Applying the Concept of Buen Vivir in Community-Driven Development

Seminar Paper

Course:
Social Sciences Perspectives on Development and Underdevelopment

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

With global challenges becoming more urgent, many international organizations, governments, civil society groups, academics, and others, have been attempting to solve issues such as poverty, climate change, or food security. Based on the vision for an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for the planet, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been an expression of the need for a major transformation of subsequent "top-down" approaches to tackle global issues. In the context of the SDGs, a community-driven so-called "bottom-up" approach, to solve global, national and local challenges, has been widely recognized.

Many civil society groups and intellectuals, however, do not share the approach outlined in the SDGs, hence different visions for sustainable development have been developed. One of these discourses that has been sweeping Latin America for the past two decades, is the concept of Buen Vivir.

1.2 Justification

Buen Vivir challenges current economic and political structures, as it aims to completely transform these systems. Due to the fact that its principles can be linked to the concept of Community-Driven Development (CDD) in many ways, it is worth an attempt to connect both approaches. The purpose of this is to find out what potential a translation of Buen Vivir's principles into practical terms holds for future CDD initiatives.

1.3 Research Problem

This paper will examine to what extent Buen Vivir can be applied in CDD. More precisely, it will examine to what extent Buen Vivir as an alternative vision for the future, can be integrated into the widely used concept of CDD.

1.3.1 General Research Question

In analyzing the research problem above, major research questions include:

1. What are similarities and differences of Buen Vivir and CDD?
2. To what extent can Buen Vivir be applied in CDD?
3. Which factors underpin a successful application?
4. Which factors hinder the integration of Buen Vivir into CDD?
5. What implications do the results suggest?

1.3.2 Research Objective

The objective of this seminar paper is to provide answers to the research questions stated above. It seeks to analyze application problems that can arise from trying to apply Buen Vivir, and to find underlying reasons for this. More precisely, the research looks at the possibility of successfully linking Buen Vivir and CDD in order to examine an alternative way to shape the future.

1.3.3 Structure of the Rest of the Seminar Paper

The research has been structured in four chapters. Chapter one provides a general overview of the entire seminar whilst Chapter two provides a review of the key concepts Buen Vivir (2.1) and Community-Driven Development (2.2). Chapter three will provide an analysis of the main research topic "Applying the Buen Vivir approach in CDD", and other research questions outlined above. As a general conclusion, a brief summary will be provided in Chapter four.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF KEY CONCEPTS

2.2 Buen Vivir

Due to the current global crises of climate, energy, poverty, and food security, there is a need for substantial societal transformation in order to shift to a new cultural and economic development paradigm. (cf. Escobar 2015: 451) Escobar's call for transformation of the current Sustainable Development debate is expressed by so-called "transition discourses", one of them the concept of Buen Vivir.

While Buen Vivir has at its core the "coexistence of human beings in their diversity and in harmony with nature, based on recognition of the diverse cultural values existing in each country and worldwide" (Gudynas and Acosta, 2011: 103), it draws from ancestral conceptions of *Sumak Kawsay* ("good life") of the Quechua indigenous people of Ecuador, and *Suma Qama*ña in Aymara, or *ñandereko* of the Guarani people of Bolivia.

Buen Vivir challenges notions of neoliberal and capitalist development, and is therefore inscribed in the post-development paradigm. In fact, Escobar (2015: 451) describes Buen Vivir as one of the main post-development trends in Latin America.

The emergence of Buen Vivir in the late 1990s was driven by three important factors:

1. Latin American social movements of the time, particularly the indigenous movement against late twentieth century neoliberalism, or more specifically: against extractivism caused by current modes of mining and hydrocarbon exploitation, industrial-scale agriculture, and forestry and fishing.
2. The convergence between the said movements and the ideologies of certain global movements, especially anti-globalization and environmental movements.
3. The widespread disenchantment with the idea of "development" in terms of material progress and economic growth.

(cf. Vanhulst and Beling, 2014:56)

Buen Vivir refers to a new perspective of collective well-being, whereby the subject of well-being is the individual within a community in relation to a specific cultural and natural environment, and not the individual itself. Eduardo Gudynas, Executive Secretary of the Latin American Centre for Social Ecology and leading proponent of Buen Vivir, sees the concept as a vision and a platform for considering and practicing alternative futures based on a "bio-civilization", i.e. "the good life of humans is only possible if the survival and integrity of the web of life of nature can be guaranteed." (Gudynas 2009: 52) The term *community* hereby includes nature, biodiversity, and the earth; not only people. As a result, nature itself is a valuable part of the community and cannot be owned. It must be honored, cared for and respected. As an alternative form of development, this way of life sees social, cultural, environmental and economic issues in balance and practically linked, rather than separately and hierarchically.

Consequently, Buen Vivir can be defined as "a holistic, de-economized view of social life", which constitutes an opportunity to build a different society and an alternative to development, "and as such it represents a potential response to the substantial critiques of post-development''. (Gudynas and Acosta 2011: 78)

For activist-intellectual Catherine Walsh (2010: 18), a professor at Ecuador's Universidad Andina Simón Bolivar, Buen Vivir:

> *[...] denotes, organises and constructs a system of knowledge and living based on the communion of humans and nature and on the spatial-temporal-harmonious totality of existence. That is, on the necessary interrelation of beings, knowledges, logics and rationalities of thought, action, existence and living. This notion is part and parcel of the cosmovision, cosmology, or philosophy of the indigenous peoples of Abya Yala but also, and in a somewhat different way, of the descendants of the African diaspora.*

In a political sense, the goal of Buen Vivir is decentralizing and deconcentrating power, and constructing a pluralistic and intercultural state (cf. Walsh 2010: 19).

Mostly Latin American intellectuals, activists, and other members of academic circles, but primarily indigenous organizations and cooperatives, have adopted the concept of Buen Vivir and attempted to translate it into normative principles. It remains a challenge to apply its notions in public and political spheres. In Ecuador and Bolivia, Buen Vivir and the Rights of Nature have successfully been inscribed in their constitutions. The Preamble of the Ecuadorian Constitution (Government of Ecuador 2008: 8) states:

“We decided to construct a new form of citizen co-existence, in diversity and harmony with nature, to reach ‘el buen vivir, el sumak kawsay’.”

Following its constitutional adoption in 2008, *Sumak Kawsay* was incorporated in the National Plan for Good Living 2009-2013.

The concept of Buen Vivir is still “a lived practice under construction”. (Gudynas and Acosta, 2011: 103) Not surprisingly, the principles of Buen Vivir are difficult to apply in today’s economic and political environment. The governments of Ecuador and Bolivia are struggling to harmonize their goals of leading social change with the demands for development from large corporations and the financial needs of the country. The extraction of natural resources, such as oil in Ecuador, are at the forefront of the Buen Vivir debate. The Yasuni ITT Initiative in Ecuador is probably the most critical case so far. The ITT area in Yasuni National Park is a highly biodiverse region of the Amazon rainforest and home to indigenous peoples as well as large numbers of endemic plant and animal species. In 2007, the Ecuadorian government developed a plan to keep the oil under the territory in the ground, if sufficient funds were raised internationally. When the funds hoped for could not be raised, Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa cancelled the ITT Initiative in 2013 and began to extract the oil. (cf. Vanhulst 2014: 56)

Another critical aspect of Buen Vivir is the lack of suitable indicators for measuring its impact, which should follow the conceptualization of its fundamental pillars (cf. Acosta 2013: 81).

Buen Vivir is not only to be viewed as a critique to the current development debate. It does incorporate long-standing Western critiques of capitalism, which primarily come out of politics, economics, geography and feminist thought. It is connected to global movements of local solidarities that promote economies of sharing and caring for each other, and collaborative consumption. As a social-ecological transformation, it calls for more than a step to take back the economy. Buen Vivir rather constitutes a move to “re-politicize sustainability”. (Gudynas and Acosta, 2011: 106)

Vanhulst (2014: 61) holds the opinion that:

> *The greatest potential of Buen Vivir lies in the opportunities it generates for dialog with other modern discourses and the current forms of development, by enlarging the frame of current debates and allowing for the potential emergence of novel conceptions, institutions and practices through collective learning.*

Nonetheless, due to limited experience on how to put the principles of Buen Vivir into practice, we are now confronted with the great task of linking currently predominant concepts of development to practical implications of Buen Vivir.

2.2 Community-driven development

The World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper *Community-driven development* (Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 303) defines the term as a process whereby "control of decisions and resources is given to community groups". Development activities are directly being driven through participation of poor people, and therefore have the potential to make poverty reduction efforts "more responsive to demands, more inclusive, more sustainable, and more cost-effective than traditional centrally led programs". (Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 303)

The term *community* is commonly defined as "a culturally and politically homogeneous social system or one that at least implicitly is internally cohesive and more or less harmonious, such as an administratively defined locale (tribal area or neighborhood)" (Mansuri 2004: 8) A problematic aspect in this context is that often times the definition is internally adjusted according to the criteria of a certain development project.

Since the terms CDD and (local) participation are both strongly related, they will be used interchangeably in the course of this paper.

Community-driven forms of development can be found in many different cultural traditions throughout history.

In the 18th century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau first systematically articulated the modern theory of community participation. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 21f) He outlined a vision of democracy in which equal citizens gather to make collective decisions in a deliberative manner, to express the "common will". In the 19th century, one of the most notable philosophers who built on these ideas, was John Stuart Mill. He was skeptical of centralized forms of government and argued that participation in national government is only of meaningful use if citizens have been prepared for participation at the local level. Henry Maine and his theory of the village community as an alternative to the centralized state, published in 1876, is of particular relevance to contemporary development. His theory of thriving indigenous systems of autonomous village governments had many characteristics of participatory democracies. Similar types of Indian village communities

were also a central conception of Gandhi's philosophy of small-scale development and decentralized economic and political power. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 23)

In 1970, Paulo Freire published his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, arguing that the "oppressed" needed to unite to find a way to improve their own well-being. These ideas led to a first wave of participatory development. However, economists long remained skeptical of the idea. A few years later, in 1973, Elizabeth Olsen articulated the need for a special concept to make individuals act in their common interest. (cf. Mansuri 2004: 4) Particularly as environmental concerns became more pressing, Russell Hardin argued in 1992 with the *Tragedy of the Commons* that common property resources would be overexploited as demand rose. At the same time, Amartya Sen was the one whose efforts were most influential in the development debate in the 1990s. As a response to "top-down" development critique, his strategy to "empower" poor people was eventually used by the World Bank and other donors. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 3) Over the last decade, the World Bank alone has invested about $85 billion in development assistance for local participation. (cf. Mansuri 2013: ix)

Community development and decentralization of resources and authority to local governments therefore share a common intellectual base, since they are both firmly rooted in historical concepts of participatory governance. More precisely, they train community members to think in terms of the public good rather than personal interest, which builds capacity for collective action. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 22) Community development and decentralization are the two major modalities that induce local participation. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 2,16)

Community development supports efforts to bring urban or rural neighborhoods, or other household groupings into the process of managing development resources without relying on formally constituted local governments. Community development projects - also labeled community-driven development - include efforts to expand community engagement in service delivery. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 1) *Decentralization* refers to efforts to strengthen village and municipal governments on both the demand and supply sides. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 2)

In this context, it is also useful to recognize the difference between *organic* and *induced* participation. Organic participation is organized by civic groups outside government, sometimes in opposition to it; induced participation attempts to promote civic action through bureaucratically managed development interventions. (cf. Mansuri 2013: ix) According to Mansuri (2013: 9), there is little evidence that induced participation builds long-lasting cohesion. It is therefore desirable to achieve community participation that comes from within the community.

Proponents of participation hold that it has intrinsic value because it enhances pro-social thinking, strengthens citizenship, and enables more inclusive civic engagement. Taking part in community decision-making also builds capacity for self-reliance and collective action.

Furthermore, CDD is a way to provide social and infrastructure services, and to organize economic activity and resource management, i.e. it complements market and public sector activities. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 16f; Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 303)

One of the key objectives of participation is to "empower" communities by treating them as partners in the development process, particularly those groups that are typically excluded from it. CDD increases poor people's voices in local political processes. By incorporating the knowledge and priorities of the community into decision-making processes, service delivery can be more effective, and targeting of benefits can be improved. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 303,307; Mansuri 2013: 15)

In addition, advocates of CDD view the concept as an effective mechanism for poverty alleviation because immediate priorities are met, while long-term results at the community level are achieved as well. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 307)

CDD reduces information problems through its decentralized structure, which strengthens local governance. (cf. Mansuri 2004: 2) Demand can better be articulated when community groups control investment choices and contribute to investment costs. Additionally, increased civic engagement of local communities tends to have an impact on higher utilization rates and better maintained public goods. Thus, CDD can make poverty reduction efforts more responsive to demand, and as a result enhance sustainability. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 305ff)

Community management of development investments usually results in lower costs and more productively employed assets. Thus, it improves efficiency and effectiveness. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 306)

CDD strategies are also an opportunity to strengthen the safety net and build social capital. This enhances the security of the poor, which is a critical aspect for long-term growth and development. Further impacts are positive short-term effects on household welfare and a reduction in risk exposure. Evidence suggests that risk exposure is reduced by the community's ability to manage risks in ways such as offering reciprocal self-help, participating in local organizations, and building linkages with people outside their social networks. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 308)

Far-reaching poverty impacts can be achieved due to the fact that CDD activities can occur simultaneously in a large number of communities without being constrained by a central bureaucracy. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 307) Nevertheless, evidence revised by the World Bank suggests that CDD initiatives have had a limited impact on income poverty. Projects with significant microfinance components do show positive impacts on savings and assets, but these effects appear to be confined largely to the life cycle of the project. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 9) The objective of development, however, is not exclusively to increase incomes or to improve poverty indicators, but also to expand people's "real freedoms", as Amartya Sen

advocated in 1999. This refers to the choices people make between different valuable beings and doings, such as being nourished, being educated, participating in public debate, or being free to walk about without shame. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 307)

CDD is traditionally financed in the form of public sector grants, as well as private and community investment credits. Programs have tended to be heavily subsidized by external donor support. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 318) For the sake of increasing community ownership, it is desirable that the largest investment amount is generated by the community itself.

A revision of further studies by the World Bank revealed that community engagement seems to improve both the quality of construction and the management of local infrastructure, which implies lower levels of corruption relative to government provision. In addition, community engagement can substantially amplify the impact of investments in health or education inputs, as – for instance – it has been proven to lead to significantly larger reductions in maternal and infant mortality, larger improvements in health-related behaviors, and greater use of health facilities. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 8)

Evidence suggests that greater community involvement in fact "modestly improve[s] resource sustainability and infrastructure quality". (Mansuri 2013: 5)

One of the most critical aspects of CDD is, however, that it tends to exclude the poor in practice. Studies revised by the World Bank show that participants in civic activities tend to be wealthier, of higher social status, more educated, male, and more politically connected than those that do not participate. At the same time, it appears that the poor often benefit less from participatory processes than wealthier groups or individuals do. This is typically the case because resource allocation processes typically reflect the preferences of elite groups. Studies also suggest that communities, in which inequality is high, outcomes are even worse, especially where political, economic, and social power are concentrated in the hands of a few people. This so-called "Capture" tends to be greater in remote communities. (cf. Mansuri 2013: 5f) Even in most egalitarian societies, public goods are almost always dominated by elites. On a positive note, it is not clear, that this always represents "capture" in the sense of only elites benefiting from the good.

Consequently, we can say that the effectiveness of local participative activities depends heavily on the extent to which they successfully target the poor. (cf. Mansuri 2004: 30)

A related critical aspect raised by Cornwall is that CDD makes claims of "full participation" and "empowerment", which can turn out to be driven by particular gendered interests, leaving the least powerful without voice or much in the way of choice. Thus it is important to identify preventive strategies that deal with this issue. (cf. Cornwall 2003: 1325) Cornwall (2003: 1337) concludes that "unless efforts are made to enable marginal voices to be raised and heard, claims

to inclusiveness made on behalf of participatory development will appear rather empty". It is therefore necessary, but not sufficient to require the representation and consultation of women. More advocacy on gender must be done, in order to ultimately challenge and change these relations of power. (cf. Cornwall 2003: 1338)

Dongier and others (2003: 303) argue that the most gains from CDD can be achieved by making good use of resources targeted at poverty reduction. In addition, participatory development is most effective when it works within a system of support from an effective central state and bottom-up civic action. (cf. Mansuri 2013: x) Furthermore, the potential for CDD is greatest for goods and services that are small-scale, not complex and that require local cooperation. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 307)

Another essential factor that allows the system to evolve and adapt better to local demand is flexibility in design, often through piloting. This means that program planning must be flexible, and decision-making mechanisms must not only be decentralized, but situated as close to the community as possible, to facilitate quick response to change. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 326)

Experience indicates that sustainability and effectiveness of CDD are enhanced when processes are simple and transparent and when actors have strong and consistent incentives for performance. Regular monitoring and evaluation then provide necessary information to ensure that the integrity of the system is maintained. (cf. Dongier, Van Domelen, et. al. 2003: 326)

According to Mansuri (2004: 1, 2013: 13f), local participation tends to work best in a context-specific manner, with a long term vision, with a well-designed monitoring and evaluation system, facilitated by a responsive center, with adequate sustainable funding, and conditioned by a culture of learning by doing.

CHAPTER 3

APPLYING THE CONCEPT OF BUEN VIVIR IN COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DEVELOPMENT

As outlined in the third Chapter, when it comes to Buen Vivir as a lived practice, it is at this point in time still difficult to draw from practical experiences that have been proven effective in the application of the approach. Acosta (2008: 1) describes Buen Vivir as a utopic project of a common life that has to be put in practice by all citizens. This means, it needs to be internalized and practiced by all members of the community in order to be successful.

Both, CDD and Buen Vivir, share a number of common features and similarities, as well as differences in its principles. Similarities provide a common basis for a linkage between the two concepts; differences provide implications for a practical application of Buen Vivir in CDD, and possible hindering factors.

Common features of both approaches include:

- **Overall objective**: Both concepts aim at increasing the well-being of the community.
- **Poverty alleviation**: Both concepts focus on inclusive participation, particularly favoring the poor. Buen Vivir goes a step further and aims at building a so-called “system of knowledge” based on communion (cf. Walsh 2010: 18), which a community can draw from.
- **Decentralization**: Local initiatives are small in scale, and driven locally by the community. (“bottom up” approach)
- **Community ownership**: In CDD, people directly participate in the decision-making that affects a common good. In Buen Vivir, cultural and organizational practices are often translated into participatory models of governance as well, which promote community ownership.
- **Personal networks** and close personal links, as well as a culture of **solidarity** are important characteristics in both approaches.

Differences of the concepts:

- **Understanding of *community*:** Buen Vivir includes nature and the earth as an important part of the community. In CDD, a community solely consists of people.
- **Understanding of *development***: In CDD, the term development refers to the improvement of people’s well-being in economic and social terms. The next step after a successful development project is to scale-up the initiative in order to maximize impacts on people’s well-being. Environmental aspects also play a role in this process, as they can have an impact on the economic or social situation of a community or an individual. Nature, however, can be owned and made profit from in order to improve people’s living situation. The “well-being of nature” is not recognized as one of the priorities for community well-being.

In Buen Vivir, on the other hand, development as such does not exist. Since the concept itself is the coexistence of all members of the community in harmony, where biodiversity is protected, and where all individuals – including the poor – are being taken care of, this coexistence itself is considered development. This type of development is not progress; it is “life itself, as a category of permanent construction and reproduction”. (Gudyans and Acosta 2011: 104) When applying the concept of Buen Vivir in CDD, development cannot be promoted through development projects or other community initiatives, but rather through internalizing a way of living in harmony with nature.

- **Decentralization**: Although both concepts favor a decentralized structure, there is still a hierarchical structure in CDD between the state and the community, and the state has an important position in the development process, as it partly plans, monitors, evaluates, and often finances development initiatives. Furthermore, we have seen in Chapter 3.1 that elites within communities generally tend to be more articulate in participatory processes, and the poor sometimes tend to be excluded. This suggests that there are no hegemonic power relations within the community because hierarchies exist within community's. Buen Vivir does not support hierarchical structures within the community because power relations must be in balance in order to benefit all members equally. A state as a central bureaucracy does also not exist in the concept. Organization and participation is induced completely within the community, without the existence of a more powerful state mechanism, or elites within a community.

From these similarities and differences, we can draw implications for the application of Buen Vivir in CDD:

In practice, every community member, including the environment, benefits equally from community resources. In order for the "web of life of nature" to survive, or for nature to be cared for (i.e. protected), only the amount of resources the community demands should be extracted from it. The production of these resources needs to be small in scale, with low levels of raw materials and energy. Only then the community can live in harmony in all dimensions and be well. In principle, the produce must be priced based on its real value, i.e. the more constraints are put on the environment, the higher the price must be. However, products should exclusively be local; they should be produced in a quantity that is sufficient for the community to consume, and that does not put constraints on the soil and the environment. In addition, every community member contributes to the production, and is equally allowed to consume the amount needed from the communal production. This system has characteristics of a communist society, where consumption of the produce is also shared among all. If a community cannot produce enough, for instance due to its geographical location, it may trade available goods with neighboring communities. In this context it may also be noted that our concept does not allow any type of scaling-up or development in terms of economic progress, because it would disrupt the coexistence of people and nature in harmony.

Furthermore, different cultures within the community must be equally respected and cherished. Cultural, as well as social, environmental and economic issues must always be in balance, which implies that an imbalance must be balanced out again. In practical terms, this balance means that the community as a whole does not only take care of the environment, but that it also takes care of the poor, or those that are disadvantaged in social aspects. For instance, those that are ill, or those that cannot contribute due to health-related reasons, must also be provided for in solidarity.

Taking into consideration that Buen Vivir does not suggest the existence of a hierarchical structure in a society, the absence of the state as a central bureaucracy that provides and coordinates services, also has implications for the realizatiom of the principles of Buen Vivir. Communities may exist independently from each other, without any central coordination mechanism, which raises the question of community borders. If no hierarchical mechanism draws community borders, and individuals make the choice of which community they belong to themselves, can a balance of social, environmental and economic factors always be maintained? On a macro- as well as on a micro-level, the community's form of governance must be participatory; it must be organized based on the communal system of knowledge, on cultural features, and on cooperative organizational forms. However, it remains highly questionable if a participatory governance model can work on a macro-level as an alternative to a state with equal power relations of all members of society. Decisions on how to coordinate any type of activity would take extremely long, and given that decisions would have to be made in large-scale, again, a balance of social, environmental and economic factors cannot be guaranteed at all times.

On a micro-level, Buen Vivir suggests that community enterprises should be realized in non-conventional forms; they should be collective and also based on cultural features and participation. These enterprises can take a social role in improving the community's well-being. In modern terms, the combination of entrepreneurial action with explicit social objectives are considered *social enterprises*. (cf. Chell 2007: 5) This example of an alternative entrepreneurial model puts the well-being of individuals, of the community, and of the environment over profit maximization. According to Acosta (2008: 39), social enterprises belong to the social economy sector, which supports a different approach to development that can lead to the realization of Buen Vivir. In our model, main characteristics of local enterprises are hence their embeddedness in the culture of the community, their explicit social objective, and their principle of participatory governance.

In conclusion, the course of this analysis suggests that with the implications we can make from the Buen Vivir principles, a realization of Buen Vivir in CDD implies changes in the original concept of CDD. Due to the fact that we cannot draw from many practical experiences, a description of our model can only be given in broad terms. More lived practices are necessary to conduct a more in-depth analysis. What becomes clear, however, is that Buen Vivir seems to only serve as a development concept for local communities and in smaller scope. Once we attempt to apply the concept in larger scales outside a local context, the concept cannot be realized in our contemporary economic and political system, neither on a national, nor on an international level. Hence we can conclude further that Buen Vivir does not seem to be

applicable in all spheres of its principles without a complete transformation of our economic and political world system.

CHAPTER 4

GENERAL SUMMARY

Buen Vivir and CDD as approaches to development share a number of common features. First of all, they share the same overall objective of increasing the well-being of the community. Secondly, both concepts focus on inclusive participation and poverty alleviation. Initiatives commenced within the scope of the two concepts, are "bottom up", i.e. small in scale and locally driven by the community. Participatory models of governance promote community ownership. In addition, the creation of personal networks and solidarity are important aspects in both concepts.

Differences of Buen Vivir and CDD are different underlying definitions of the terms community and development. Buen Vivir recognizes the earth and the environment as an integral part of the community; and it describes development as a state of coexistence in harmony, with permanent construction and reproduction. Also, Buen Vivir does not recognize hierarchical structures.

In practice this means that in communities, the production system is communal and small in scale; that it does not put constraints on the environment; and that all members of the community benefit from the join production. Local enterprises are social in nature, meaning they put the well-being of the community before a maximization of profit. Within the community, individuals develop a participatory local governance model based on the practices of their diverse cultures. Buen Vivir therefore means that communities turn completely to local production, and do not engage in any type of international trade. Furthermore, a state as a hierarchical entity to the community, does not exist; another coordination mechanism, with equal power relations of involved individuals, will have to be developed. A complete transformation of our economic and political structures would be the consequence of this model.

The analysis at hand suggests that Buen Vivir can be a lived practice in local terms. However, this comes with a complete isolation from the "outside world", if not practiced globally. As a concept for a different vision for our future, it cannot be realized at this time in our modern world. For Buen Vivir to become a reality, this "utopic project of a common life […] has to be put in practice by all citizens", as Acosta stated. Further research in indigenous communities, which practice Buen Vivir, is needed to gain concrete insights on how principles of harmonious coexistence are integrated into the existing world structures. The challenges these communities

face in living Buen Vivir can serve to adapt the concept to modern notions, so that it becomes a more tangible approach.

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