

Good Life between *Buen Vivir* and *Sumak Kawsay* – Indicators of a political concept in Ecuador

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Short abstract:

Sumak Kawsay, *Buen Vivir* or Good Live has experienced much attention since its integration as a leading principle of the State into the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 and -as *Suma Qamaña*- into the Bolivian one of 2009. In this context it was understood as an alternative to the capitalist understandings of development as growth. By this, it acquired a role as a semi-utopian alternative within the discourse of an ecologist left that is more interested in looking for connections and local tradition of this concept in order to diffuse it that to try a concrete description of the concept of Good Life. Still, the Good Life counts with a series of more or less concrete indicators, both in the definition of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement -the actor that introduced this concept in Ecuador- and the one of the government, that can allow an impression of how the construction of a society or a State of Good Live could work.

Long abstract:

Sumak Kawsay, *Buen Vivir* or Good Live has experienced much attention since its integration as a leading principle of the State into the Ecuadorian Constitution of 2008 and -as *Suma Qamaña*- into the Bolivian one of 2009. In this context it was understood as an alternative to the capitalist understandings of development as growth. By this, it acquired a role as a semi-utopian alternative within the discourse of an ecologist left that is more interested in looking for connections and local tradition of this concept in order to diffuse it that to try a concrete description of the concept of Good Life. Still, the Good Life counts with a series of more or less concrete indicators, both in the definition of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement -the actor that introduced this concept in Ecuador- and the one of the government, that can allow an impression of how the construction of a society or a State of Good Live could work.

This presentation tries to find out possible indicators of *Sumak Kawsay* in the definition of the indigenous movement and the Ecuadorian government, based on a discourse analysis of the publication on this concept. The comparison between the different interpretations of Good Life through certain indicators can allow not only to understand the differences between the different groups that defend Good Life, but also can be the first step to a

conceptual foundation for a definition of Good Life that works for a practical implementation.

The central indicators of Good Life in the discourse of the indigenous movement are:

1. *Sumak Kawsay* means not to use more than what is necessary for life. By this, nature and society, community and individual have time and space to regenerate.
2. *Sumak Kawsay* means to adapt oneself to environment using the teachings and wisdom of ancestors.
3. *Sumak Kawsay* is a post-capitalist proposal that wants to put economy at the service of humankind.
4. *Sumak Kawsay* means reciprocity.
5. *Sumak Kawsay* is the re-valoration and re-appropriation of traditional knowledge in an intercultural space of mutual respect.
6. *Sumak Kawsay* is necessarily local and communitarian, deeply rooted in the customs of the peoples that live it. That is why a system of autonomies is needed that allows the Good Life to develop and prosper.

Obviously, those points have hardly anything to do with the State interpretation of Good Life as the planning institution SENPLADES uses it. For the State questions of economic diversification and State development are of higher interest – and it has an interest in maintaining centralization.