-Westernization (either in President Obama's globalism or in president Trump's Americanism) to maintain a unipolar world order and to contain de-Westernization which, at its turn, is moving towards the multipolar world order of today where unipolar decisions can no longer be easily made.<sup>11</sup>

Sustainable economies are predicated on the principle that economies should be one aspect of communal (the economic) while developmental (rough, and sustainable) has transformed the social as one aspect of the economy. The communal and the social or societal are two different horizons of meaning. While sustainable economies are founded on principle of pluriversal co-operation and markets to exchange rather than financial markets to speculate, developmental economies are today entangled in the conflict between an emerging multipolar world order (de-Westernization) and the monopolar counter-reformation driven by the re-Westernization attempting to contain de-Westernization. Sustainable

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<sup>11</sup> For the first arguments see Henry Kissinger, 2014; Micklethwait, 2014. For the second, multipolar world order, see Mahbubani, 2008; Froetschel, 2008. For more recent unfolding see, for instance, Economist, 2014; Rachman, 2016. The media's debate on this issue is overwhelming. See, just as examples, Sputnik [International](#), 2016; Yu, 2014. Scholars are also attentive to the mutation from the unipolar to the multipolar world order.

economies (and decoloniality) are neither not-driven projects nor NGO, while developmental economies are state driven projects confronted among themselves in the conflicts between de- and re-Westernization. Once again, the efforts of the US government, financial and military complex to defend their privileges confronting increasing disobedience and departures from what once was the successful designs of Westernization.

### **3. The Problems with Rough Development and the Challenges of Sustainable Development**

What are the problems with rough development and what solutions are sustainable development offering? We first need to clarify the ideas behind development before considering its modalities, whether rough or sustainable.

There is a common belief that development is not merely one option among many, but that it is the unavoidable ontological unfolding of universal history: progress, evolution, and development are all members of the same family and of the same believed to be universal historical ontology. For the believers, these ideas and storytelling do not 'represent' the world, for there is nothing to represent, but they are the world. Decolonially speaking narratives telling evolutionary, progress and developmental stories are 'invention,' world-making narratives, and by making-believe that what these words do is to represent what it is and what happens. All three concepts (progress, evolution, development) are sustained on the belief that progress and development are not options but ontologies and that any departure from "reality" would be considered irrelevant from the perspective of social actors and institutions that take development (progress and evolution) to be the only relevant conception of human destiny. In this scenario, "nature" doesn't count single life energies that make and sustain the living, of which each of us is a guess on earth during a short span of time, has been reduced to an inert object: "nature." Consequently, ecologically present ecological turbulences may very well be how planet Earth (Pachamama for the Andes, Gaia for the Greeks, Slippery Earth for the Mesoamerican Nahuatl) is responding to human abuses of our

common destiny: there will be no human species if the current conditions of life on the planet are altered. Life on the planet would no doubt continue with or without human species on it.<sup>12</sup>

Since development privileges the economic sphere over all other domains of experience (such as religions, nationalities, sexual preferences, skin pigmentations, languages) that make our lives possible<sup>13</sup> and added consequence is the (trans)formation of the senses, beliefs, and sensibilities of the population trapped in the rhetoric that having more is better and being fast and not wasting time is preferable to going slow, having time to think, be creative, and enjoy life. The trap is making many to believe that really the UN chart of sustainable development will improve current ecological turbulences in a few decades. Decolonially speaking, the crisis today is not only economic; it is ethical above all. That is why sustaining development doesn't offer solutions to problems created by development but offers justification to maintain the belief that economic growth brings happiness to all. Today we who are attentive to the current global (dis) order are witnessing the collapse of the EU, the disintegration of the UK and the unsustainability of democratic values in the US, crimes of all order in all places, war-gambits and media-war in the Middle East, destroying Syria as previously Iraq and Libya were destroyed – in the name of ethical values and political fairness. Corruption is another example; the disregard for and disposability of life (human and that of the planet) is another. And we could go on. A large population of the planet knows all of these by now, but knowing and being indifferent and/or feeling impotent is precisely the process of self-dismantling of Western civilization, the fall of the glories attributed to the "rational individual) and the world disorder that it is generating. Furthermore, the industrial and technological revolutions are precluding people from being together and encouraging relations between persons as technological devices take over our lives at the expenses of interpersonal, communal and convivial relations. Cell phones and Ipods are 'increasing

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<sup>12</sup> In South America, the critique of extractivism has been relentless, both by intellectuals and people's organisations. See Acosta, 2009, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Emerging economies have managed to create an urban consumerist middle class that transformed the configuration of the cities (Shanghai, Beijing, Johannesburg, La Paz, Mumbai). Between the billionaire elite, the millionaires that follow, the different layers of middle classes (professionals, services, administration), the working class, and the layers of poverty, from poor to extremely poor, people are substituting human relations with relations to consumer goods and the isolation promoted by communication technology. Intuitively, this description is meaningful in Cairo, Sao Paulo, Mexico, Mumbai, and in all cities with populations over 15 million. For example, see Shaoul, 2011.

*communication*' and 'decreasing *conversations* and *conviviality*', thus transforming people into communicative and competitive machines. These arguments were advanced in the 1970s by Ivan Illich, but were also foreseen by Norbert Wiener in the 1940s.

Illich (1978) calls for a reversal that puts the machine and current technology at the service of the user, re-establishing *conviviality* and the communal, rather than putting the user at the service of machines and technology under the goals of development, whether rough or sustainable. Sustainable economies would require placing the horse in front of the cart, whereas the industrial revolution put the cart before the horse. Society dismantled the communal and prevented that governance shall be based on the principle of ruling while simultaneously obeying and being ruled. The vision and praxis of the communal is beyond the current principles under which operate the defender of development and the drivers of re-Westernization and de-Westernization operate.

#### **4. The UN Goals Revisited**

The previous consideration provided, I hope, a frame to revisit the UN's chart for sustainable development. When US President Harry Truman introduced the idea of development in his presidential address in 1949, the word came with baggage: the concept of underdevelopment (now 'emerging economies'). Rough and sustainable developments are the present chapters in a long history of the Westernization of the world (Latouche, 1989) to which the concept of development strongly contributed, until the emergence of de-Westernization.

For the sake of argument, and keeping in mind the point of origination of the very idea of 'development', let's revisit the principles providing the framework for the 17 goals set up in the sustainable development agenda outlined by the United Nations:

- Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and the planet.
- For sustainable development to be achieved, it is crucial to harmonize three core elements: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected and all are crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies. (UN, 2016)

I foresee no disagreement between the framework and the goals, and I cannot imagine that any one of the almost eight billion people on the planet would oppose these ideas. Who would oppose the fantastic (in the sense of both great and fictitious) resolve stated in point 3 of the declaration?

3. We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities. (UN, 2015)

There is a fundamental set of issues to address before considering the content of each of the 17 goals. The issues I will address are not located in the content but in the terms of the conversations.

To move in this direction let's take a significant detour, from the UN to the Constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador (Bolivia, 2009; Ecuador, 2008). The most recent versions of these constitutions are radically innovative and moving in the same direction. Chapters such as 'The Right of Nature' (*Pachamama*) and several articles illustrate this:

Article 71. Nature, or *Pachamama*, where life is *reproduced* and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes.

Article 250. The territory of the Amazon provinces is part of an ecosystem that is necessary for the environmental balance of the planet. This territory shall constitute a special territorial district, for which there will be integrated planning embodied in a law including social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects, with land use development and planning that ensures the conservation and protection of its ecosystems and the principle of *Sumak Kawsay* (the good way of living).

If I were a member of the team re-rewriting the constitution, I would have suggested to replace “reproduction” with “regeneration.” Life is regeneration, cars are produced and reproduced. Be as it may, the Constitutions of both countries must be read in the context of their double meanings: Western cosmology in the population of European descent (in blood and subjectivity) re-writing the constitution and the cosmology of *Poblaciones Originarias* of the Andean region. When read in the context of the Ecuadorian and Bolivian States government ruled by people of European descent (with the exception of President Evo Morales in the ambiguous situation of holding a position within Western models of governance and of also dwelling in the ancestral knowledge that allows him to invoke his ancestors [not Greek and Roman] when he elaborated on *Pachamama* and *Suma Qamaña* in his discourses) the *significance* of the expression changes, although the *meaning* is the same (Gudynas, 2013). When Aymara intellectuals and activists invoke *Suma Qamaña*, the implications are rooted in ancestral knowledge, while the concepts in the discourses of the population of European descent are rooted in modern legacies (Greece, Rome, Western Europe) in the colonial histories of South/Central America and the Caribbean.

Let me clarify what I am driving at. Simon Yampara, an Aymara scholar and intellectual little known beyond South America, has been researching the meaning of several key Aymara philosophical concepts. He offers some hints about *Pachamama*. First of all, the term cannot be understood in isolation. That is, when one extracts the term from its universe of meaning to insert it into a Western cosmology, the latter captures and integrated the concept to its own frame disavowing the conceptual and vivencial frame that the concept has in Indigenous cosmologies and praxis of living. *Pachamama* in Aymara is related to

indigenous communal organization and the wholeness of land and territory, air and water, day light and night darkness, etc. Greek cosmo-vision (Gaia) and Aymara cosmo-*convivencia* (*Pachamama*) belong to parallel and independent local histories and meaning-world-making that have been entangled in power differential since the Spanish invasion in the South American Andes and the dismantling of existing praxis of living.

*Pachamama* would be badly misunderstood if it is simply translated as Mother Earth or *Gaia*. *Pachamama* is energy, both material and spiritual energy; it is fertility; it is the energy that receives the light of the sun and the water from the rain in order to constantly regenerate life. You began to see the irreducible differences between *Nature and Pachamama*. Thus, *Pachamama* is a word that embodies the complex forces and energies that engender and regenerate life (Yampara, 2005). Decolonial arguments and non-state organizations led by *Pueblos Originarios* provide the groundwork for this thinking and revamping of a group's own ancestral, non-Western knowledge—that is, delinking from Western antecedents grounded in Greece and Rome.<sup>14</sup> In the hypothetical case that the UN would want to promote and enact changing the terms of the conversation, it would be necessary to delink from the very structures that created and sustain the UN. Which at this point is difficult to imagine that that would happen, although nothing prevents bringing this possible scenario forward. At this point, the best the UN can do would be: a) to mediate between re- and de-Westernization; b) to reduce rough development to a zero point and to replace it with sustainable development; and c) to allow sustainable economies to flourish on their own, not to contain the, supporting them if possible without intending to dictated what the officer of the UN think and feel is better for people they do not understand; thus preventing sustainable development to encroach on sustainable economies and prevent them from unfolding. To what extent the UN would be willing and able to move in that direction would depend on the extent that the UN would be able to become a truly inter-state, autonomous institution that would also implement just and equitable solutions to the benefit of the population of the planet.

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<sup>14</sup> Revamping their own civilisational patterns, entangled with Western dominant civilisational patterns in Bolivia, Ecuador, Canada, Chile, Guatemala, the US, New Zealand, and Australia, requires both philosophical rebuilding and educational remapping. One example is Yampara, 2005. Others are Linda T Smith in New Zealand and Leanne B. Simpson in Canada.

## **7. Sustainable Development is a Matter of Inter-State and Inter-Civilizational Arbitration**

The 17 goals listed by the UN are not related, in their description, to the political conflicts and tensions in the emerging multi-polar world order. Declarations made in state summits and in interstate organizations (TPP, ASEAN) cannot be taken literally. They are just pronouncements and perhaps good will. To understand the difficulties involved in carrying on agendas of sustainable development and, of course, sustainable economies, it would be helpful to recall some of the master-lines of the world order since the sixteenth century.

International law has been a fundamental instrument holding together the colonial matrix of power (Angie, 2007). Since it was managed by Western (North Atlantic) imperial states, issues were addressed within the same cosmology. De-westernization disputes the control of the colonial matrix of power and requires changing the content (not the terms) of the conversation.

The processes that I am underscoring were already underway and foreseen some time ago by a scholar of inter-state law, Professor Adda B. Bozeman. The fact that she was born in Latvia to a German family and studied in Paris before moving to the US may explain in part her opening up to the need for a multipolar world order and the philosophy of pluriversality being argued today in decolonial circles. In her book *The Future of Law in a Multicultural World* (1971), she advances an argument that would today be considered an argument for the multi-polar world order dominating and guiding life and death on the planet. Bozeman used the expression 'multicultural' before multiculturalism became daily currency in the US. However, multiculturalism was used differently in the US in late 1980s and 1990s, when 'people of colour' coming to the US made the idea of the 'melting pot' untenable. Bozeman introduced the word, before its time, in inter-state politics.

What she argued in that small and important book is at the heart of what I am arguing here. She outlined the direction that points towards changing the terms of the conversations. I am not arguing that she succeeded in changing the terms of the

conversation; she did not. Yet the argument is all the more significant because, at the time, it was not easy to even think about respecting these co-existing 'cultures' or 'civilizations' rather than imposing our own upon them. Now, in the present, many people are thinking about it, but still the task is difficult. It is difficult to think about it, and it is more difficult (almost impossible at the moment) to advance in this direction. In this respect, Bozeman observes:

Due allowance having been made for misunderstanding as an organic or inevitable aspect of all intercultural relations, it remains to be remarked that on the political level of communication are today in an inexcusable state of disarray, and that the intellectual failure here is clearly that of the scholarly and political elites of the West. For whereas the non-Western societies, non-Communist as well as Communist, *are fast recovering their native voices [...] the Western leaders are holding fast to the illusion that their own vocabularies and values in the sphere of politically significant behaviour and organization are still meaningful in the rest of the world.* (1971: 28–29, italics mine)

This was already the perception in the late sixties, when the book was written, and the early seventies, when it was published. Bozeman's claims were indicative of the need to change the content of the conversation and to regionalize Western vocabulary, values, and visions. But there is more. Bozeman continues:

Acquiescing in short-lived semantic victories and the establishment of pseudo-orders, they are programmatically ignoring a truth richly documented in history and society: namely, *that political system, are in the final analysis, carried and informed by substratal cultural forces* (*ibid.*: 28, italics mine).

In the following chapters, she goes on to analyze the 'substratal forces' of the West, the Islamic Middle East, Africa south of Sahara, India and Indianized Asia, and China. The layout of the map provides a clear understanding that Western substratal forces (that is, the Western traditions upon which the dreams of modernity have been fancifully built) are one among many, not the one that all others have to incorporate, thus erasing their own.

Bozeman's argument cuts through issues that have been argued behind and beyond mainstream media and that have become so evident in the twenty-first century, particularly after the invasion of Afghanistan and the disaster of Iraq.

Development, in both its rough and sustainable versions, cannot be detached from the particular conflicts of today's world order, as I mentioned before. And conflicts in the world order are inextricably linked to international law. International law has been created, in the sixteenth century, to control and manage European interests, as noted above. This was clearly seen and argued by the German thinker Carl Schmitt, and more recently international law (not Schmitt's analysis) is being contested based on the memories and histories of former colonies.<sup>15</sup> Today, Western-managed international law (following the narrative that Schmitt stopped in the early seventies) is at the heart of inter-state conflicts, as recently witnessed in the US's accusations of Russia's violation of international law in Crimea, while the very same international law was used to legitimize US support of the coup-d'état in Ukraine, deposing a democratically elected president, on the name of state-territorial sovereignty.

We are not experiencing a second Cold War. We need a different frame of mind to understand the scope of the present. No one single model or perspective will be enough. My own perspective and argument here come from the history, transformation, and dispute regarding the management of the colonial matrix of power. It is not certain that China, for example, wants to be the only manager; what is clear is that China doesn't want to be managed any more. And this feeling is growing among other countries as well.

The 'vocabulary and values' that Bozeman underlines in the above quotation are key issues in changing both the content of conversations around inter-state relations as well as the terms of the conversation, as we have seen above. The reader may object that it is an illusion to expect that a change of vocabulary would have any effect on politics and economy in the 'real world'. Certainly, a change requires more than words. Changing the terms of the conversation requires discourses, arguments, and, above all, emotions. Reasoning is far from

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<sup>15</sup> See Schmitt, 1952. Among the growing number of scholars questioning the universality of international law, see Angie, 2007; Grovogui, 1996.

being sufficient; it is ‘emotioning’, what we sense rather than the way we express our emotions (e.g., emoting), that guides decisions, which are then explained rationally.

Diplomacy requires not expressing your emotions, not emoting. Diplomacy and inter-state relations are framed by game theory, which is precisely a technology to suppress what one senses. In this regard, changing the terms of the conversation means detaching ourselves from the vocabulary that keeps us trapped: development is not just a word. It invokes a set of beliefs and expectations. To live in harmony and plenitude offers us a different vision and re-orientes our beliefs and hopes: hopes to be able to live in plenitude and harmony instead of expecting growth to make us better because we will have more.

### **8.Sustainable Economy and the Reconstitution of Knowing, Sensing, Believing.**

It was after 1945, in the history of western civilization (that is, since 1500), that all spheres of social organization, values, and subjectivities became part of the economy. Until then, the economy was one aspect (an important one, no doubt, since the invention of America and the formation of the modern/colonial world-system) of all spheres of social organizations. Religion first, and secular civilization later, were the commanding values. Since 1949, development, and thus the economy, became the commanding value. We are still in that trap now.

Gustavo Esteva, the influential Mexican intellectual and activist and one of the leading voices in promoting organizations based on communal values and sustainable economies, has laid down the foundations ‘to regenerate the social fabric of hope’ – that is, regenerating the communal, supported by sustainable economies.<sup>16</sup> His critique of sustainable development after the Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 is radical:

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<sup>16</sup> Here I am loosely following Gustavo Esteva’s vision leading to sustainable economies and living in harmony (Esteva, 2015). Esteva’s project has been endorsed and housed by the Rector of Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City (available at: [http://noticias.ibero.mx/prensa/detalle\\_comunicado.php?id\\_noticia=3127&foto\\_principal=1](http://noticias.ibero.mx/prensa/detalle_comunicado.php?id_noticia=3127&foto_principal=1)). I am thankful to Rolando Vazquez for making me aware of this project.

What seemed the ultimate triumph of environmentalism became resounding failure. The supreme consecration of fashion Brantland also represented the beginning of the end. By adopting official and universally the gospel of "sustainable development" the unbearable contradictions of the term became evident at the same time, in Rio de Janeiro began to manifest new initiatives being taken in the social base and represented a real alternative. (Esteva, 2012, my translation)

The bottom line of the observation is that existing institutions today are ill equipped to solve the problems they have themselves created, promoting civilizational values that cherished the beliefs that more is better, faster is better, being first is better: in sum a civilization founded on the promotion of truth without parenthesis that shall be accepted by the rest of the world and in the conviction that living better is the road to happiness while values of living well are traditional encumbrance to the unfolding of growth and accumulation. Hence the central role of the stock markets now adays. A civilization structured on pyramidal organization in which leading means to invent and contain the enemy instead of leading to harmonize and ruling by obeying rather than ruling to order. Institutional and actors leading the world order, since the sixteenth-hundreds, are interested in defending principles and advancing self-benefits rather than in the well-being of the people and the sustainability of life. What shall be sustained is life not development; hence sustainable economies.

Development is predicated on the assumption that having more (growth) for a given nation-state also means more for the entire population. Pyramidal world order requires that some States (monarchic and/or secular nation-states) have the upper hand on all other States (dynastic or would be nation-states). During 500 years ruling by ordering (diplomatic and/or military) was shared amid Western countries (Italy [the Renaissance], Spain, Portugal, France, UK, Germany, the Netherlands and the US). The political and economic order was supported by theological, scientific and philosophical knowledge (including aesthetic regulation of taste and subjectivity). That is no longer possible: de-Westernization has been changing the content of the conversation by creating strong States that allows their ruler no longer follow the orders and dictates of Western countries (EU and the US). And it is no longer possible either due to the increasing disobedience of the emerging political society

contesting one by one all the values that allowed and legitimated Western Civilization interferences and dictates beyond their own limited rights. The diverse and planetary emergence of the political society are decolonial manifestations of people delinking from modernity/coloniality and re-orienting their praxis of living, sensing and knowing toward communal existence and sustainable economies.

It is in this venue that more recently Anibal Quijano rehearsed the previous decolonial critiques to development that he, and many others in Latin America first and later on in Africa and Asia, were advancing since the so called “dependency theory.”<sup>17</sup> The debate on dependency was initiated by Argentine economist Raul Prebisch in the fifties. It doesn’t have much to do with Gunther Frank, whom no doubt contributed to make the debate known, but has to do with the debate within Latin America since the 1960s.<sup>18</sup> Quijano was involved in those debates.<sup>19</sup> In 1990, at the edge of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, he came up with the concept of coloniality (coloniality of power, colonial matrix of power). Coloniality changed the terms of the conversation and opened up an unprecedented scenario to understand (not just critique) but to understand that development and modernization, and its mutation into neo-liberalism, was the last known chapter of previous global designs to interfere, disturb and manage. By the early 1990s the colonial consequences of development were showing up, discrediting the rhetoric and promised rhetoric that the formula (modernization and development) promised. Sustainable development was an expression introduced by the promoters of development precisely to

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<sup>17</sup> Joseph L. Love, Berta Brambila and Andrea Martínez Baracs: “ Raúl Prebisch y los orígenes de la doctrina del intercambio desigual.” *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 375-405, 1980

<sup>18</sup> For a summary see Vincent Ferraro, "Dependency Theory: An Introduction," in *The Development Economics Reader*, ed. Giorgio Secondi (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 58-64; see also the review article on dependency theory, in 1980, by James L. Dietz, *Journal of Economic Issues* Vol. 14, No. 3 (Sep., 1980), pp. 751-758

<sup>19</sup> Early articles by Anibal Quijano that pre-figures the concept of *coloniality*, could be found in his collected work, *Cuestiones y Horizontes: De la Dependencia Histórico-Estructural a la Colonialidad/Descolonialidad del Poder.* Buenos Aires: Biblioteca CLACSO, 2014.

save the unavoidable negative consequences that its implementation engendered: once again, the rhetoric of modernity can hide the logic of coloniality to a certain extent but not for ever.

That was in the 1990s. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, it was obvious to many, and to Quijano among them, that development has become endorsed by the majority of the nation-states, including States that promoted at the same time a leftist agenda. The rhetoric was no longer development and modernization but development and globalization and development and market democracy. Until the early years of the twenty-first century Quijano was still thinking that socialism was the way out. He was not proposing to revive the communist version of socialism (in the Soviet Union, in the China of Mao Zedong or the Cuba of Fidel Castro). In Peru, the presence of Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path)<sup>20</sup> was enacting extreme versions of Maoism. However, Quijano was still thinking that socialism offered a vision of society that liberalism and economic development were not offering. The fact that the Soviet Union and Mao Zedong 's China no longer exist today, while the North Atlantic developed countries (e.g. G7) and the model of democratic neo-liberalism (a contradiction in terms) do exist, validates and testifies that models that survive are not necessarily models that work. That neoliberalism and Western Civilization are not working and need to be patched areas recognized even by their defenders.

What explains the survival and expansion of the colonial matrix of power, the rhetoric of promises that sustain it and cannot be fulfilled and the increasing disturbing consequences of the current chaos and world disorder? Recalling the early years (late sixties and early seventies) debates on development (rough development at that time), Quijano observes:

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<sup>20</sup> David Scott Palmer, "Rebellion in Rural Peru. The Origins and Evolution of Sendero Luminoso." In *Comparative Politics*, 18/2, 1986, 127-146, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/421840?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/421840?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)

This pattern of power (development) is still globally hegemonic today, but also in its moment of deepest and most serious crisis since its establishment just over five hundred years ago. In these conditions, “Bien Vivir,” today, can only make sense as an alternative social existence, as a decoloniality of power.<sup>21</sup>

The “500 years ago” doesn’t refer to the specific rhetoric of development in the second half of the twentieth century, but to the coloniality of power (or the colonial matrix of power) of which development is one of its chapters. Listening to the Indigenous forethought to delink from the illusion of development (and of coloniality of power), Quijano re-oriented the way out. Instead of socialism he argued for the horizon offered by “Bien Vivir” (to live well) (e.g., to live in plenitude and harmony) that, in his view, displaced and replaced “socialism” deflecting the illusion that “democracy” in collusion with capitalism has no alternative and has to be improved. The orientation towards “Bien Vivir” (as argued in the previous section) contributed to foresee that sustainable economies are the necessary foundation of “Bien Vivir” That is, economies for life rather than life for the economy (rough and sustainable development) is what sustainable economies decolonially proposes.

At this point, it is necessary to bring back the conflicts between de-Westernization and re-Westernization (in full-steam in 2019) explored in chapters **xxxx** and **xxx** in association with sustainable development and sustainable economies. The limits of rough and sustainable development are manifested in the conflicts between the politics of de-Westernization (see “interviews” in this volume) that closes the 500-year cycle of Westernization. During that period, Western European States (monarchic/theological and bourgeois/secular) fought among themselves, at the same time, they expanded and controlled the rest of the planet. The rhetoric was, first, conversion of the nonbelievers or not knowing the Christian God; then progress and civilization, then development and

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<sup>21</sup> *Viento Sur*, 122, Mayo 2012, 46-56,  
[https://www.vientosur.info/IMG/pdf/VS122\\_A\\_QUIJANO\\_BIENVIVIR---.pdf](https://www.vientosur.info/IMG/pdf/VS122_A_QUIJANO_BIENVIVIR---.pdf)

modernization and lately development and globalization. The modifier “sustainable” was introduced, as also already mentioned, in the *Brundland Report* in 1987, indicating that development, to that point rough development, was driven many aspects of life in the planet (including the human species) to an unsustainable future.

Until 2000 the G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States) maintained Western hegemony, political and economic, but mainly epistemic through higher education in the natural sciences, social sciences, the humanities, art and aesthetic regulation as well as in the professional schools. There is an implicit complicity between epistemology, aesthetics, political theory and political economy. What is done in the sphere of the content (politic, economy, knowledge, art) etc. is grounded in the sphere of the conceptualization of what has been done and it is being done. The rhetoric of modernity is the legitimization of its terms of the conversation, regulating coloniality of knowledge that decolonial thinking aims to change. Changing the terms of the conversation means to delink first and to establish secondly the rule of decolonial games rather than games regulated by modernity/coloniality.

All epistemic, economic and political decisions were in the hands of the predecessor of the G7. That is, in the hands of institutions and actors managing the colonial matrix of power. However, by 2000, the G5 permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation) began to dissent in crucial global issues. On many occasions China and Russia were dissident voting members preventing any attempt of unilateral decisions in the global order. Today, political dissidence of Russia and China (as well as Iran not being a member) are expressed and manifested beyond the Security Council, in the economic and military terrain as well but increasingly the epistemic domain and in their repercussions in the sensibilities and emotions of the people. All of which presupposes the introduction of discursive arguments that are changing in particular ways the content of the conversations that sustained and made possible 500 years of Westernization. <sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Serge Latouche, *op.cit.*

Changes in the content of and disputes in the colonial matrix of power amid Western States were and are family feuds since all of them belong to the same cosmology and to the same system of belief. When China, Russia and Iran (and also India and Turkey although less decisive in their de-Western orientations) changes the term of the conversation, the changes are introduced from cosmologies alien to Western ones. That is precisely the conflict today. However, some, but not all, terms of the conversations are accepted. Development is not being questioned although sustainable development has been endorsed by de-Westernizing states while democracy Western style is called into question. Which doesn't mean of course that rejecting democracy implies automatically endorsing totalitarianism. It means that the goals that democracy defends and the horizon it announces, could be achieved by other means. Beyond that, democracy has been used and implemented by Western states to advance global designs. The invasion of Iraq, the failed attempt to demote Al-Assad, the improbable destitution of Maduro in Venezuela: the slogans of the "Yellow Revolution" in Hong Kong and the down play of the Yellow Vest in France) are all clear signs that democracy could be an effective tool of advancing imperial agendas. For that reason, de-Westernization rejects the Western model for re-Westernizing democracy that that end being rhetoric to contain de-Westernization.

Sustainable economies depart from development and democracy: *Bien Vivir* (Sumak Kawsay) presupposes sustainable economies and sustainable economies presupposes living in harmony and plenitude instead of living better and having more in a society that presupposes competition and denies democracy in praxis, albeit, it is constantly repeating in saying. Epistemic/aesthetic reconstitution means just that: that knowledge and ways of knowing and sensing and emotioning would motivate behaviors in the same way that the desire of more implanted in modern subjects motivates him or her living to work and working to have more and get ahead. Epistemic/aesthetic reconstitution starts by delinking from the already constituted (what it is now political theory grounded on Greek thinkers and political economy ground in French's (the Physiocrats) and Scottish's thinkers (Smith) and English (Ricardo) political economists). And they demand to aesthetic reconstitution that presuppose delinking from the already constituted (Kant and Hegel, late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and their predecessors Aristotle and Longino) and redirecting the praxis of living

towards decolonial horizons. The foundations are already there, in the legacy of decolonial thinkers during the twentieth century (Gandhi, Fanon, Cabral, Biko). Although at that time the horizon was the foundation of the nation-state managed by the native population, and the nation-state was a two edged sword, there is more at work than meets the eye and that has to be re-told in the process of epistemic/aesthetic reconstitution. And there is much to be learned from Indigenous thinkers, theorists and activists (Vine Deloria, Jr, Linda T. Smith, Leanne Simpson, Glenn Coulthard, Fernando Huanacuni Mamani). And there is much to learn from the histories, memories, praxis of living of all culture and civilization before those memories, languages and praxis of living where devalued and sometimes demonized by the rhetoric of modernity in the process of activating the logic of coloniality.

The foundations of sustainable economies have already their ground in derogated memories and praxis of living downgraded during the European that survived co-existing and parallels to Western modernity/coloniality as well as the wealth of non-Western praxis of living and knowing in which the economy is something taken for granted rather than elevated to the main role, function, and expectations of and in life. All of which means neither going back to the pass nor to revive the praxis of living that are equivalent to Western modernity bent to domination. But we know, for example, that none of the existing civilizations and cultures before the advent of Western modernity, were neither based on a disrespect for non-human life nor in a technology that requires the exploitation of natural resources to fill the planet with mechanical objects and processed food. Sustainable economies is a concept that places us, already, on a different path of knowing and sensing that does not intend to supersede development (e.g., post-development) but delink from its rough and sustainable versions.

## **9. CLOSING REMARKS**

Sustainable economies are the emerging conceptualization of economies that are not founded on the idea of development, on the idea of growth and on the idea of accumulation, but on the idea of living in harmony and plenitude. Democracy is not a solution, even less *the* solution. The solutions are many and are in the hands of States, whenever possible, and the

political society independently of State politics, to delink from both rough and sustainable economies and from both de-Westernization and re-Westernization.

I would like to give the last word to Anibal Quijano (1928-2018) honoring celebrating his decolonial vision:

[...] the “indigenized” populations under colonial domination, first in “America” under Iberia, and later throughout the world under “Western Europe”, have not only shared in common, universally, the perverse forms of domination / exploitation imposed with the global coloniality of power. Also, paradoxically but effectively, in the resistance against them the former dominated have come to share common historical aspirations against domination, exploitation, discrimination: the social equality of heterogeneous individuals, the freedom of thought and expression of all those individuals, the equal redistribution of resources, as well as equal control of all of them, over all central areas of social existence.

For all that, in the historical "indigeneity" of the population victims of the global coloniality of power, it not only encourages the inheritance of the past, but all the learning of the historical resistance of such a long term. We are, therefore, walking in the emergence of a new historical, historical / structurally heterogeneous identity like all the others, but whose development could produce a new social existence freed from domination / exploitation / violence. In other words, the new horizon of historical meaning emerges with all its historical/ structural heterogeneity. In that perspective, the proposal of *Bien Vivir* is, necessarily, an open historical question that needs to be continually investigated, debated and practiced. <sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Anibal Quijano, *op.cit.*, pp. 55-56

Sustainable economies are being and shall be enacted and thought out with our backs to sustainable development and its supporting institutions and governance. At this point, sustainable economies will be accepted neither by globalizers nor by nationalists. The interstate system and the colonial matrix of power that glue it together legally, militarily, and institutionally, all of legitimized by institutional knowledges and ways of knowing and sensing. Not that 100% of the planet population agrees and accepts the current state of affairs, but protests are relatively efficient at this point because they are executed within the epistemic/aesthetic constitution. They address the contents of the system but do not have the force of de-Western oriented states (China, Russia, Iran at this point and to a certain extent India and Turkey). Nevertheless, next to the struggle of Indigenous population around the world reclaiming their land, epistemic/aesthetic reconstitution is a struggle beyond ethnicity and sexual classification: it is a task that reconnects human existence to life and to earth, detaching ourselves from the world of man-made-objects, reconnects ourselves with the flows of life, reconnects ourselves with the necessary *vincularidad*—weaving communal praxis of living held up by sustainable economies.

The bottom line is that existing institutions are ill equipped to solve the problems caused by the current civilizational vision of ‘more is better’, ‘faster is better’, and the idea that the goals are pyramidal – ‘leading to contain’ – instead of horizontal – ‘multipolar leadership to harmonize’. To produce and consume more requires a competitive way of living: more for me (whether ‘me’ is an individual, an institution, or a nation-state) and disregard for the consequences. Development is predicated on the assumption that more for a given nation-state also means more for the entire population.

The ideas that 'more is better' and 'faster is better' promote competition and conflict rather than cooperation and working together; they engender humiliations (at all levels, from civil society to governments), and humiliations generate anger. Humiliation has created, and will continue to create, inequalities and violence. Not too many people like to do what other people want them to do. Sustainable development, if it could be implemented, could solve the ecological problem of sustainability, but it cannot solve most of the problems existing today, such as inequalities, interstate conflicts, migrations, and refugees.

The end of this unipolar world also means that conflicts and alliances are taking place at two levels: a) the level of the inter-state system, with all its financial, military, and corporate implications (e.g., de-Westernization and re-Westernization); and b) the level of emerging political society, organizing itself by delinking from level a). Sustainable development is being played at level a), with manifested oppositions from civil and political society. Sustainable economies are being played at level b), with opposition from the actors of level. Furthermore, sustainable development shares with rough development the goals of development itself. And it shares with sustainable economies concerns over the drastic and dramatic consequences of rough development. In their turn, sustainable economies share with sustainable development the concern with 'sustainability', while they totally reject the idea of 'development'.

This is the bottom line: no one has the right to force another person *not* to believe and act on meritocratic values and success drives. Inversely, no one *can* force another person to accept meritocratic values and success drives. Billions of people do not care for meritocracy and success, but want to live in harmony, plenitude, and caring. Sustainable development cannot prevent meritocracy, success, and accumulation – that is, all the values that destroy harmony, plenitude, and caring. Sustainable economies are the economies that make it possible to live in harmony, plenitude, and caring. However, not everyone would like to accept those values. And that would be fine, so long as persons and institutions operating on meritocracy and success and ruling the world order do not prevent people from living the way they want to and not in the way that state, financial, and economic institutions (and those

ruling them) want people to live.<sup>24</sup> Here in a nutshell is what I mean by changing the terms of the conversation.

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