## Original Article

# Latin American Post-Neoliberal Development Thinking: The Bolivian 'Turn' Toward *Suma Qamaña**

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*This article has been developed from a paper originally presented at the EADI-DSA 2011 Annual Conference: 'Rethinking Development in an Age of Scarcity and Uncertainty', York, 19–22 September 2011.

**Abstract** One of the most innovative elements of the current Latin American post-neoliberal context is the attempt to rethink development from the point of view of indigenous cosmovisions. In the Andean region, this dynamic is exemplified by the crystallization of the *Suma Qamaña* or Living Well paradigm. I want to focus here specifically on the case of Bolivia, taking as my frame of reference the most comprehensive and systematic statement of the Movement Toward Socialism's (MAS) vision of development, namely, the National Development Plan (PND). An important ambiguity, I want to argue in this article, undergirds the PND. The PND elucidates *Suma Qamaña* from both alternative development and post-development perspectives. That is, the concept is developed as an alternative to liberal capitalism, on one hand, and as the more radical, postcolonial critique of modernity, on the other.

L'un des aspects les plus novateurs du contexte post-néolibéral qui prévaut actuellement en Amérique latine est la tentative de repenser le développement à travers les cosmovisions amérindiennes. Dans la région andine cette dynamique se manifeste par la cristallisation du paradigme du *Suma Qamaña* ou du Bien-Vivre. Je souhaite me concentrer ici sur le cas de la Bolivie, en prenant comme cadre de référence l'énoncé le plus complet et systématique de la vision de développement adoptée par le Mouvement vers le Socialisme (MAS), à savoir le Plan National de Développement (PND). Je cherche à montrer dans cet article qu'une ambiguïté importante sous-tend le PND. Le PND offre une clarification du concept de *Suma Qamaña* à travers les perspectives tant du développement alternatif que du post-développement. Ainsi, le concept se développe comme une alternative au capitalisme libéral, d'une part, et comme la critique postcoloniale plus radicale de la modernité, de l'autre.

*European Journal of Development Research* advance online publication, 15 November 2012; doi:10.1057/ejdr.2012.41; corrected online 22 November 2012

**Keywords:** Bolivia; Suma Qamaña; alternative development; post development

## Introduction

The history of Latin American thought can be understood as a back-and-forth between outward-looking modernizing tendencies and inward-looking identitarian ruptures (Devés Valdés, 2000–2004). Applying this heuristic device to the discourse on development, it could be said that the 'conventional orthodoxy' that underpinned the age of the Washington Consensus was a modernizing moment, whereas the current post-neoliberal development thinking that has come to the fore in and through the 'turn to the left' is an

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identitarian one. The Latin American imaginary that generated, for instance, Dependency Theory and Magical Realism, seems to be at work again.

One of the most innovative elements of the current Latin American post-neoliberal context is the attempt to rethink development from the point of view of indigenous cosmovisions. In the Andean region, this dynamic is exemplified by the crystallization of the *Suma Qamaña* or Living Well paradigm. Bolivia and Ecuador are a case in point. Both the governments of Evo Morales and Rafael Correa have turned to this indigenous paradigm in order to orient and legitimate their respective development projects. I want to focus here specifically on the case of Bolivia, taking as my frame of reference the most comprehensive and systematic statement of the Movement Toward Socialism's (MAS) vision of development, namely, the National Development Plan (PND), which was first made public in June 2006 and was reaffirmed in September 2009 as the basic orientation of Morales's second term (MPD, 2007).

Are *Suma Qamaña* and the PND compatible or fundamentally antagonistic? Can the MAS government's turn to indigenous forms of life provide a corrective to the socialist and (neo)liberal development projects that have been carried out by the modern state? Or rather, does this turn undermine the emancipatory potential of the indigenous movements that have come to the fore in the region in the last decade? Indeed, does the PND's incorporation of the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm represent a new development model, or is it an expression of ideology, the instrumentalization of indigenous worldviews?

The turn to indigenous cosmovisions transpire in and through another of the elements that constitutes the post-neoliberal Latin American context, namely, the coming to the fore of non-state actors. By imagining 'other possible worlds', social movements denaturalize and decenter the conventional ways of thinking about development that had been 'carried' by hegemonic state actors (Escobar, 2010).

While the growing sway of non-state actors has undoubtedly transformed the region, I take the view here that the true watershed of Latin American post-neoliberal development thinking has been the attempt by national governments to institutionalize the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm. It would be vulgar and simplistic to reduce this dynamic to the strategic instrumentalization of this paradigm by the state. What marks the 'turn to the left' is that national governments are taking 'seriously' the demands of indianist and alter-globalization movements. The perspective I want to develop here, then, is more about how the state grapples with the paradoxes of the 'iron cage' than about the 'world-rejecting' potential of non-state actors. It is about how the state balances the emancipatory and transformative potential of *Suma Qamaña* with the imperatives of creating social coherence and maintaining social order. Indeed, it is about how governments attempt to give systemic – political, judicial, economic – expression to this paradigm. Bolivia exemplifies this dilemma.

These reflections, it needs to be stated at the outset, are oriented by development ethics. Succinctly, it could be said that the aim of development ethics is to assess the ends and means of development (Crocker, 1991, p. 457). First it is asked: How does a given development project define the human good? What moral sources, traditions and worldviews does it draw on to elucidate this definition? And then: What institutional arrangements does the development project propose to achieve this end? Are the means consistent with each other? Are they consistent with the end?

Applying this method of inquiry to the MAS's engagement with the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm will provide a much-needed analysis of the normative issues underpinning Latin American post-neoliberal development thinking, like, for example, the issue I just alluded to concerning the compatibility between national development plans initiated by the state and indigenous paradigms that are brought forth principally by agonistic social

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**Table 1:** Bolivia's PND: General structure

| | |
|---|---|
| *End* | |
| Chapter One | Appropriation of *Suma Qamaña* |
| *Means* | |
| Chapter Two | Distributive Strategy |
| Chapter Three | Political Strategy |
| Chapter Four | Economic Strategy |
| Chapter Five | International Relations Strategy |

movements. The insights gathered through this analysis, moreover, can in turn contribute to the self-understanding of development ethics, a field whose trajectory has closely followed the genealogy of the study of development. From this perspective, the turn to *Suma Qamaña* by national governments in the Andean region is taken to be the most recent 'paradigm shift' in the discourse on development, one that is situated betwixt and between the two perspectives, which, as we shall immediately see, filled the space left by the so-called 'classical' theories, namely, the alternative and post-development perspectives.

The logic of end and means provides the general structure for the five main chapters of the PND. The first chapter redefines the end of development through an appropriation of *Suma Qamaña*. The next four chapters delineate the four means for achieving this new conception of the human good. Each mean consists of a strategy aimed at transforming institutional arrangements: namely, a distributive strategy – 'Dignified Bolivia'; a political strategy – 'Democratic Bolivia'; an economic strategy – 'Productive Bolivia'; and an international relations strategy – 'Sovereign Bolivia' (Table 1).

An important ambiguity, I want to argue in this article, undergirds the PND. Chapter One elucidates *Suma Qamaña* from both alternative development and post-development perspectives. That is, the concept is developed as an alternative to liberal capitalism, and as the more radical, postcolonial critique of modernity; as the 'return' of the state, and as the empowerment of social movements and indigenous communities. From the first perspective, the problem is (neo)liberal capitalism. For the second perspective, the problem is 'modernity'. From the former, Living Well implies pushing beyond the neoliberal age of the 1990s. From the latter, it implies pushing beyond the colonial republican period of the nineteenth century.

As background, before engaging this ambiguity, I will elucidate the contested nature of the discourse on *Suma Qamaña* and then evoke the particularity of the Bolivian context.

## *Suma Qamaña*: A Contested Notion

One of the most innovative elements of the current Latin American post-neoliberal context is the attempt to rethink development from the point of view of indigenous cosmovisions and forms of life. In the Andean region, this dynamic is exemplified by the crystallization of the *Suma Qamaña* or *Sumak Kawsay* paradigm. Whereas the Aymara nomenclature, *Suma Qamaña*, tends to be used in Bolivia, the analogous Quechuan construction, *Sumak Kawsay*, tends to be used in Ecuador. The term can be rendered into Spanish as '*vivir bien*' and '*buen vivir*', respectively – and I translate here as 'living well'.

As a discourse on development, *Suma Qamaña* is a highly contested notion. It is futile to attempt to work through the different positions and perspectives that have been

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espoused during the last couple of years. They are far too numerous and heterogeneous. I propose rather to focus on two debates that undergird the literature – two debates that have structured the discourse on *Suma Qamaña* and which all discussions of this paradigm explicitly or implicitly take part in.

The first and more fundamental debate gravitates around the very legitimacy of *Suma Qamaña* as a development discourse. On the one side, there are those like Simón Yampara (Saavedra, 2010) and Fernando Huanacuni Mamani (2010) that argue that the retrieval of the nomenclature is an authentic expression of an indigenous emancipatory project. This position stands upon two premises. First, that the nomenclature can be etymologically and historically traced back to something like '*vida en plenitude*' or 'life in abundance', the cosmovision that oriented the life of ancient Andean cultures. And, second, that this cosmovision can be retrieved and operationalized so as to provide the organizing principles for a contemporary society not satisfied with the basic coordinates of western Enlightenment-Modernity.

The characteristics that constitute 'life in abundance' described by proponents of this position can be systematized into three interrelated principles. First, a *relational ontology*: Living well implies being in harmony and equilibrium with the cycles of Mother Earth (*Pachamama*), the cosmos, life. This relational ontology is opposed to the Western – Abrahamic monotheistic – creationist horizon that has tended to take the form of an ontological – Cartesian – dualism. Second, a *communitarian understanding of social life*: Society is inherently relational, emerging from the primordial relationship with 'all things that form our existence'. From this second principle is derived the primacy of the *ayllus* and *markas* – the basic social units of Andean societies – over the individual. This understanding of the social is opposed to the prevailing Western atomistic-individualistic conception of social life. And third, a *metaphysical pluralism*: Life in plenitude brings forth the many truths of the multiverse, as opposed to the single truth of the universe. This pluralism grounds the diversity of languages, dance, music, costumes of the peoples of the *Abya Yala* (the Americas). Metaphysical pluralism is understood here in opposition to the homogenizing dynamics of Western modernity.

There are, however, those that are skeptical about this account of *Suma Qamaña*. Alison Spedding Pallet, for example, has critiqued the fallacious 'return to origins' of the position expounded by Yampara and Huanacuni Mamani, taking issue with its lack of ethnographic foundations (2010). These individuals, she has argued, have failed to demonstrate how the constituting traits of the paradigm are actually grounded and expressed in the everyday life of this or that indigenous community. This reification, moreover, is in cahoots with a spurious romanticism that perpetuates the myth of the 'noble savage'.

'Life in abundance' describes, diachronically, pre-industrial societies of the Andean cultures before western colonialism, and, synchronically, the rural life of the highlands before the migratory exodus to urban centers. Thus elucidated, this cosmovision, maintains Spelling Pallet, manifests problematic neo-luddite overtones to the extent that it normatively excludes all technological advances of the industrial and information technology revolutions. Such approaches to *Suma Qamaña*, moreover, have failed to engage the problem of the paradigm's operationalization. How is 'life in abundance' – assuming it did or does exist – to be worked into the (post-) industrial societies of the twenty-first century? These issues need to be addressed from the perspective of public policy. Indicators need to be developed to measure 'life in abundance', for example. These practical issues, Spelling Pallet believes, will undermine the reification of *Suma Qamaña* (2010).

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For Spedding Pallet, the discourse on *Suma Qamaña* that has come to the fore in the Andean region is an intellectual chimera, an invention of 'urban intellectuals'. The paradigm functions as a sort of New Age spiritualism. She does not, however, seek to annihilate the concept. Her aim rather is to engage in what can be called the 'critique of ideology', that is, she aims to strip away the concept's mystifying elements, while salvaging its emancipatory potential. This can only be done, however, when we recognize *Suma Qamaña* to be what it is, namely, an interested political project that is dialectically engaged with modern social life.

François Houtart seems to be in agreement here with Spelling Pallet. While seeing *Suma Qamaña* as an important moment in the struggle of the peoples of the Americas, he warns against 'falling captive to an indigenist fundamentalism'. 'Amerindian culture', he argues, 'is situated in space and time. Indeed, ultimate values such as Living Well and the *Pachamama* are expressed through a particular culture in a particular historical period' (2010, pp. 27–28). For Houtart, just like with Enlightenment-Modernity, we need to historicize and undercut the pretension to universality of *Suma Qamaña*. And furthermore, discussions of the indigenous paradigm need to take into consideration the positive aspects of the Enlightenment. Not to do so would simply be dogmatic. 'We cannot just reject the contributions made by Western culture such as the Enlightenment, which though has produced distortions like, for example, the capitalist economic system, it has nevertheless made contributions to world culture and history' (p. 28). Undoubtedly, Houtart has in mind here the idea of the sanctity of the individual human person and the corollary right of self-determination, which have dialectically been deployed against the obverse side of the Enlightenment in the form of (post-)colonial struggles, and specifically the struggle for indigenous rights.

The second debate that undergirds the literature on *Suma Qamaña* has to with the question concerning this concept's compatibility with Enlightenment-Modernity. This issue already lurked behind the first debate I just analyzed. On one hand, with Yampara and Huanacuni Mamani, it seems plausible that if *Suma Qamaña* is to have any normative leverage as an authentic, and, perhaps even radical, 'turn' toward indigenous forms of life, it needs to be developed in contradistinction to the Western worldview that was imposed upon the Amerindian cultures during the colonial and republican periods. On the other, with Spedding Pallet and Houtart, it seems naïve and quixotic to attempt to abstract *Suma Qamaña* out of a dialectical engagement with the Western worldview that has to a large degree constituted our late-modern societies; and, in like fashion, it seems a contradiction and a form of fundamentalism to attempt to replace Western universality with an indigenous universality.

The seeming incompatibility of these two positions stems, I maintain, from the way the literature vaguely deploys terms such as 'Western worldview', 'Modernity', 'Enlightenment' and the like. A close look at the scholarship makes evident, however, that the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm is directed not against Enlightenment-Modernity in general, but against a certain – some would argue the dominant – tradition of the Western worldview. This is the tradition that crystallizes in and through positivism, and which is characterized by four interlocking elements: economic reductionism; a teleological conception of progress; atomistic individualism; and instrumental rationality.

Now, as it is known, from the very beginning voices have emerged from within the discourse on Western Modernity taking issue with this dominant tradition. Romanticism, critical theory, communitarianism and poststructuralism are just some examples. And it is with these voices that a certain dialogue has taken place. It is from these perspectives that a certain convergence can be said to exist between *Suma Qamaña* and Western Enlightenment-Modernity. Indeed, the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm has been elucidated by drawing

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on these perspectives. What voices and perspectives ought to be emphasized? This is what constitutes the second debate, which I will briefly unravel.

Two positions can be identified concerning how *Suma Qamaña* engages and draws on Enlightenment-Modernity. I have already mentioned these perspectives at the outset. *Suma Qamaña*, on one hand, as an attempt to rethink development from an alternative development perspective, and, on the other, as a de-colonial rupture with the very concept of development. Both of these perspectives, I can now add, take issue with the economic reductionism, teleological conception of progress, atomistic individualism and instrumental rationality underpinning the 'classical' theories of development, and most notably the 'stages of growth' paradigm, the Keynesian- and Marxian-oriented dependency theories, and the free-market (neo)liberalism of Mont Pèlerin and the Washington Consensus. Yet each perspective engages the discourse of development drawing on a different relationship with Enlightenment-Modernity.

The first perspective seeks alternatives to the dominant modernity of *Homo Oeconomicus* through a shift from economic growth to human functioning, from commodities to capabilities, as exemplified by the capabilities approach of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, and operationalized through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP)'s human development index (1990). 'If development is seen as the expansion of the capability of people to do the things they have reason to value and choose, writes Sen, the glorification of human beings as "instruments" of economic development cannot really be adequate' (1997, p. 13). Against postmodern relativism and the Rawlsian minimalist procedural conception of justice, the alternative development perspective marshals an Aristotelian 'thick theory of the good' that meets the tests of ethical objectivity and cultural difference. 'I think, maintains Nussbaum, we can produce an account of [the] necessary elements of truly human functioning that commands a broad cross-cultural consensus, a list that can be endorsed for political purposes by people who otherwise have very different views of what a complete good life for a human being would be' (2002, p. 132).

Rather than seeking development alternatives, the second perspective seeks an alternative to development. It emerges in and through the condition of postmodernity and post-coloniality. The post-development perspective represents the disenchantment with the meta-narrative of development. 'The deconstruction of development', writes Arturo Escobar, 'led post-structuralists in particular to postulate the possibility of a "post-development era". For some, this generally meant an era in which development would no longer be the central organizing principle of social life' (2006, p. 448). For post-developmentalism, the problem thus goes beyond the hegemonic and homogenizing dynamics of economic reductionism and instrumental rationality. The problem has to do rather with the pretension to universality of Western cultural forms of life. This perspective gains leverage in and through the coming to the fore of non-state actors under the late-/postmodern conditions of post-Westaphalian, disaggregated sovereignty (Falk, 2002; Slaughter, 2004). Social movements are now understood as 'carriers' of a plurality of particular conceptions of social life that denaturalize the 'universality' of the development paradigm carried principally by the technocratic state, although increasingly in cahoots with business and certain civil society actors.

## The Bolivian Context: MAS and PND

The Bolivian context exemplifies the 'paradoxical times' that, according to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, has characterized Latin American societies since the end of the last

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millennium (2007). There exist, argues the Portuguese legal scholar, contradictory sentiments in the region: namely, the sentiment of urgency that pushes us to want to do everything in the short term; and the civilizational sentiment that what is needed are long-term transformations. On one hand, there is a sentiment of urgency to respond to the 'creative destruction' of capitalism that is generating the ecological crisis and the growing social inequalities. On the other hand, there is an almost diametrically opposed sentiment that suggests that what is needed in the region are long-term – civilizational – transformations. That is, that it is not possible to change everything today; that it does not suffice simply to take power. What is needed is to rethink the modern state, how we relate to nature, how we relate to one another. Indeed, what is needed is a rethinking of the basic coordinates of modernity (Sousa Santos, 2007, pp. 25–27).

Bolivia's current Vice President, Alvaro García Linera, points to two types of contradictions that underline what he refers to as the 'Process of Change' that crystallizes with the election of Morales (2011, p. 14). On one hand, there are the contradictions of 'long duration' that have been generated by centuries of the dynamics of colonialism. This type of contradiction unfolds, for example, as the tension between the mono-cultural state and a pluri-national society, between the centralization of politics and the decentralization of social life. On the other hand, there are the contradictions of 'short duration' that come to the fore specifically during the neoliberal period. This second type of contradiction unfolds, for example, as the tensions between the private and public ownership of natural resources, between the market and the state, between the monopolization of politics by economic elites and the democratization of public policies by the different popular sectors of society.

For her part, the Argentinian sociologist, Maristella Svampa, evokes the 'ambivalent character of the current Latin American transition', and specifically the 'multiple faces of Bolivia' (2007 and 2010). She identifies four politico-ideological matrices that have come to the fore in the region: namely, the communitarian indigenous, the popular-national, the classical or traditional leftist, and the 'new' autonomist narrative. These matrices play themselves out across different time frames: a 'long memory' that corresponds to the process of colonization; a 'medium memory' that corresponds to the popular-national state of the 1950s; and a 'short memory' that corresponds to the anti-neoliberal struggles of the new millennium.

This critical juncture described by Sousa Santos' opposing sentiments, García Linera's two types of contradictions, and Svampa's heterogeneous matrices and frames of reference sketch in broad strokes the socio-historical conditions in and through which the discourse on *Suma Qamaña* has crystallized. These juxtaposed social forces both bring forth and are oriented by the two positions identified in the previous section regarding the way in which *Suma Qamaña* engages Enlightenment-Modernity. 'The urgency for short-term change', the 'contradictions of long duration' and 'long memory' are the socio-historical analogs to the alternative modernity perspective, whereas the 'civilizational transformations', 'contradictions of long duration' and 'long memory' are the socio-historical analogs of the post-development perspective.

These affinities play themselves out in and through the MAS. This movement, which was largely responsible for propelling Morales to office and has been the vehicle by which he has exerted power, instantiates the socio-historical paradoxes and antagonisms inherent to the Latin American post-neoliberal context. The MAS has intrigued scholars when it emerged in 1995 out of the watershed congress of peasant organizations, the Asamblea por la Soberanía de los Pueblos (ASP; Assembly for the Sovereignty of the People), and then

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participated in the municipal elections of 1999 (Harnecker and Fuentes, 2008). I want to briefly consider here two sets of tensions that characterize the MAS. These tensions, I argue, are central for understanding the ambiguity that undergirds the PND. The first is the ideological tension between Marxist and Indianist perspectives. The second is the institutional tension between the imperatives of a social movement and the imperatives of a political party.

The MAS is principally a rural organization with roots in mining syndicalism and the defense of the coca leaf (Do Alto, 2011). What ideologically characterizes the MAS as a 'new left' movement is that it has constructed a peasant discourse by drawing on both Marxism and Indianism, two perspectives that have historically been considered antithetical in Bolivia (García Linera, 2005). Coming to the fore in the 1940s with organizations such as the Partido de Izquierda Revolucionaria (PIR) and the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR), Marxism aimed to overcome the material-economic alienation of the wage-laborer through a statist project that had strong ties with the National Revolution of 1952. Exemplified by organizations such as the Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) and the Movimiento Revolucionario Túpak Katari (MRTK), Indianism emerges in the 1970s partly in reaction to Marxism's failure to consider the ethnic and rural dimensions of Bolivian life. Indianism – and in particular its radical Katarist variant – vehemently critiqued Marxism for falling captive to the assimilationist and homogenizing elements of the indigenist politics that dominated the first half of the twentieth century. The MAS, thus, has drawn on the indianist discourse as a corrective to the Marxist eclipse of the problem of symbolic-cultural discrimination and its urban bias. And it has drawn on the Marxist discourse as a corrective to the ethnic particularism of Katarist indianism and its rural bias.

The MAS is also known as the Instrumento Político por la Soberanía de los Pueblos (IPSP; Political Instrument for the Sovereignty of the Peoples). What institutionally characterizes the MAS as a 'new left' movement is that it has attempted to construct this 'political instrument' by bringing together two organizational structures that historically have been diametrically opposed, namely, the 'social movement' and the 'political party'. A social movement, as it is known, aims to contest power, grounded in direct democracy. The political party aims ultimately to wield power through control of the state, grounded in representative democracy. The MAS, on one hand, has functioned as a network of peasant social movements that resist instrumentalization by political parties. It has, on the other hand, functioned as a political party. This tension manifests itself as the 'government of social movements' and the idea of the 'integral state' (García Linera, 2011, pp. 29–37).

As I have already suggested, I want to focus here specifically on the MAS government's PND, which was first made public in June 2006 and was promulgated by Supreme Decree No. 29272 in September 2007. 'The social and economic changes brought about by social movements, the hope which the indigenous populations have come to place in the future, and the crushing electoral victory of December 2005, inspired the new Ministry of Development Planning to elaborate the PND, the aim of which is to eradicate the deep social inequality and inhuman exclusion that afflict the majority of Bolivians and particularly the indigenous peoples' (MPD, 2007, p. 1). The 2010–2015 MAS Government Platform states that the aim of Morales' second term would be to continue to work to bring about the 'democratic and cultural revolution' as outlined in the PND (MAS, 2009, p. 53).

'The new development plan' presented in the first chapter of the PND 'is grounded in the concept of Living Well borrowed from the autochthonous and indigenous cultures of Bolivia' (p. 11). A fundamental ambiguity, as I have already intimated, undergirds this

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project. *Suma Qamaña* is understood now, from an alternative developmentalist point of view, as an attempt to go beyond the atomistic economism of the neoliberal conception of the human good; and now, from the post-development point of view, as an attempt to go beyond the ethnocentrism of the Western conception of the human good. Thus, while as an alternative to neoliberal capitalism *Suma Qamaña* is developed 'comfortably' from within the horizon of modernity, as a postcolonial critique of westernization the nomenclature implies a more radical questioning of this horizon.

This ambiguity that permeates the discourse on *Suma Qamaña* and which the MAS seems to ideologically and institutionally accommodate lurks behind the notion of 'neoliberal colonialism', deployed by the PND as a diagnosis of the socio-historical conditions that the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm aims to transcend (MPD, 2007, p. 10). 'The history of Bolivia, like that of Latin America', states the PND, 'has been plagued by colonialism and neoliberalism, through which the colonial powers imposed an alien form of civilization that generated the dynamic of domination and economic exploitation, sustained by a primary export paradigm and exacerbated in and through a logic of cultural, social, and political exclusion' (MPD, 2007, p. 33).

Neoliberal colonialism, then, refers to a volatile socio-historical context where high levels of poverty and inequality are combined with deep divisions based on race and ethnicity. 'The colonial heritage coupled with neoliberalism generated a situation where property rights were controlled by the elite minority that was associated with the permanent administration of politics and power' (Ministerio de Planificación y Desarrollo, 2007, p. 25). The sharp ethno-racial and socioeconomic fault line that exists between Bolivia's western highland and eastern lowland departments exemplifies this 'neoliberal colonial situation'.

The neologism 'neoliberal colonialism' is a composite of the two dynamics that according to the PND have generated Bolivian underdevelopment: namely, the 'neoliberal' institutions of the 'self-regulating' market and the minimalist state that crystallized with the New Economic Policy of 1985; and the 'colonial' understandings of superiority and domination that were institutionalized with the first Constitutional Assembly of 1826 (Ministerio de Planificación y Desarrollo, 2007, p. xvii). On one hand, the atomistic individualism and instrumental rationality of liberal capitalism reduces the human good to the *Homo oeconomicus* frame of reference. On the other, the dominant cultural-symbolic order of European-Modernity colonizes indigenous forms of life, reducing the human good to the Western frame of reference. The aim to overcome each of these dynamics brings to the fore the alternative development and post-development perspectives, respectively. Alternative developmentalism aims to transcend the 'neoliberal' moment, whereas post-developmentalism aims to transcend the 'colonial' moment.

Let me now more closely examine the alternative and post-development elements found in the PND.

## Alternative Development Perspective

The PND casts *Suma Qamaña* as an attempt to rethink development from an *alternative modernities* perspective, and specifically through an engagement with the human development paradigm. Here 'living well' seems to closely approximate the theory of the human good proposed by the capabilities approach as developed most notably by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Carried by the state, this perspective emerges as the frame of

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reference of the PND, laying the foundations for a socialist and communitarian critique of the institutional arrangements of the neoliberal age.

Drawing on the human development paradigm, the PND understands *Suma Qamaña* as a critique of the neoliberal fallacy that posits economic growth as the end of development, and consequently instrumentalizing the human being. '[E]conomic expansion and the change in GNP do not express development. The increase in the productivity of goods and services, the sum of macroeconomic indictors, and employment statistics … do not do justice to community, conviviality, and the expansion of rights' (MPD, 2007, p. 17). For the PND, '[h]uman development is the end – economic growth – a means' (UNDP 1996, p. 1). Indeed, 'Living-well needs to be understood as the humanization of development' (MPD, 2007, p. 12).

Lurking behind *Suma Qamaña*, this approach is the destabilization of the economic reductionism, atomistic individualism, instrumental rationality and the teleological conception of progress underpinning classical modernization theories. *Suma Qamaña* represents a critique of both the solipsism of utility and the commodity fetishism of primary goods as measures of equality. It represents an attempt to think equality beyond utilitarianism, welfarism and Rawlsian liberalism. '[I]t is my contention', writes Sen, 'that basic capability equality has certain clear advantages over other types of equality … Basic capability equality is a partial guide to the part of moral goodness that is associated with the idea of equality. I … argue that as a partial guide it has virtues that the other characterizations of equality do not possess' (1979, p. 220).

'Living well' implies a shift from *Homo Oeconomicus* to *Homo Sociologicus*; from 'having' material possessions to 'being' in the world in a meaningful way (Fromm, 1976); from how satisfied a person is to how much that person can be; from being 'well-off' to 'living well' (Sen, 1999). Indeed, more specifically, the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm implies a shift from commodities to capabilities, from negative to positive freedom. The conception of distributive justice that stems from the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm is closely related to Sen's idea of 'basic capability equality'; that is to the 'real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead' (1985b). The aim of the PND's distributive strategy, 'Bolivia Digna', is to generate human capabilities for living well and to provide the conditions for achieving these capabilities (MPD, 2007, pp. 37–45).

*Suma Qamaña* can also be understood in terms of Martha Nussbaum's 'thick vague theory of the good' (1992, p. 214). Against 'post-modern' anti-essentialism and moral relativism, Nussbaum argues that, as 'an account of the most important functions of the human being, in terms of which human life is defined', the human capability framework represents a universal theory of the human good that is free of metaphysical presuppositions (1992, p. 214). Unlike the Rawlsian 'thin theory of the good', which grounds a minimalist procedural conception of justice (as fairness), the 'thick' 'Aristotelian conception is concerned with *ends* and with the overall shape and content of the human form of life' (Nussbaum, 1992, p. 215). These ends are understood against the horizon of the 'flourishing life' (*zoie makarios*), 'happiness' (*eudaimonia*) or, indeed, 'living well' (*eu zên*) (Nussbaum, 1987). As an alternative development perspective, *Suma Qamaña* too is concerned with the 'overall shape of human life'. This is what the PND refers to as 'integral human realization': 'Most concretely, living well is the access to the enjoyment of material goods as well as to effective, subjective, intellectual, and spiritual realization in harmony with nature and in community with all human beings' (MPD, 2007, p. 12).

Nussbaum's theory, moreover, is 'vague' in the positive sense because 'it admits of much multiple specification in accordance with varied local and personal conceptions'

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(Nussbaum, 1992, p. 215). The theory, in other words, commands a 'broad cross-cultural consensus' in the sense that 'it can be endorsed for political purposes by people who otherwise have very different views of what a complete good life for a human being would be' (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 131). In short, casting Aristotle in light of the communitarianism of Charles Taylor, Nussbaum argues that the human capability approach meets the test of both ethical objectivity and cultural difference. As an alternative development paradigm, *Suma Qamaña* too meets this test. 'Living well' is seen as a vague universal that is concretized in and through 'a pluri-national logic of civilizational conviviality' (MPD, 2007, p. 11). Indeed, '[o]ne of the central elements of the [*Suma Qamaña*] paradigm is inter-culturality … understood as … the mutual recognition of different cultures in a single territory' (MPD, 2007, pp. 17–18).

The importance of deep pluralism brings forth another affinity between *Suma Qamaña* and Nussbaum's 'thick vague theory of the good', namely, 'the centrality of practical reasoning [as] a basis from which people of diverse opinions might then proceed to further work on the difficult matter of specifying the good human life' (1987, p. 45). Like Nussbaum's 'thick vague theory of the good', the Living Well paradigm attaches great importance to 'the capacity to decide' (MPD, 2007, p. 18) – what Sen refers to as 'agency freedom' (1985a) – that is, 'practical reason, as a good that both suffuses all the other functions, making them fully human, and also figures, itself, as a central function on the list' (Nussbaum, 1992, p. 132). This is what the PND refers to as the 'capacity to decide' (MPD, 2007, p. 18). There is a shift toward deliberative or participatory democracy, understood both as empowerment of individuals and different cultures. For the PND, 'there is no development without democracy, without the participation of a plurality of social actors in political, economic, and cultural decisions' (MPD, 2007, p. 16).

This conception, carried by the MAS government, emerges as the frame of reference of the PND. For the human capability approach assumes that good functioning – 'living well' – has material and institutional conditions; it is not 'independent of the resources people have and the institutions in which they live' (Nussbaum, 1987, p. 33). In other words, *Suma Qamaña* understood from the human capability framework presupposes the horizon of modernity to the extent that this horizon legitimates the institutional arrangements that make possible Living Well.

The alternative development conception of *Suma Qamaña*, then, lays the foundations for institutional arrangements that transcend the neoliberal epoch. On one hand, the PND develops a socialist critique of the 'market fundamentalism' of the neoliberal age. It calls for the 'return' of the state as a 'protagonist of national development, for it does not suffice for it to be a simple coordinator; rather it is indispensable for the state to actively participate in the production and commercial activity of the strategic sectors so as to guarantee internal accumulation, while at the same time promoting innovation and productive expansion' (PND, 2007, p. 6).

On the other hand, the PND develops a communitarian critique of liberal constitutional-juridical principles that ground social order and cohesion on the project of transcending cultural, religious and linguistic differences by drawing on abstract and 'thin' universal notions such as 'justice as fairness'. The new Bolivian Constitution aims to construct a plurinational state through a communitarian federalism built around deep historical and cultural differences. 'The Constitutional Assembly manifests itself as a great cultural encounter for the construction of a new Nation and State grounded in interculturality' (MPD, 2007, p. 13).

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## Post-Development Perspective

The PND also casts *Suma Qamaña* from a *post-development* perspective as a de-colonial rupture with the very concept of development. Here the problem is not economic reductionism or instrumental rationality, but rather the Westernization of conceptions of the 'human good'. This is the perspective that is carried principally by Bolivian social movements and which the Morales administration attempts to accommodate through 'the decolonization of the structures, practices, and discourses of the state' (MPD, 2007, p. 20).

Rather than seeking development alternatives, it is often said, the post-developmentalist perspective seeks an alternative to development. This claim needs to be understood in light of Jean-Francois Lyotard's now classic poststructuralist definition of the postmodern condition as an 'incredulity toward meta-narratives' (1979). Post-developmentalism emerges in and through the condition of postmodernity. It is the crystallization of the disenchantment with the meta-narrative of development. 'Are we not', ponders Escobar, 'beginning to inhabit a gap between the discursive practice of development and a new one, which is slowly and painfully coming into existence, but which will establish us as different from the previous bankrupt order, so that we will not be obliged to speak the same truths, the same language, and prescribe the same strategies?' (1992, p. 26).

The PND suggests that, as an attempt to rethink the human good, *Suma Qamaña* implies a break with the paradigm of development and its 'myth of unilateral progress that divides cultures into modern and primitive … , and which annihilates other temporalities, imaginaries, and conceptions of human relations' (MPD, 2007, p. 13).

More specifically, post-developmentalism is a postcolonial perspective. It emerges in and through the South's grappling with the postmodern condition, that is, in and through the passage from colonial to postcolonial societies. 'Postcolonial perspectives', Homi Bhabha writes, 'emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and the discourses of "minorities" within the geopolitical divisions of East and West, North and South. They intervene in those ideological discourses of modernity that attempt to give a hegemonic "normality" to the uneven development and the differential, often disadvantaged, histories of nations, races, communities, peoples' (1994, p. 171). Postcolonialism represents a shift from a material-economic perspective to a symbolic-cultural one through which the problem of the 'Third World' gives way to the problem of the 'subaltern' (Spivak, 1988) and the problem of 'dependency' gives way to the problem of 'orientalism' (Said, 1978). Oriented by this shift, the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm aims to 'dismantle not only the economic, but also the political and cultural elements … which structure the organization of the state as well as the minds of people' (MPD, 2007, p. 5).

With the purpose of opening a space for non-Western imaginaries, post-developmentalism has aimed to dismantle the web of concepts that have perpetuated the 'hegemonic normality' of the paradigm of development. 'The development discourse', argues Wolfgang Sachs, 'is made up of a web of key [Western] concepts [i.e., poverty, production, the state] … Each of them crystallizes a set of tacit assumptions which reinforce the Occidental worldview. Development has so pervasively spread these assumptions that people everywhere have been caught up in a Western perception of reality … At a time when development has evidently failed as a socio-economic endeavor, it has become of paramount importance to liberate ourselves from its dominion over our minds' (1992, pp. 4–5). The PND aims to achieve this: 'The colonial heritage is mediated by racially and ethnically charged ideological representations, discourses and structures. Indeed, 'coloniality is ultimately rooted in the administrative control of language and knowledge' (MPD, 2007, p. 21). This control is

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exerted by the state, and, for this reason, it is argued that '[t]here is an urgent need to dismantle the mechanisms of domination, ethnic exclusion, racism and hegemony which colonized the state apparatus, and which have been mystified by liberal modernization' (MPD, 2007, p. 20).

Post-developmentalism emerges in and through the proliferation and increasing sway of non-state actors or social movements (Escobar, 1992). This perspective brings to the fore the fact that 'post-modernity' – that 'postcolonialism' – does not simply refer to that way of seeing the world that gravitates around the plurality of particulars, alterity, difference, fluidity, hybridity, playfulness, reflexivity. Postmodernism is first and foremost a socio-historical condition linked to the information technology revolution (Lyotard, 1979) and post-Fordist flexibility (Jameson, 1991). Understood from the point of view of a geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo, 2002), post-developmentalism takes seriously the shift from the state to non-state actors, from the national to the local that is generated by the conditions of late-modernity. Social movements are now understood as 'carriers' of a plurality of particular conceptions of social life that denaturalize the 'universality' of the development paradigm that is carried by the state. Indeed, to imagine beyond development is to think the 'exteriority of social movements in relation to the state' (Escobar, 1992).

The 'exteriority' of social movements needs to be understood in terms of the 'rhizome-plateau'. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1972, p. 33) define 'plateau' as a multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by subterranean stems as in a 'rhizome'. A rhizome is a principle of connectivity and heterogeneity, as any point of a rhizome can be connected to any other point. It is also a principle of multiplicity and a principle of rupture and deterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari, 1972, pp. 3–32). On one hand, it could be said that rhizomes grow into plateaus; on the other, it can be said that plateaus sprout rhizomes. The circularity is inevitable and desirable, for it does away with the classical ideas of foundations and hierarchies. This metaphysical and political category, 'rhizome-plateau' is the interlocking of the poststructuralist conception of language understood as a decentering of the subject and the pluralism of social struggles (ethnic, racial, feminist and so on) understood as a critique of the essentialism of the Marxist historical subject, the proletariat. *Suma Qamaña* 'is understood as diverse, complex, heterogonous, and composite' (p. 17). Indeed, '[d]ecolonizing the state presupposes that we recognize that we are diverse and multiple' (MPD, 2007, p. 20).

Drawing on Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000), we can apply the idea of Deleuze and Guattari to understand the 'rhizomatic multiplicity' of Bolivian social movements that propelled the MAS into power and was able to fill the power vacuum created by the weakness of the Bolivian state as symbolized by the Cochabamba Water Wars of 2000 and the El Alto Gas Wars of 2003. 'This new multiplicity is defined by the "event" and by "charisma" that rises up as power of the singularization of the whole and of the effectiveness of imperial interventions' and is "functional rather than mathematical, and rhizomatic and undulatory rather than inductive or deductive" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 41). By a dynamic circulating 'the multitude re-appropriates space and constitutes itself as an active subject. When we look closer at how this constitutive process of subjectivity operates, we can see that the new spaces are described by unusual topologies, by subterranean and uncontainable rhizomes – by geographical mythologies that mark the new paths of destiny' (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 397). This 'rhizomatic multiplicity' of Bolivian social movements deconstructs the paradigm of development to the extent that it takes issue with the legitimacy of the Bolivian state. 'In the political realm de-colonization implies accepting the political practices of excluded populations; while in the economic

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realm it implies the recognition of the economic forms of agrarian and nomadic peoples as well as of the urban communities' (MPD, 2007, p. 21).

This 'de-colonization of the state' opens up a space for two types of institutional arrangements. On one hand, there is the shift from representative democracy to direct democracy in and through the empowering of non-state actors. 'The incorporation into the state administration of a plurality of subjects such as social movements and rural and urban workers that recognize the communal form linked to cooperative practices contributes to the de-colonization of the state. And so too does the recognition of indigenous and rural economic forms, for they contribute to the construction of a state grounded in the participation of all citizens' (MPD, 2007, p. 21).

On the other hand, the PND proposes a new conception of national identity that must grapple with the plurality of particulars through the granting of greater autonomy to local cultures. Indeed, 'recovering the capacity to decide requires a new conception of the nation – one that is grounded in the authentic recognition of pluri-ethnic and multi-cultural realities' (MPD, 2007, p. 19).

## Conclusion

I have argued that a fundamental ambiguity undergirds the new conception of the human good proposed in Chapter One of the PND. *Suma Qamaña* is understood from both an alternative development and post-development perspective. Rather than revealing a conceptual shortcoming or incoherence, the ambiguity concerning the end of development brings to the fore the pragmatic and hybrid nature of the PND. The MAS government understands *Suma Qamaña* as a broad framework that is to be concretized in and through that learning-by-doing and participatory socio-historical dynamic. *Suma Qamaña* should thus not be understood from within the limits of either the alternative development or post-development paradigms. It needs be understood, rather, as an attempt to bring both of these paradigms together.

These perspectives have historically been considered as mutually exclusive. They represent two different breaks with the 'classical' theories of development. They stand upon two different relationships with Enlightenment-Modernity. The first has faith in the emancipatory power of reason in the form of, for example, 'multiple modernities'. The latter calls for a 'rupture' with modernity, in the form of, for example, 'degrowth'. The first is carried by the state in the name of reforming the political and economic subsystems. The second is carried by social movements against these subsystems. From the point of view of the genealogy of the discourse on development, the originality and significance of *Suma Qamaña*, and, in particular, Bolivia's PND, can be interpreted precisely as the attempt to bring together the alternative and post-development perspectives.

Indeed, the state, as carrier of the alternative development paradigm, engages in a contested exchange with non-state actors, carriers of the post-development paradigm. More concretely, the Morales administration casts *Suma Qamaña* as an attempt to develop a socialist and communitarian alternative to liberal modernity, while at the same time attempting to accommodate the more radical post-developmentalist understanding of the concept carried by increasingly empowered non-state actors that, taking issue with the legitimacy of the Bolivian state, seek greater leverage and autonomy. The result of this dynamic is the new end of development. Indeed, for this reason I argue that the PND

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**Table 2:** Bolivia's PND: Ambiguity and tensions

| *Ambiguity Concerning the End* | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Suma Qamaña* | Alternative Development Perspective | Post-Development Perspective |
| *Tensions Undergirding the Means* | | |
| Political Strategy | Communitarian Interpretation of Pluri-nationalism | De-colonial Interpretation of Pluri-nationalism |
| Economic Strategy | *Gran Salto Industrial* | Rights of the *Pachamana* |

needs to be understood as an example of what Charles Sabel has called 'democratic experimentalism'.

The ambiguity found in the PND concerning the end of development brings forth what, drawing on John Dewey's political philosophy, Sabel has called 'democratic experimentalism' or 'experimentalist governance', that is, a recursive process of provisional goal-setting and revision based on learning from the comparison of alternative approaches to advancing them in different contexts'. The 'distinctive mechanisms for accountability, monitoring, and compliance enforcement' of experimentalist governance, 'respond to the demands of a world in which precise policy goals and methods of achieving them cannot be determined ex ante, but must instead be discovered in the course of problem-solving' (Sabel and Zeitlin, 2012). The PND can be said to be experimentalist in the sense that, for the MAS government, the *Suma Qamaña* paradigm is guided by a pragmatic, 'learning-by-doing' approach to development where 'intervention has to be designed in part as a form of inquiry and not as the execution of a determinate mandate' (Sabel and Simon, 2010, p. 41). *Suma Qamaña*, in other words, does not represent this or that end or paradigm of development. It represents rather a process in and through which the state and non-state actors pragmatically draw on alternative and post-development perspectives to push beyond neoliberal colonialism.

It needs to be pointed out that the Morales government gives pride of place to the alternative development perspective; that, in the final analysis, the PND lays out a socialist and communitarian alternative to neoliberalism. Yet, at the same time, there is also evidence to suggest that the MAS government is also attempting to accommodate elements of the post-development perspective, by, for example, empowering non-state actors and granting autonomy to indigenous areas. There is, nevertheless, a clear asymmetry between the MAS's appropriation of the two visions of *Suma Qamaña* presented in Chapter One of the PND.

This asymmetry, which can already be deduced from the deep differences that exist between the two development perspectives and is perhaps best expressed through the formula 'imminence of the state versus exteriority of social movements', manifests itself in the PND as a series of tensions among the proposed institutional arrangements. Perhaps the two most fundamental tensions are, namely, the tension between the communitarian and decolonial interpretations of the notion of the 'pluri-national state', which undergirds the political strategy, 'Democratic Bolivia'; and the tension between the socialist alternative, the *Gran Salto Industrial* (Great Industrial Leap), and the degrowth perspective, rights of the *Pachamama* (Mother Earth), which undergirds the economic strategy, 'Productive Bolivia'. These tensions are reflected empirically 'on the ground' as conflicts between the MAS government and social and indigenous movements such as the one

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around the MAS highway project through the Territorio Indígena Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure (Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory –TIPNIS) (Table 2).

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## Correction

This article has been corrected online, as an administrative error replicated the article disclaimer in the English abstract. We apologise to the author for this error and for any confusion caused to the reader.

The original version of this paper stated the author's affiliation as UNESCAP when in fact no affiliation should have been given. This has been corrected and the related disclaimer removed.