Questioning Conventional Notions on Development:

- A study of el Buen Vivir and the Indigenous Community of Choquecancha- Peru

By: Paloma León Campos

MSc Thesis in International Development studies

The Department of International Environment and Development Studies, Noragric, is the international gateway for the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (UMB). Eight departments, associated research institutions and the Norwegian College of Veterinary Medicine in Oslo. Established in 1986, Noragric's contribution to international development lies in the interface between research, education (Bachelor, Master and PhD programmes) and assignments.

The Noragric Master thesis are the final theses submitted by students in order to fulfill the requirements under the Noragric Masters programme "International Environmental Studies", "Development Studies" and other Masters programmes.

Noragric

Department of International Environment and Development Studies

P.O. Box 5003

N-1432 Ås

Norway

Tel.: +47 64 96 52 00

Fax: +47 64 96 52 01

Internet: http://www.umb.no/noragric

Declaration

I, Paloma León Campos, declare that this thesis is a result of my research investigations and findings. Sources of information other than my own have been acknowledged and a reference list has been appended. This work has not been previously submitted to any other university for award of any type of academic degree.

Signature....................................

Date................14 may 2012.................

i

Acknowledgements

This hard but rewarded process of learning how to write a thesis could not have been possible without the support and advice of many people. First of all I would like to thank my family for trusting and encouraging me during the whole writing process. Special thanks to my father, the most loyal person I've ever known. He has not only support med with my decisions, but he has foremost being an example of hard-working, commitment and humbleness. He has taught me to believe in ideals, to pursue knowledge and deepen my critical thoughts.

There are no sufficient words to thanks all people and friends whom has always believed in me and given me all the support needed throughout this process. I am grateful to my friends in Peru, Cuba and Norway whom have made my academic life a bit easier with their honest and constructive comments to my work. They have also been part of unforgettable moments where we have shared everlasting study nights in the library, desperate search for coffee and insightful conversations.

I am also grateful to my faculty, Noragric, which have provided me with a friendly study environment and important tools for analysis.

I dedicate this work to the Choquecancha community. To the indigenoues farmers whom have for long time resisted discrimination and have had the courage to conserve their ancestral practices and to believe in themselves. To them whom taught me to trust.

Abstract

This study examines el Buen Vivir; a proposal that emerged in the Latin- American continent as a result of failed development policies and the appearance of social actors such as indigenoues movements, feminist groups and afro- descendants. This study seeks to understand the proposal of el Buen Vivir and how it challenges conventional notions of development. This project is understood as a political platform where critical views on conventional development are shared and put into practice. This has taken different forms; Bolivia and Ecuador for instance have incorporated the principles of el Buen Vivir in their political constitutions while social movements have made this proposal a political demand. Moreover indigenous people seem to entail some of the elements of el Buen Vivir through their practice and knowledge system.

This research emphasizes the latter aspect by basing the field work on the indigenous community of Choquecancha, situated in the Peruvian highland. Despite being victims of a violent colonization and present marginalization by the Peruvian state and society in general, the indigenous community of Choquecancha has managed to conserve their ancestral practices, values and knowledge systems. The objective of my fieldwork was two folded. On the one hand, to conduct an in-depth study on ancestral food systems and look at how these practices correspond to some of the elements that sustains el Buen Vivir. On the other hand, to analyze to what degree these practices challenges conventional notions on development based on the ideas of economic growth, faith in progress, and, accumulation of goods as synonymous of wellbeing.

In this research I have followed a qualitative case study design. The data collection is mainly based on semi- structured interviews, semi-structured observation with indigenous farmers from Choquecancha and semi- structured interviews with experts on the field of inquiry.

The theoretical framework is based on critical Latin-American knowledge production from which I adopt some of the studies of the modernity/ coloniality research group. These studies look at development as part of a gran modern narrative, at the same time as they conduct a review of previous studies on development and different paradigms in the field. Finally the studies undertake a deconstructive approach that has led to question the nature of development itself.

This study has found that indigenous practices, knowledge systems and relational ontologies that differ from modern dualistic thinking that separates nature from society and culture from economy, are all essential elements that correspond with the main principles of el Buen Vivir. By focusing on ancestral food system, such as Ayni, Minka and Chalayplasa, I have identified not only relationships of self-subsistence but also economic practices that are mediated by reciprocal relationships, solidarity between different communities and communal wellbeing. I have also identified a sense of collective conviviality as the main aspect of being a comunero. These factors enabled me to analyze Ayni, Minka and Chalayplasa beyond economic endeavors and to look at the cultural, political and social dimensions of these practices. The indigenous farmers of Choquecancha displayed an alternative view on production, welfare, nature and growth that not only enrich the proposal of el Buen Vivir but also might even challenge the conventional views on development. In this sense, this field work reinforces the idea that el Buen Vivir do not emerge as an abstract rhetoric but rather as a political project based on the experiences of indigenous people in the continent.

Table of contents

List of Maps, Figures and Images

Maps

Figures

Imagines

Abbreviations and Spanish names

CDF	Comprehensive Development Framework
CEPAL	Economic Commission for Latin America
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Indicator
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISI	Import Substitution Policies
MC research group	Modernity/ Coloniality research group
MST	Movimiento Sem Terra
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic treaty organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SAPs	Structural Adjustment policies
TPE	Productive Transformation with equity policies
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WB	The World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization

CHAPTER I:

Introduction

1.1 Opening and Research Problem

Commonly, it has been argued that the planet is immersed in an economic crisis that seems impossible to solve unless classical neoliberal recipes are taken ahead, such as reduction in health services, schools and salaries, among others. However, increasing critical voices have argued that this crisis goes beyond an economic endeavor and involves also political, cultural and ideological domains. Critica2l Latin-American knowledge production advocates that it is about an integral multidimensional crisis that involves energetic, environmental, production patterns, consumption and cultural factors. The situation is then, according to this view, a structural crisis rooted in a particular world system that is modern capitalism. Accordantly, further critical studies have argued that modern capitalism, inherent in modernity, cannot be simply understood as an economic mode of production, but rather as a socio- historical process based on modern postulates on economic growth, faith in progress, development and others.

In the context of Latin- America many governments and transnational companies have tried to equate development with further extractive policies and this has encouraged further socio-environmental conflicts between farmers, indigenous people and national authorities and corporations. As a result, new subjectivities and the activation of local self- subsistence practices of resistance have emerged and the idea of development itself has been questioned. Alternative perspectives have argued that development- policies have not only failed responding to the main necessities of the most marginalized people of the continent, but it has also replaced or dismissed other forms of conceiving and practicing wellbeing.

El Buen Vivir (Good living or Living well) is a recent proposal that emerges as a response to conventional development policies taking ahead in the continent. This framework serves as a

platform where different proposals by different actors and social movements are shared in the attempt to challenge conventional development policies through own localized practices of self- subsistence. El Buen Vivir is the result of the re- articulation of relational practices and ontologies where indigenous communities serve as a central reference.

In this investigation, by drawing on a case study in an indigenous community of Choquecancha in the Peruvian highlands, I intend to identify, in the spheres of local food system, elements that correspond and simultaneously enrich the framework of el Buen Vivir. In this concern, I will specially emphasize on ancestral practice of agricultural work such as Ayni, Minka and Chalayplasa. The underlying objective is to identify linkages between these practices and el Buen Vivir and to analyze to what degree conventional notions of development are challenged.

As a framework of analysis, the study is situating within alternatives approaches to development that suggests and discusses whether development policies in the continent should be redefined or whether it is about questioning the rationality of development itself. Essentially, alternative approaches draws attention to development as a modern social construct that itself needs to be deconstructed.

I build on concept employed by the critical Latin-American thinking and more specifically by the Modernity/coloniality research group. Essentially I will base on Edgardo Lander (2000) on modern civilization in crisis, Enrique Dussel (2000) on the myth of modernity, Anibal Quijano (1992; 2000) on coloniality of power, and various deconstructive approaches to development such as Arturo Escobar (1995), Wolfgang Sachs (2010), Eduardo Gudynas (2011) among others.

1.1.1 Objectives and Research Questions:

The overall aim of this investigation is to analyze the elements and practices that constitute the emerging proposal of el Buen Vivir. The base of my research is a case study in an indigenous community of the Peruvian highlands. By drawing on two distinctive aspects, localized food systems and the indigenous community's practice of reciprocity, the intention is to study the ways in which the proposal of el Buen Vivir challenges conventional notions of development.

More specifically, the main objectives of this investigation are to look at the following questions:

1) What is the relationship between colonialism and modernity? What role has the concept of coloniality of power, introduced by Anibal Quijano, played in the preservation of modern postulates on progress, economic growth and conventional development inherent in modern capitalism?

2) What role have dominant views on development played in this concern? What are the main theories that have shaped the field of development and what are the critics to it from a Latin- American perspective?

3) How does el Buen Vivir challenge modern postulates, more specifically the conventional notions on development?

1.2 Situating the Discussion

The increasing global polarizations between a privileged minority and an excluded and oppressed majority, as well as dramatic climate changes are all alarming conditions that are starting to have serious consequences for most parts of the world. In this context, it has been argued from different fronts that the planet as a whole is undergoing a serious structural crisis[1].

Social agencies, researchers, NGO's, the media, social movements and other actors involved have played an important role in revealing how further exploitation and plundering of natural resources not only lead to socio- environmental conflicts but also to a vast destruction of Eco-systems and pollution- threatening the conditions that make life possible on Earth. Moreover the current social- economic order has also been questioned by different actors who are victims of increased unemployment rates, loss of social welfare and safety networks, both in the so- called Third world countries as well as in the First world countries.

Although this concern has received more attention worldwide and many agree on the necessity of finding answers to the problems mentioned, there is in no way a homogenous position regarding what solutions are to be undertaken. Indeed, the solutions proposed varies from small local suggestions to international agencies implementation of corporate

---

1 According to Armando Bartra, in his book called The Big Crisis, he explains the crisis as systemic and not transitory, thus

responsibility frameworks or alike. In this concern the proposals made are not only different in terms of local/global dimensions but they also respond to specific political positions and social interests. There are two main contrasting positions that have shaped many of the debates concerning the contemporary structural crisis and its impacts. On the one hand there is the position that claim that it is crucial to undertake reforms in the economic structure while on the other hand it has been argued the necessity of questioning the rationality of the system itself that necessarily implies to go beyond the economic realm only and also involve social, environmental and cultural domains (Sachs 2010) [2].

Studies by E. Lander (2000) show that the persistent crisis is triggered by a particular model of civilization that was made worldwide in the 16th century, namely modern capitalism[3]. He asserts that this model not only determines economic structures, but it also involves a series of elements that shapes, guides and determines practices, thoughts, policies, social and public relations. Accordingly, Lander (Ibid) suggests that modern civilization that has prevailed at a world wide scale is: "entrenched in a social system of values and norms grounded on liberal and modern thoughts of society which shapes our views on human being, nature, history, progress, knowledge and the perception of good life" (Lander 2000: 14). The crisis then goes beyond an exclusively financial concern, and integrates climate disasters, increasing poverty rates, loss of values, cultural homogenization, alienation, abolition of indigenous languages and traditions, among others. Indeed modern world system entails and integrates various dimensions of political, ethical, cultural and environmental concerns.

---

2 According to Wolfgang S. there are two contrasting positions on how to solve the "crisis". On one hand he asserts that ecocratic discourses aims at solving the structural crisis by imposing new levels of administrative monitoring and control. On the other hand various ecological movements goes beyond the treatment of this problem merely as a technical constraint and affirms that we are facing a civilizational impasse- "namely, that the level productive performance already achieved turns out to be not viable in the North, let alone for the rest of the globe" (Sachs 2010: 35).

3 The world system is a category introduced by Immanuel Wallerstein in his book *the modern world system* published in 1974. The notion of world system, holds on to the idea that there is **one** world (the periphery and the core) connected by complex networks of economic exchange relationships. This system arose in the 16th-century with the conquest of the new worlds and the expansion of capitalist world- economy and its based on global division of labor' between core and periphery. While the core has a high level of technological development and growing capital accumulation, the role of the periphery is to supply raw materials and cheap labor for the expansion of the core. As such, the concept of the world system embraces the idea of one interconnected world based on asymmetrical power-relations (Soto 2007).

According to F. Braudel (1994) [4], modern civilization is effectively in crisis when: *"we define civilization as a specific globalized order, socially industrial, economically capitalist, culturally hybrid, intellectually rationalist and historically being defined by its constant struggle against traditional civilizations (a contest which modernity is not able to defeat completely due to the resistance of alternate cultures) the situation is then, in a strict way, a civilization which is in crisis[5]"* (Ibid: 45).

Hence, when discussing modern civilization from a critical approach, what is been displayed is a global hegemonic social order, inscribed in the logics of modern capitalism created 500 years ago. This matrix of power, besides from shaping the dominant economic model, builds what Lander (2000) acknowledges as the social order of society as a whole. Indeed, modern civilization, based on the idea of one sole epistemic tradition that claims to hold on to a universal truth and hence dismisses alternate knowledge perspectives, shapes specific lines of thought, production patterns, accumulation of capital and the creation of social imaginaries. Accordantly among the central postulates that integrates and sustains modern civilization or also called modern capitalism is the notion on development. Critical scholars asserts that modern civilization, exposed as the most advanced form of human experience, "has been legitimized and acquired renewed vigor, in recent years, through the discourse of progress and development" (Lander 2002: 4). As such, according to Lander, a process of re-conquest has been introduced and intensified along with the development imaginary which defines, through a dense global institutional network, the majority of the planet as lacking, poor, and backward. This means "justifying a massive intervention to rescue it from such a pitiful condition" (Ibid). Moreover, A. García in an interview affirms that conventional development has increasingly been questioned due to its premises on economic growth and accumulation that rather to be the solution at stake seems to be the cause of the structural crisis itself[6].

In this respect, a closer look at conventional notions of development is a crucial task in this study. This is because of two reasons, first because development constitute a central postulate of modern reasoning and second, because development, although growing criticisms and failures in the Latin- American continent, still manages to shape perceptions on improvement and change that certainly influences national authorities as well as people in general.

---

4 Fernand Braudel, was a French historian and educator. Among his most important studies was the History of Mediterranean, Civilization and Capitalism between 1955- 1979 and the unfinished work on the Identity of France (1970- 1985).
5 Own translation from Spanish, Braudel (1994).

6 Persona Interview with A. García, a social researcher on the Institute of Philosophy in Havana. March 2012

1.2.1 The Introduction of Development policies in Latin- America

Development policies were heavily introduced in Latin- America at the beginning of the 1950's, just a few years after President Truman's famous Point Four Program and in a context of growing nationalism in the continent. In general terms, a considerable number of countries of the region had, since the great depression, begun to build national economies in a more independent way (Escobar 1995). Nonetheless, by 1952, with the approval of an International Development Act, increasing external interests on the continent were emerging. The notion of further production and technological improvement as the basis for progress was made a general trend among the Latin-American countries. Among the task that had to be undertaken in order to successfully introduce progress in the continent were first of all capital formation, technological innovation, monetary and fiscal policies, industrialization and agricultural development, commerce and trade (Ibid). International agencies such as the World Bank (WB), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Alliance of Progress and technical agencies of different kind emerged along with the reinforcement of development economics. In this concern, the most common ingredients advocated in order to enhance economic development were: 1) capital accumulation, 2) industrialization, 3) development planning and 4) external aid. Classical and neoclassical theories of growth provided the building blocks for these models (Ibid).

Nonetheless by the beginning of 1980s the paradigm of development economics seemed to have failed and the Latin-American continent faced its worst crisis in century. This led to serious consequences in terms of rising poverty rates, increased unemployment, urban and rural violence, growing differences between rich and poor and industrial decline. But by the end of the same decade neoliberal policies were introduced in the continent drawn on the experiments introduced in the military regimes of Chile and Argentina. As such, as the 1980s unfolded, the neoliberal economic agenda became dominant in the region. Policies aiming at transforming into marked- orientated economies, privatization of social services, deregulation and free- markets, labor reforms and structural adjustment policies (SAPs) imposed by the WB, IMF and others had become the order of the day in most part of the continent. These policies were reinforced with the creation of new regional programs and agreements concerning trade and policy- making, among them, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Plan

Colombia. Although these market reforms seemed, by some analysts, to be the solution at stake and that certainly provided further infrastructure, stable economies, decrease of inflation in some countries, the overall reality is that the social conditions of the most marginal and excluded people was not only unsolved but rather intensified. Increased unemployment and growing informality were growing, decreasing national production, signs of negative ecological outcomes, expansion of monocrops and monocultives, dispossession of land and territories and growing internal migrations were some of the serious consequences that shaped the decades of the 1980s, 1990s and that still preserves. As a result of the immense negative outcomes that started to be visible for most part of the world in the beginning of the 1990s, different social researchers started to question whether development was gradually fading out as an outdated perspective "belonging to a bygone era of economic apartheid" (Pieterse 2011: 3). According to J.N. Pieterse (Ibid) the structural adjustment policies introduced represented a radical break with the development tradition, leading to a lost decade of development in 1980s. Pieterse argues that as a result, traditional development practices might have entered a mutation phase in the direction of world- development policies based on global economic imperatives (Ibid).

The WB have played an important role in the mutation phase by focusing on a new economic trend; neoliberalism with human face. In general terms this trend, based on the idea of marked friendly state intervention policy and good governance, was successfully introduced with the formation of the comprehensive development framework (CDF) in 1999/2000 by the World Development Report. CDF stressed the necessity of establishing a stable macroeconomy along with prudent fiscal and monetary policies, honest governments, strong property and personal rights supported by an efficient legal and judicial system, human development, infrastructure and integrated rural development strategies and urban management (WB 1999).

However, in spite of changes in the development and neoliberal discourses and a deepened disarticulation of popular classes combined with the state's incapacity for providing economic and political guarantees to the most marginalized; important and innovative signs of resistance have appeared (Motta 2007).

1.2.2 The Emergence of New Social Actors of Change

During the last years different voices and subjectivities[7] have arose and in general terms they seek to go beyond the traditional demands of goods and services. For instance, the arisen of the Zapatista movement in 1994 in Mexico did not only aim at better housing, health and educational opportunities but also, and even more importantly, they claim the possibility of being recognized and respected as indigenous. As Esteva and Prakash (1998) outlines:

"*By centering their claim in recognition and respect for what they have, they allude to a capacity of self- determination which challenges the foundation of the universalistic assumptions of modern thinking.*" (Ibid: 37)

Moreover, they argue that the indigenous struggle in Mexico is also about giving continuity to their own history and to continue to be themselves: "*Despite the decimation and annihilation they have suffered, the Indian peoples of Mexico have succeeded in giving historical continuity to their condition. They want to continue being themselves in the contemporary world.*" (Ibid: 38)

Furthermore, in Argentina the Piquetero unemployed movement based on local decision-making and assemblies have proclaimed that the only possibility for them to survive is through self- organization. In line with their discourse, the piqueteros have managed to open "comedores populares" where they guarantee a minimum food supply to the community as well as occupying closed factories and run them as cooperatives. Likewise we can identify the Movimiento Sem Terra (MST), Urban and Land committees in Venezuela, and the many indigenous and peasant movements emerging in Colombia, Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru (Motta 2007).

These movements are characterized by their massive mobilizations but also for their capacity to generate alternate knowledge systems and proposals for change. The indigenous movements have played an important role in this regard and they have questioned fundamental premises of the modern enterprise, where conventional notions of development play a crucial role. As portrayed above, because these are struggles entrenched in deep

---

7 I use subjectivities in this context to highlight the emergence of new social actors and identities. It is no longer the proletarian class against capitalist mode of production and private property, but rather multiple actors such as women, indigenous, afro-descendants, homosexuals and lesbians that are challenging the dominant socio-political order.

cultural redefinitions (Escobar 1995) the actors involved not only claim material improvement or distribution of wealth, but they also struggle for the very definition of life, economy, nature and society. Along with a new political scenario where progressive governments have achieved broad popular support, Indigenous movements all over the continent have managed to rearticulate their communities and political demands. The persistent way of opposing and resisting further invasion by transnational companies and foreign capital interests have given them a crucial role in the struggle against further extraction policies obscured by developmentalists discourses. As Escobar (Ibid) outlines: *"The struggles between global capital and biotechnology interest, on the one hand, and local communities and organizations, on the other, constitute the most advanced stage in which the meaning of development and post development are being fought over*." (Ibid: 198)

By being forced to leave their territories due to further capital expansion, crop economies and exploitation of natural resources, they had no other option than to organize themselves and to create instruments for their own survival. In this case, many of the Andean indigenous communities reinforced their self- governing communities, based on territorial struggles and new practices of direct democracy (Motta 2007). According to Motta (Ibid), communities are not only concerned with creating new economic practices but "*also ways of organizing social relationships and the subjectivities that form the basis of these collective structures* (Ibid: 36)." In this respect, communities do not separate the economic struggle from the social and cultural struggle, and thus in order to challenge the dominant perception of economy, market and conventional forms of development they have to introduce and put into practice other ways of doing and perceiving production and consumption patterns. As Motta (Ibid) advocates:

"They therefore theorize and practice resistance as a multilayered process that involves challenges to "structures" of power but also, centrally, the construction of alternative social relations and subjectivities "outside of" these dominant ways of being and organizing social reality" (Ibid: 36).

For Luis Macas, former CONAIE[8] leader of Ecuador, their struggle is not only about social inclusion but about the character of knowledge itself as well as about culture. He affirms that their struggle is of epistemic character (Escobar 2010a). Likewise the Aymara sociologist

---

8 CONAIE "Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador" is the principal indigenous organization in Ecuador.

Felix Patzi Paco affirms that the demands that are taking place in Bolivia are about 'the total transformation of liberal society' (Ibid). In other words, a redefinition of modern premises concerning private property, representative democracy, and the activation of communal forms of organization based on indigenous practices. Although the indigenous organizations vary from country to country, a shared perception is that in order to defeat and challenge economic and cultural structures of domination, communities needs to articulate broad political demands and decentralized governing structures.

1.2.3 The Rise of el Buen Vivir and the Role of Indigenous Communities

In this context el Buen Vivir emerges as a proposal for going beyond western definitions and practices of wellbeing (Gudynas 2011). Although el Buen Vivir cannot and should not be reduced to one specific context, thus it is a practice that is generated from different countries and different actors; it is worth mentioning that this proposal is supported by the cosmovision and practices of Latin- American indigenous people. In general terms el Buen Vivir entails two major tasks; on the one hand it encompasses a general critique to modern capitalist system and more specifically to conventional notions of development. On the other hand it proposes alternate practices that can challenge dominant ways of conceiving wellbeing. El Buen Vivir entails a critical approach to modern world system through its political activation of relational ontologies which differ from the dualist ontologies of liberal modernity. Moreover this proposal questions the way improvement and development is generally understood and attempts to deconstruct these notions. In this regard it seeks to bring a new political subjectivity which can deconstruct the modern enterprise and question the very foundations of modern civilization. As Gudynas puts it; "*Good Living encompasses a set of ideas coming forward as both a reaction and an alternative to conventional notions of development.* " (Ibid: 1)

According to this view, conventional notions on development are entrenched in the idea of modern industrial societies and based on an epistemic tradition which embraces a specific knowledge system. This knowledge system is based on the following assumptions: a linear approach to history, hierarchical dualisms of subject and object, culture and nature (the latter is conceived as an useful object for human improvement in contrast to other knowledge systems that consider nature a living subject and a part of society) and lastly the idea of

economic growth as the only way to achieve wellbeing[9].

As an answer to these premises, el Buen Vivir conceptualizes other ways of perceiving history and the relationship between nature and society and wellbeing. Gudynas summarizes this idea in the following way:

"*A central aspect in the formulation of Good Living takes place in the formulation of a critique of contemporary development. For example, it questions the rational of contemporary development, its emphasis on economic aspects and the market, its obsession with consumption, or the myth of continued progress*" (Gudynas 2011: 2).

In this respect, as portrayed above, this research paper attempts to look more in depth at the elements and practices that constitutes the proposal of el Buen Vivir drawing on a particular case study of the indigenous community of Choquecancha located in the Andean valley of Lares. My particular concern in this regard is to get a better insight in self- managed local food systems, ancestral system of reciprocity and the relationship between culture and nature. Although the research in Choquecancha entails limitations concerning external validity due to its cultural and historical specificities, it illustrates important contributions on the studies of community organization and the proposal of el Buen Vivir. Firstly, because Choquecancha being an indigenous community exposed to colonization and continued cultural and racial discrimination, have managed to prevail own traditional and ancestral knowledge systems and practices. Secondly, Choquecancha being a quechua- spoken community might offer a general view on Andean cosmovision which goes beyond a Peruvian context and might entail similar characteristics in other Andean regions. Thirdly, considering the significance of indigenous movements in the continent, this research might contribute to further studies on Peruvian indigenous communities and as such reinforce the indigenous movements of Peru with further analytical tools and examples of el Buen Vivir.

---

9 Among these critical scholars we can mention: Arturo Escobar who studies the creation of the third world through development discourses, Wolfgang Sachs and Gustavo Esteva whom have a cultural approach to development, Ivan Illich whom studies the relationship between development and needs, Majid Rahnema concerned about poverty and Vandana Shiva who studies ecology, resources and the relation to development, among others.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured in six main chapters.

In **Chapter I and II**, I expose my introductory part as well as the theoretical and methodological approaches for this investigation. In **Chapter III**, I analyze the relationship between colonization, modernity and conventional views on development, particularly by disclosing two main and contrasting notions of the emergence of modernity, that is an Intra-European notion and a perspective that looks at modernity as a process that involved the world population through colonialism. Thereafter the intention is to look at how colonialism persists at present time through *coloniality of power* and the emergence of dominant development discourses. Thereafter, in **Chapter IV**, the investigation moves on to analyze more specifically the way development has been treated in Latin- America and the criticism made by the critical Latin-American thinking. Moreover in **Chapter V**, I describe el Buen Vivir, its origins, characteristics and the main criticism on conventional notions of development. The last part of the chapter introduces, by drawing on the case study on the Choquecancha community, specific practices of el Buen Vivir. In this respect I will mainly focus on localized food production, ancestral practices of reciprocity and the indigenous people's relations to their natural environment. Thereafter I conclude with some final remarks in **Chapter VI**.

CHAPTER II:

Theoretical framework and Methodology

2.1 Theoretical approaches

In the next section I present the theoretical approaches that guide my analysis. My primary aim is to open up for some of the theoretically necessary questions concerning the crisis of modern civilization, conventional notions of development and alternative perspectives from Latin- America. In this respect this research intent to reveal some of the central debates and critical analysis of modern civilization that exist, their origins and characteristics drawing on the academic lines of "el pensamiento critico latinoamericano" or Latin-American critical thinking. I chose to embark on this framework based on two factors. Firstly, because the Latin-American critical strand of thought plays an important role in the production of critical knowledge and also because this framework recognizes non-academic knowledge production. Moreover this framework might enrich my analysis by adapting alternate views so as to understand the prevailing crisis of modern civilization in a holistic way.

This framework of analysis involves a series of historical and contemporary theorists; among them we can identify the work of J.C Maritategui, J. Marti, E. Dussel and A. Quijano. However, in this investigation I will build on the concepts employed by some specific contemporary theorists outlined below. In addition, this framework of analysis undertakes two important functions which are closely connected and which I consider to be underlying elements for my investigation; and they are:

- To go beyond a narrow esoteric intellectual community separated from reality and social actors.
- To find points of contact between theory and practice, by, on the one hand provide the forthcoming social movements in Latin America with critical analytical tools so as to understand the current socio- historical conditions of the region. On the other hand enrich this analytical framework through alternate knowledge perspectives and practical experiences by new social actors such as indigenous peoples, afro

descendants, women and others whom might contribute to further critical knowledge production.

Indeed, this research attempts to overcome the idea that suggests that theory is produced via a process of abstraction separated from everyday struggles of movements and impoverished communities and rather look at theory and practice as an integrated whole which draws on a double layer process of thought and action.

Having said that, the aim of this paper is to approach the conceptual definition of modern civilization or modern capitalism by using some of the theories elaborated by the **Modernity/Coloniality research group (MC research group)** [10]. This group is known for basing its analysis on critical thinking, mainly from Latin- America, and deals with socio-historical analysis of reality as well as introducing alternative views on phenomena that are perceived to be universal and natural. In this sense the MC research group aims at finding other perspectives based on the knowledge and experience of subaltern groups. As far as modern civilization and modern capitalism is concerned, this research group bases its analysis on modernity and conceives this phenomena as a project rather than a particular historic moment, a project that starts in the sixteenth century (Yehia 2006). In overall, the conceptualization of modernity/coloniality is grounded in a series of operations different from dominant theories of modernity. Some of these are: (1) locating the origins of modernity with the Conquest of America, rather than in the most commonly accepted landmarks such as the Enlightenment or the end of the eighteenth century; (2) a persistent attention to colonialism and the making of the capitalist world system as constitutive of modernity; (3) consequently, the adoption of a world perspective in the explanation of modernity, different from the view of modernity as an intra-European phenomenon. (Escobar 2009: 7). In this respect, this research community looks at modernity from the perspective of coloniality suggesting that modernity and coloniality are two phenomena that are closely interwoven. The aim of my study is precisely to enhance a better insight in this relationship by basing my analysis on the

---

10 MC research group: Is an interconnected group of researchers in Latin America and the United Sates. The theoretical foundations that have shaped this research group/program are; the liberation theology from the 1960s to 1970s, dependency theory, the debates on Latin American modernity and postmodernity in the 1980s, cultural studies in the 1990s. The main objective of this group is to make "a decisive intervention into the very discursivity of the modern sciences in order to craft another space for the production of knowledge- another way of thinking, the very possibility of talking about 'worlds and knowledge's otherwise" (Escobar 2009: 2). In other words, the aim on this research group are twofold, on the one hand it aims at dismantling dominant views on modernity and on the other hand it proposes alternative views based on the knowledge and experiences of subaltern groups (Yehia 2006). Some of the key notions that make up the conceptual corpus of this research program are: the modern colonial world system as the ensemble of processes and social formations that encompass modern colonialism and colonial Modernities that articulates the main forms of power into a system. Coloniality of power (Quijano). Eurocentrism, as the knowledge model that represents the local European historical experience and which became globally hegemonic since the seventeenth century (Dussel, Quijano). (Escobar 2009: 8)

theoretical framework on modernity introduced by the MC research group. I consider this first aim important in order to understand how modern capitalism managed to become a worldwide system. This process implied in one part the colonization of the so-called Third World where the peripheries had to be incorporated into one economic order to provide raw material but also in order to be inscribed into a different logics of production. Accordantly, linking colonization with modern capitalism might not answer the roots of the structural crisis itself but, this linkage might give an interesting input to understand the universalization of modern capitalism and the maintenance of modern postulates since colonial time, such as economic growth, accumulation, progress and later development

In order to answer this objective I will build on the theoretical framework by E. Dussel. Moreover using the conceptual innovation on "coloniality of power" by A. Quijano, I intend to show how colonialism still prevails in society through the dominance of cultural and mental structures. Furthermore by drawing on a deconstructive approach to development, I examine conventional notions on development embedded in modern postulates on growth and improvement. In this regard I adopt the analytical approaches of A. Escobar and E. Gudynas. Lastly the aim is to situate and characterize el Buen Vivir and distinguish the way in which it challenges conventional notions on development. In this task I build on the concepts employed by A.M. Larrea and E. Gudynas. The aim is to enhance a theoretical grounding which allows evidencing other theories and thoughts that challenges modern epistemic tradition.

2.1.1 Modernity:

Traditionally, modernity is understood as a specific moment in history which has gradually and in a linear way, conformed and shaped current modern societies. According to E. Dussel (2000), this vision is normally embedded in the logics of neutrality and universality. This is meant to say that modernity is an Intra-European project based on a Eurocentric perspective that indicates Europe as the starting point of modernity without taking into consideration anything outside of Europe (Ibid). However Dussel's analytical approach challenges this conception by introducing a new way of perceiving and explaining this phenomenon, and that is the concept of the *myth of modernity*. By this he means that modernity is embedded in two logics of function. Firstly it embraces rational and irrational cores. The former can be the industrial revolution and the Enlightenment process, but the latter has involved historical

colonialism and systematic violence against the *other* as different. This means that modernity is entrenched in a double dimension which cannot be seen separately, a dimension that include the discovery of the new world and the industrial revolution of Europe. Moreover, the myth on modernity is also used to reveal how the suppositions of progress, according to Dussel (2000), turn useful in making irrational praxis of violence justifiable. I expand fully on this model in chapter III with regards to the study on colonialism/modernity and development.

2.1.2 Coloniality of Power:

A. Quijano (2000; 1992) uses the concept of "coloniality of power" to describe the ways in which colonialism still persist in society. He bases his analysis mainly on cultural forms of domination and how they take part of a more durable and stable form of colonialism and, as such, manages to control thought and action. In this respect, this model of power is not limited to economic and institutionalized form of domination but it also involves a process of historical reidentification, meaning that regions and population from the new world were attributed new geocultural identities (Quijano 2000). A. Quijano (2000; 1992) suggests that the incorporation of diverse and heterogeneous cultural identities into a single world system was the basis for the formation and intensification of one global cultural order.

I adapt the concept of coloniality of power to analyze how colonialism goes beyond material dispossessions and entails also the creation of modern culture and constructs, dominance of mental structures and the production of subjectivities. In this respect, I locate the indigenous people as the *otherness* and how they had to face, since the Spanish colony, and until present time, physical violence as well as spiritual, cultural and cognitive deprivations.

Lastly, the concept employed by A. Quijano reinforces the linkages between "old" and "new" colonialism by suggesting that colonialism activated coloniality but coloniality on the other hand sustains colonialism by other means. In this sense I adapt the concept of coloniality of power because of two reasons, first, in order to understand modernity and colonialism not as historical moments but as processes of power- relations. And second, to understand and examine the values and postulates that derive from these complex processes of power relations and the role conventional development plays in this context.

2.1.3 Conventional notions on Development

As portrayed above, one of the specific aims of this research is to analyze conventional notions on development and to examine the possibilities in establishing connections with modern culture. As such, this research paper aims to study development, not as a category but rather as an historical process. In order to enhance this task I have chosen to draw on critical approaches on development in order to give an overview of the main criticism that are been made especially concerning notions on economic growth, improvement and welfare. As such I attempt to look at this phenomenon as a cultural construction which shapes knowledge systems and social imaginaries. As Esteva et.al. (2010) outlines:

"Development occupies the center of an incredibly powerful semantic constellation. There is nothing in modern mentality comparable to it as a force guiding thought and behavior." (Ibid: 3)

More specifically I will adopt a "deconstructive" approach in order to be able to denaturalize social representations and discourses that have been made universal and locate them within a socio- historical analysis.

In this aspect I will use the analytical approaches from A. Escobar and G. Esteva. But before I undertake this objective, the aim is to outline a brief analysis on the main theories that have shaped the field of development, their characteristics and criticisms. In this task I will use much of G. Rist (2011) historical analyses on development. It is worth mentioning that in this part I do not pretend to study the different definitions of development that have emerged during the last years. Firstly, due to lack of space and secondly, because this analysis has already been realized by many scholars and intellectuals. I rather base my analysis on a deconstructive approach to conventional notions of development by asserting that development is a social construction entrenched in modern culture that entails power-relations.

2.1.4 El Buen Vivir (The Good Living)

As portrayed above, the aim of this investigation is not merely to enhance a critical perspective on certain issues, but to deconstruct and dismantle conventional notions on development by an exposition of new ways of seeing and acting.

In that regard, I will describe and analyze el Buen Vivir and highlight two of the tasks this proposal entails: 1) to present a critical position regarding the modern civilization and the

conventional notion of development and 2) to reveal alternate practices based on different ethical orientation with emphasis on cultural, social and political diversity.

By drawing on the analytical approaches from E. Gudynas (2011), A. M. Larrea (2010) and F. Houtard (2010; 2011), my primary aim is to describe, characterize and analyze el Buen Vivir. The purpose is to identify the elements that characterize this proposal and show how it differs from modern/ colonial perceptions of development and welfare. In this concern I have chosen to emphasize on a number of specific topics that illustrates some of the most evident contrasts between modern culture and el Buen Vivir. These are of ontological and epistemological concern such as: dualistic versus interrelated perceptions on nature and society; individualism versus communitarian, monoculture versus diversity. I will also build on my case study with emphasis on localized food systems, based on ancestral practices such as Ayni, Minka and Chalayplasa (barter markets) and link these with the elements and principles that constitutes el Buen Vivir.

The description of my field of analysis and the theoretical approaches respond to the research question of this study. This is also the case concerning the methodological framework I have chosen for this investigation. In the following section I outline my methodology.

2.2 Methodology:

2.2.1 Brief introduction on Study area:

This investigation was conducted between December 2011 and January 2012 in Peru, mainly in the Andean highlands of Lares where Choquecancha community is located. More specifically this community is situated in the department of Cusco. I came to know Lares through the work realized by a member of my family in indigenous communities on forest conservation. Later, through my own research I found that Lares was an interesting place where indigenous ancestral knowledge, practices and forms of self-organization still prevail and play an important role for the communities. I came across various communities but I decided to choose Choquecancha because, according to the local authority of Lares, Choquecancha had managed to preserve many of the cultural ancestral aspects in terms of agricultural production and self- sustained economy. Based on this information I chose to embark on the study of ancestral food system, the relationship between the community and their natural environment and lastly their perceptions on welfare. As such, my staring point of

this investigation was the Quechua Indigenous community of Choquecancha and their relationship with el Buen Vivir.

From the start of my fieldwork I informed the leaders and members of the community about my research objectives and interest in learning how they have managed to preserve their own traditions and organization despite of colonialism and further territorial expropriation. I informed them about my interest in observing their daily routine and more specifically the agricultural production. With an approval and identification letter written by the local authorities of the Lares- municipality, they accepted my presence and invited me to take part in their daily life routine, their work on the land, the local assemblies and their traditional festivities. These gave me the possibility of being a passive and active observer throughout the fieldwork and participate in their activities. It is important to clearly state my position as researcher and in this case I consciously embraced the position as active and semi-participating researcher basing my work on subject- subject stances rather than subject-object. By this is meant to say that my position as researcher was mainly drawn on the idea of learning from the research object and try to establish symmetrical relationship between the researcher and the research object. Indeed my position and starting point for this research was undeniably influenced and shaped by previous theoretical readings as well as political positions. This demonstrates that the study is heavily formed by deductive stances.

2.3 Research Strategy

I base my research strategy on a qualitative approach. This is because of three reasons:

1) Qualitative methods are appropriate in the study of communities, thus it enables us to understand social reality through the eyes of research participants (Bryman 2008).

2) Qualitative methods provided me the analytical tools to observe and grasp the daily life of the indigenous community which otherwise could not have been possible to perceive. For instance, their view on and the way they treat their natural surroundings, are issues that are, to a certain degree, inexplicable unless observed. Therefore, qualitative methods, more specifically structured observation proved convenient in many situations during my fieldwork.

3) Lastly, scholars have expressed a need for in- depth qualitative research on indigenous knowledge systems and practices so as to understand the mechanisms of resistance, social organization and current political participation.

2.3.1 Social Constructivism and Critical Realism

My **ontological position** is based on a *social constructivism approach*. This position is commonly used in the social sciences and particularly in qualitative research. It stresses the idea that social phenomena are socially constructed through interactions, social dynamics and are in constant movement. Reality as such is not a fixed, stable "object", but a process of continual changes. Moreover this position asserts that because reality is socially constructed, social actors play a crucial role in the definitions and constructions of the social world and its forthcoming interpretations. In this field of enquiry I will be using this ontological position based on the idea that neither reality, discourse or imaginaries are fixed nor natural, but rather phenomena's that are socially constructed (Bryman 2008).

Consistent with my chosen ontological position is the epistemological notion that I have adopted for my study known as *critical realism.* This position suggests that the study of the social world should acknowledge the necessity of highlighting the structures that creates that world. Moreover this epistemological view, contrast to positivists approaches, advocates that the social world is not an entity outside social actors involvement, but rather a process that is reproduced and transformed in daily life (Bryman 2008). This means that not all phenomena in society can be captured by empirical data collection neither statistics. This is because social constructions are embedded in complex relations of power that, in many cases, are difficult to identify and quantify. Hence this view asserts that reality cannot be fully understood exactly as it is, as the social reality is in constant movement and can have multiple interpretations according to different subjectivities.

2.3.2 Study design

As my research design I have chosen a case study approach that can enable me to conduct an in- depth analysis of a single case. This design commonly used within the social sciences and draws on an intensive examination of a specific setting such as an organization, life, family, or community (Bryman 2008).

Moreover, in my specific field of inquiry, this research design enables me to look closely at the daily life and agricultural system of an indigenous community. Commonly, communities of the "third world" have been studied and characterized by their levels of impoverishment, lack of health and educational systems and in general material scarcity. In my case study, I

rather focus on the elements that can contribute to rethink modern society and as such I intend to learn from the community's experiences.

Nonetheless it is worth mentioning one of the most crucial criticisms regarding this type of research design, the limited external validity. In the case of the Choquecancha community, due to their cultural specificities and historical conditions, it is not a representative case that can be applied more generally to other cases or communities. However this case illustrates some of the elements and characteristics that constitutes el Buen Vivir and that to certain degree, through an alternate knowledge system and other practices, manages to challenge modern epistemic traditions. In this respect, the main objective in adopting a case study design for my research is not to find grand alternative models or strategies, but to identify, in concrete local settings, alternative representations and practices. Likewise, in spite of Choquecancha's specificities, it represents a possible generalization to other Andean indigenous communities that have managed to preserve similar cultural traditions and representations.

My particular intention is to describe and examine in greater depth indigenous ancestral practices concerning agricultural system and to look at how these represents some of the elements that sustain el Buen Vivir in practice. The aim is to find alternative rationalities that are able to deconstruct and dismantle, through social practices and knowledge systems, universalistic assumptions and perceptions.

2.3.3 Methods of data collection

In my research inquiry I have applied different qualitative methods in order to get a broad picture of the agricultural system in the community. The main research method I used was structured observation. This method allowed me to get a deeper insight in specific events and behavior concerning local food management and subsistence where reciprocal systems such as Ayni, Minka and bartering have been emphasized. This research method has been chosen mainly because of two reasons: 1) structured observation provides more reliable information about events and 2) this method also provides greater precision regarding their timing, duration and frequency (Bryman 2008: 264).

Some of my daily tasks as a structured observant were to keep an eye on social interactions between the members of the community and their behavior and attitude towards nature, food and labor. I also participated in some communal tasks and kept track on my own field notes. Moreover, the methods chosen for my data collection, consistent with my study design, was unstructured interview, semi- structured interview, content analysis, and the use of visual materials such as photographs and video.

The combination of these methods gave me the possibility to gain valuable information that might not have been possible to get with quantitative research methods. This is because it is difficult to grasp, understand and experience social relations such as complementary interactions between the members of the community as well as their natural environment unless the researcher observes and participates in the life of the community.

I also conducted semi- structured interviews with some representatives of the Choquecancha community as well as members of other smaller communities around that area. In addition I was also able to interview other community members as elders and farmers, and to undertake unstructured interviews with local authorities of Lares. These interviews were crucial to understand better the meaning behind Ayni and Minka (practices that I will outline more in detail in Chapter V) and to look at how the absence of national authorities generates, to a larger extend, closer cooperation between communities in the area mainly in the production of food so as to increase the food supply for all communities. These activities have been recorded through observation, videos and photographs. During all interviews notes were taken and most of them were recorded and transcribed by myself. It is important to mention that, being a native Spanish speaker, most of the interviews were translated to English by me, nonetheless some informants also responded in Quechua that required translation from Quechua to Spanish.

In the following section, I outline the geographical, cultural and socio-historical traits of the indigenous Choquecancha community in order to contextualize their efforts on keeping own ancestral practices, self- organization and their values kept in localized food systems and their natural environment in general. These are all important aspects for my research inquiry.

2.4 The Indigenous Community of Choquecancha: An in-depth insight on the Area of study

The Choquecancha community is situated in the valley of Lares, in the south- eastern part of the Andes. Lares has three main agro- ecological zones: the *yunga*, 2300 MSL, the *quechua*, between 2300 and 3500 MSL, and the *puna* above 3500 MSL[11]. This geographical location gives room to an immense biodiversity and different types of food production such as; potatoes, corn, vegetables, fruits, coffee, flowers, coca leaves and medicinal plants. Nonetheless, due to the altitude, the growing conditions are harsh and there is limited number of food crops that communities in different locations are able to grow (IIED 2005). Despite this constraint, the Andean people have developed strategies to overcome this obstacle by growing many different food crops and trading with other crops produced by communities located in different ecological zones. Nonetheless, with the introduction of neo-liberal policies these practices have been threatened and communities were compelled to produce food for cash economy. Since the 1950s international financial institutions such as the WB, multinational agricultural companies and the Peruvian government have promoted an economy based on exports and this led to the introduction of new technological innovations such as genetically engineered crops and new storage techniques among others. As such many communities of Lares were forced to cover national demands on food production that led to intensified production, tough labor conditions, crops displacing other crops such as barley replacing tubers and grains and the introduction of fertilizers and pesticides. These policies were reinforced in the 1970s by the institutionalization of local development assistance programs that sought to strengthen the cash economy through more intensive farming practices. In this respect the widespread use of pesticides destroyed local biodiversity, and short rotation cycles, combined with artificial fertilizers weakened soil fertility, but even more dramatically malnutrition rates for children increased considerably (Ibid).

However the Andean people of Lares managed to overcome this constraint by reinforcing traditions of reciprocity and self- governing practices such as barter markets and local food systems. These are mainly based on ancestral techniques and practices that constitute an integrated economic and social system of culturally divergent communities (Ibid). By 2005 the valley of Lares had a total population size of 1,555 families distributed in 14 indigenous

---

11 Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Program, IIED – International Institute for Environment and Development

communities[12]. Only 3% of the total population lives in Lares while the majority of the population is distributed in mainly three communities; Ccachin, Choquecancha and Amparaes.

Map 1: An overview of the department of Cusco where the Valley of Lares is Located.
Source: Amauta Spanish School. (April 2012)

Choquecancha is an indigenous peasant community consisting of 500 families located about 10 km from Lares and 3400 meters above the sea level. In Quechua the word Choquecancha means the ground made of gold and some theories suggest that this community was the cultural center of the valley whose population originally came from the fortress of Antawalpa. This community is located in the highlands of the valley and according to the local history this location was chosen in order to avoid further intervention, exploitation and violence by the Spanish Colonialists. In this regard, Choquecancha is considered as one of the last places

---

12 INEI, Censo Nacional de Población y de Vivienda 2005.

where the Incas managed to escape and rebuild their political, economic and cultural practices.

Despite severe colonial discrimination, marginalization by the national authorities and further excessive land use, fertilization and growing interest on cash economy by governmental policies; the Choquecancha community has managed to maintain its own agricultural systems based on local governance of food production.

Indigenous governance of localized food systems are deeply embedded in ancestral practices of reciprocity such as Minka; a symmetrical form of exchanging products and labor force between family members and neighbors of other communities around the area. Likewise, el Ayni; is a form of reciprocal exchange between products and services. The aim of the agricultural production is orientated towards food security and ecological sustainability of the community through the use of organic fertilizers, native seeds and reciprocal forms of labor. Muyuy and barter markets is also being put in practice in order to recover the land and exchange crops between the communities. The importance of sustaining local food systems, and the empirical evidence on prevailing ancestral practices based on a tradition of reciprocity of the Choquecancha community are factors that are considered throughout the analysis of this research.

CHAPTER III

Section I

"At the Crossroad of Colonization and Modernity and the Invention of Development"

A central aspect in my analysis in Chapter III is the relationship between colonization and modernity. As mentioned earlier, the intention of analyzing this relationship is not necessarily to find the roots of the structural crisis per se thus the origin of the crisis are multidimensional. However, this perspective might give us a view on how modern capitalism or modern civilization became a worldwide system and how certain postulates, derived from this system, have triggered an unsustainable social order. In this sense, the universalization of modern capitalism in one part corresponded to colonization of Third World countries because these were incorporated into the world market where new patterns of production, consumption and labor were introduced. But this new economic order came along with a set of postulates, social representations and values. Some of these are economic growth, faith on progress, science, technology and binary colonial divides between the ones considered civilized and the other considered savage. The central aspect in this regard is hence to analyze how, despite the end of colonization, certain modern postulates, although they seem to be in crisis such as economic growth, still manages to shape and even determine social imaginaries, desires and actions. In this concern, the concept of coloniality of power turns useful. In the last section of this chapter, conventional notions on development are introduced and studied as a central postulate that responds and constitutes the foundation of modern world system.

3.1 A Critical Approach to Modernity:

Modernity is a difficult category to fully understand with all its complexities. In this paper I explore modernity by building on concepts employed by E. Dussel (2000) who is member of the MC research group. The central concept employed by this author, who offers a critical assessment on modernity, is *the myth of modernity*. By this Dussel (Ibid) suggests an urgent

need for dismantling traditional notions on modernity that holds on to the idea of an Intra-European construction. Hence E. Dussel (Ibid.) suggests an assessment of modernity based on two historical processes, these being: **1)** *The first modernity*: Inaugurated by Spain and Portugal through the Iberian discoveries of new territories and the construction of a world system **2)** *The second modernity*: starts in the 17th century and is the result of the former. This idea is important to note thus commonly the emergence of modernity is placed to the 17th century, while according to E. Dussel (Ibid.), this century is already a modern product and not the beginning itself. As such the second modernity is nothing more than a mere synthesis of previous processes.

As such the idea that the European civilization is the ultimate stage of modernity is a notion that Dussel suggests to deconstruct and denaturalize by embracing the first stage of modernity as the base for the second one (Ibid). The following quote suggests the way modernity is commonly understood.

"It's normal to understand modernity as a linear process which bases its foundation on Greek culture, later the roman, thereby the middle age (which is considered as a period of obstacles for the development of the civilization initiated by Greece and Roma), and further the renaissance (which improves the Greco-Roman tradition) and, at last, the XVII decade, the Enlightenment and the bourgeois revolutions" (Soto 2007a: 3)[13].

According to this perspective, modernity is presented as an intra- European construction based on sequential chains. From this perspective the Hispano-American world is detached from the foundations of modernity, meaning that the discovery of America by the Spanish and Portuguese had nothing to do with modern Europe. Likewise, modernity has commonly been interpreted as a process which has managed to encounter and improve the medieval world and replaced traditional social relations, values and norms with progressive ones. In this respect, important changes in the relationship between man, nature and society were introduced. Man became the central actor in the construction of society, locating religion as a second priority, and this new reorientation also opened grounds for the utilitarian view on nature to the benefit of humankind. Similarly, scientific knowledge- systems played a central role in the construction of the new modern societies, thus scientific and technological inputs were crucial in the demystification processes of traditional knowledge, considering this knowledge an obstacle for further progress and modernity. All these changes sought out specific forms of

---

13 Own translation from Spanish (Soto 2007a)

policies, structures, values and social representations. Indeed, when we speak of modernity in its traditional meaning, what is being highlighted in general terms is science, technical knowledge, progress, growth, the formation of modern states, liberal democracies, reasoning, and at last the consolidation of modern capitalism (Soto 2007).

Nonetheless this view on modernity has been challenged by different positions which consider that modernity needs to be addressed within a world system perspective. In this respect, it has been essential to emphasize the conquest of the American continent not only because of its role in the consolidation of the capitalist world market, but also and perhaps even more importantly because it introduced new global power-relations. As such, according to Soto (Ibid) and Quijano (2000), it is crucial to recognize the significant role the conquest of Latin- America has had in the formation of modern European capitalism and how a new intersubjective configuration was introduced[14]. As such, Quijano suggests that modernity involves the world population under the banners of new and common rule- powers and political structures:

"Therefore, whatever it may be that the term modernity names today, it involves the totality of the global population and all the history of the last five hundred years, all the worlds or former worlds articulated in the global model of power, each differentiated or differentiable segment constituted together with (as part of) the historical redefinition or reconstitution of each segment for its incorporation to the new and common model of global power "(Quijano 2000: 13).

Accordingly, Dussel suggests that the modern enterprise is entrenched in an umbilical relation between colonialism and modernity that was one of many determinants that sought to bring the consolidation of modern capitalism in Europe. This was possible through the expropriation of territories and natural resources, the control of gold and silver and other commodities produced by the unpaid labor of Indians, blacks and mestizos (Quijano 2000), which allowed a greater control of commercial exchange, capital accumulation and the dominance of world market.

Indeed, according to Dussel (2000) the first and second modernity stages are deeply embedded in rational and irrational praxis that needs to be unveiled. The first modernity responds to an irrational praxis of violence while the second seemed to undertake rational

---

[14]This is meant to say the introduction of one global cultural order that revolving around European and Western hegemony managed to incorporate diverse and heterogeneous cultural histories into a single world system.

reasoning of progress, capital accumulation, technological improvement and a way out of underdevelopment.

"In this framework, modernity implicitly contains a strong rational core that can be read as a "way out" for humanity from a state or regional and provincial immaturity. On the other hand, this same modernity carries out an irrational process that remains concealed even to itself. That is to say, given its secondary and mythical negative content, modernity can be read as the justification of an irrational praxis of violence" (Dussel 2000: 8).

The first stage of modernity is characterized by the genocide of Indians not only due to violence and plagues by the conquistadors (Quijano 2000), but also due to the harsh labor conditions in which American Indians were forced to work until death. The subsequent Iberian colonialism imposed a new social regime which manages to justify a whole social order of violence upon different cultures, traditions and practices in the name of civilization. Indeed, the violence used against the population of the new world, considered lesser to western conceptions of advancement, was legitimized by making other cultures appear inferior and immature (Soto 2007).

The social representations created during colonial times of the *other* as different and less indelibly, shaped significantly the ways on which reality was imagined but also acted upon. These social representations became dominant in the decade of XVI when cryonics, missionaries and travelers reinforced the idea of the colonized as inferior through their writings (Ibid). J. Ginés de Sepúlveda, was a Spanish humanist scholar, philosopher and theologian, who in his book, *A second Democritus: on the just causes of the war with the Indians*, justifies the Spanish colonization by arguing the following:

"With perfect right the Spaniards rule over these barbarians of the New World and the adjacent islands, who in wisdom, intelligence, virtue, and humanities are as inferior to the Spaniards as infants to adults and women to men. There is as much difference between them as there is between cruel, wild peoples and the most merciful of peoples, between the most monstrously intemperate peoples and those who are temperate and moderate in their pleasures, that is to say, between apes and me" (Ibid: 43).

The social imaginary which produces the *other as* immature*,* also produces the idea that this immaturity is a stage which can be acted upon and changed through the acceptance and the embracing of civilization as a moral duty. According to Dussel (2000) these social

representations are reinforced through political- economic and military dominance, but also the production of discourses which creates permissible modes of being thinking are of great importance. Accordingly, colonization implied territorial and cultural dispossession. This involved a long lasting and profound process of colonization, useful to the reproduction of domination. *"All of those turbulent processes involved a long period of the colonization of cognitive perspectives, modes of producing and giving meaning, the results of material existence, the imaginary, the universe of the intersubjective relations with the world: in short, the culture"* (Quijano 2000: 9).

As such colonization is much more than a historic moment; it should rather be considered a historical process that has deeply shaped political, economic as well as cultural power-relations. In this concern, Dussel suggests that although the second stage of modernity has been deeply influenced by the French revolution, scientific knowledge systems, and liberal ideology; it does not mean that colonial genealogies of thought are totally dismissed. In this respect, the former and latter stages of modernity are not only linked together, but they constitute the emergence of a new world- system namely modern civilization. This system, besides from shaping political and economic structures, also creates specific social representations, subjectivities and conceptual formations that have played a crucial role in sustaining and legitimizing modern knowledge systems. Among these conceptual formation is the idea of progress and later development. Dussel takes this idea further by arguing that progress and development are two social representations grounded on the illustrious genealogy of western conceptions that have justified the myth on modernity and turned useful in making irrational praxis of violence justifiable. Dussel (2000) describe the myth of modernity in the following way:

1. The modern civilization casts itself as a superior, developed civilization (something tantamount to unconsciously upholding a Eurocentric position).
2. The aforementioned superiority makes the improvement of the most barbaric, primitive, coarse people a moral obligation (from Ginés de Sepúlveda until Kant or Hegel).
3. The model of this educational process is that implemented by Europe itself (in fact, it is a unilineal, European development that will eventually—and unconsciously—result in the "developmentalist fallacy").
4. Insofar as barbaric people oppose the civilizing mission, modern praxis must exercise violence only as a last resort, in order to destroy the obstacles impeding modernization (from the "colonial just war" to the Gulf War).

5. As the civilizing mission produces a wide array of victims, its corollary violence is understood as an inevitable action, one with a quasi-ritual character of sacrifice; the civilizing hero manages to make his victims part of a saving sacrifice (I have in mind here the colonized indigenous people, the African slaves, women, and the ecological destruction of nature).

6. For modern consciousness, the barbarians are tainted by "blame" stemming from their opposition to the civilizing process, which allows modernity to present itself not only as innocent but also as absolving the blame of its own victims.

7. Finally, given the "civilizing" character of modernity, the sufferings and sacrifices—the costs—inherent in the "modernization" of the "backward," immature people, of the races fitted to slavery, of the weaker female sex, are understood as inevitable (Dussel 2000: 8-9).

These points show an interesting view on how discourses on progress and modernization have been used to dismiss other ways of perceiving wellbeing. Although progress has indeed involved significant scientific and technological advancements in society, the idea of one-directional progress has also disqualified other ways of conceiving improvement. This has led to the idea of considering something *different* as uncivilized and therefore the need for modernization. Likewise, according to G. Rist (2011), the myth on modernity and the discourses on civilization got legitimacy by linking civilization to a moral duty in the name of mankind. Similarly, moral responsibility was also used so as to make civilization a mission in order to preserve security and guarantee liberty for the colonized population (Ibid)[15].

In this way modern world system based on accumulation by dispossession, not only sought to bring binary divisions between the civilized versus savage, primitive/traditional versus modern/ progressive, but according to Dussel (2000) and Quijano (2000), modern civilization has also brought and shaped a set of values, norms and important knowledge systems that still prevails in modern societies. Among them we can identify the notion of modern state formation, liberal notions of democracy, market- orientated economy; all these legitimized by specific forms of structures and policies. Likewise there are other norms and values, closely

---

15Rist (2011) suggests: "Since the colonies exist, it is necessary to administer them- even if it is though that they were "blundered into." It is too late for discussions, even if the interest that the metropolis draws from the overseas territories is not as high as people would have it. On top of the moral obligation, there is a moral responsibility. The past cannot be changed; no one must follow it through logically and convince oneself that this serves the interest of mankind" (Ibid: 55-56).

connected to the previous ones, which have gone beyond formal structures of power and entered mental structures of social imaginaries. In this respect we can identify notions of improvement, quality of life, competition, accumulation, private property linked to expropriation, progress and development; all important elements that constitute and shape modern civilization and that today seem to be the roots of unsustainable practices that cause severe climate changes. According to Quijano (2000), these are all social representations proven to be effective and long- lasting instruments of universal social domination because of two main reasons: 1) The formation of independent nation- states, led mostly by Latin-American seigniors and the bourgeoisie class, embraced in most cases similar political and economic interests as previous European colonial powers, 2) Social imaginaries and representations were not only reinforced by formal policy-making but they managed to enter into the interior worlds of people and communities by altering their cultural orientations .

In this sense it is important to question how, despite formal political independence in the Latin American continent, modern postulates still shapes knowledge systems. This is not a negative outcome in itself, thus modern civilization has also contributed to expand human's potentials and possibilities, however the crucial point is how certain values and consumption patterns, made universal, are today threatening life on earth.

In this sense, the aim behind this task is to review on how certain modern categories not only replace others, but also how they activate a structural crisis unless we start to rethink notions on growth progress and development. Indeed modern representations seemed rather to pursue the same principles of capital accumulation, exploitation of nature and high consumption patterns that sought to be the problem rather than the solution itself. As such, it is crucial to get an insight on how these specific but dominant forms of conceiving reality are reproduced and legitimized through indulgent forms and modes of being and thinking. In other words, the construction and preservation of specific attitudes, perceptions, values and notions are considered part of social constructions embedded in specific historical processes of power-relations.

3.2 Coloniality of Power:

Along the same lines of thought, Quijano (2000) advocates that modern civilization and modern capitalism cannot be limited to formal structures of power, but it also involves the control of thoughts and actions. As such, Quijano suggests a socio-historical analysis of modern civilization and offers a rigorous analysis on power relation between formal and

informal or indulgent forms of power. According to Quijano (Ibid.), in order for the modern enterprise to become a hegemonic matrix of power, and reach the most remote areas of the ones being colonized, the following processes are needed. As mentioned earlier, it is essential to keep in mind that colonization processes did not only involve material plunder of the colonized, but also the dispossession of people's own and singular historic identities (Ibid.). The people of the new world, with own and different cultural identities, knowledge production and traditions, were victims of a homogeneous regime which reduced diversity into a simple expression of primitiveness. By doing so, the intellectual legacy of the colonized people was dismissed and underestimated; a condition that sought to bring deep and durable material and mental colonialism.

Through this processes regions and populations were attributed new geocultural identities and it involved the creation of the Indian, as a new racial, colonial and negative identity. "*In the production of these new identities, the coloniality of the new model of power was, without a doubt, one of the most active determinations* "(Quijano 2000: 8).

The second process involved in the formation of modern civilization as hegemonic, which inevitably became the result of the former, is the denial of the Indians as creative subjects of change. This means that while Indians are denied their active participation in transforming their own reality, they are also invisibilized. This process "*involved the plundering of their place in the history of the cultural production of humanity. From then on, they were inferior races, capable only of producing inferior cultures*" (Ibid: 20).

This model of power is known as *coloniality*, and it is based on cultural domination that manages to locate one knowledge system above the others, this is meant to say a process where different conceptual formations are being subjugated by the hegemonic and Eurocentric modes of knowing. *"Europe's hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and especially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony"* (Ibid: 8).

In this respect, colonization involved the control of cognitive perspectives; modes of producing and giving meaning to historical and symbolic experiences of the world, a social structure that still persist in contemporary societies. This is manifested through multiple and different forms, but it is mainly sustained and practiced through coloniality of power.

"*In effect, all of the experiences, histories, resources, and cultural products ended up in one global culture order revolving around European or Western hegemony. Europe's hegemony over the new model of global power concentrated all forms of the control of subjectivity, culture, and specially knowledge and the production of knowledge under its hegemony*" (Ibid: 8).

As such, colonialism sought out to bring *coloniality*, but coloniality on the other hand endures colonialism by naturalizing cultural processes and knowledge systems, making them appear neutral and free from power- relations. This Peruvian author suggests then that, despite formal independence, colonialism prevails through coloniality of power. In a strict way this is meant to say; epistemic colonialism.

In other words, coloniality of power reproduces the perspective of the colonizer and locates itself in the interior universe of the ones who are being dominated. It is an attack on the identity of the other (Quijano 2000). Quijano resumes this idea in the following way:

"The model of power based on coloniality also involved a cognitive model, a new perspective of knowledge within which non- Europe was the past, and because of that inferior, if not always primitive" (Ibid: 20).

It is crucial to situate this discussion within the formation of modern civilization and modern capitalist world-system and to look at how specific patterns of thought and action derives from these systems and manages to shape views and attitudes.

3.3. Concluding Remarks

Overall, the present analytical section attempt to study modernity and its relationship with colonialism. In this concern I have identified, by building on concepts employed by Dussel and Quijano, that modernity is not a historic moment, but a historic process embedded in historical and colonial forms of power- relations that got legitimacy not only through formal structures of power but also by altering traditional knowledge systems and cultural processes.

As such, when drawing on modern civilization, I do not attempt to undertake the analysis of colonization and modernity as two separated moments in history, but to rather establish points of contact that can illustrate the complex matrix of power embedded in these processes. In this

concern, the aim is to enhance a critical assessment, based on the theoretical contributions by the MC research group, on modernity and its linkages to colonialism.

In this respect the purpose was to undertake a detailed analysis of Dussel's theory on the myth of modernity and Quijano's concept on the coloniality of power. The reason for this is to deconstruct dominant views on modernity as an Intra- European phenomenon and suggest alternate perspectives that challenge these views. In this concern, Dussel (2000) offers a rigorous analysis by basing his approach to modernity on two different but interdependent stages. The first one, the first stage of modernity, referring to colonialism and the second stage of modernity, referring to modern Europe, are interwoven and entrenched in a process of rational and irrational constructions of thought and action. On the one hand this complex process appeals to the idea of progress and human improvement, but on the other hand, this process has historically involved the exploitation and plundering of other cultures and territories. As such, modernity seemed to be an historical construction bounded and constituted through colonization. I am putting an emphasize on coloniality of power in order to disclose colonization as a persistent form of domination that manifests itself not merely through economic and military power, but also through the cultural construct, social imaginaries and epistemic domination.

In this sense, if we are to understand the complex dynamics between modernity and colonization and expose it to a critical review, it is important to understand the concept of coloniality of power by Quijano. This is essential in order to enhance an analytical understanding of how colonization through cultural means of domination, persist in society.

In this respect, the conceptual approach employed by Quijano offers a distinctive way to perceive colonization as a process rather than a moment, and he shows how this process manages to sustain colonial binaries by refined means.

The main objective of this section has been to illustrate how modern capitalism was consolidated and how, through colonization and the incorporation of peripheral regions into a world economic order, became a worldwide system. This has been possible through the expropriation of land, resources, the introduction of new production- consumption patterns and most importantly making modern postulates on growth and progress universal values for all. These processes were taken ahead through violent means, but also through indulgent forms of domination. Coloniality of power turns a useful analytical tool in this regard and reveals the way modern culture still manages to shape ways of thinking and being. In the

context of Latin- American, modern postulates have not only managed to underestimate other practices that have been considered obstacles for further modernization, such as indigenous endeavors, but modern premises have also activated unsustainable practices and life styles based on high consumption and accumulation. It is precisely these processes that have generated a multidimensional crisis of modern capitalism

In the next section I intent to undertake an in-depth analysis on conventional notions of development by identifying development as one of the most important cultural constructs of modernity in the 20th century.

Section II

3.4 "Theoretical Foundations and the Field of Development"

In the first section of this chapter I undertook a critical analysis on modernity and introduced alternative views that look at colonialism as an inherent part of modern constellation. Moreover I have argued that these twofold and interwoven processes have shaped specific knowledge systems, perceptions, social representations and values that are all maintained and reinforced through coloniality of power.

Coloniality of power suggests a persistent and profound coloniality of minds and behavior that operates in different interrelated domains of power such as the control of economy, the control of authority (institutions, policies), and the control of intersubjectivity, knowledge and culture (Yehia 2006).

As such, we can identify a range of modern social constructs that shapes our perception on reality, such as notions on nation-state formation, representative democracy, liberty, progress as economic growth and development. In this section I will examine conventional notions of development through a socio- historical analysis, and then examine connections between this notion and modern world system. Thereby the intention is to outline a brief introduction to the main perspectives that have shaped this field of study, taking into consideration the pluralistic character of development studies. As such I agree with Shanmugaratnam (2005) in the idea that shifts in development paradigm or theory are not taken on in a radical form. On the contrary; "*theoretical shifts in development thinking are invariably evolutionary and some ideas discarded at one time may regain currency at other times, while some ideas may persist throughout evolutionary changes*" (Ibid: 2).

In this section, I identify the principal theoretical approaches that have shaped the field of development. The intention is to draw on the main elements that constitute each theoretical approach and identify the common postulates among these approaches. The idea of growth will play a crucial role in this regard, thus this postulate has persisted throughout evolutionary changes and constitutes at present time an underling if not central element for development analysis.

According to the Latin-American critical thinking, development is one of the foundational elements of modern civilization. Gudynas (2011) suggests that this notion is deeply rooted in modern culture and needs to be exposed to a critical analysis in order to understand the positive and negative outcomes of development policies in Latin-America. In recent years growing criticism on development has arose in the continent. This is mainly because development policies, legitimized through the discourses on economic growth, have not fully managed to respond the expectations of the people involved. On the contrary, these policies might have exposed them and their environment to further social and environmental degradation.

This is clearly illustrated in how development discourses are used by national authorities to legitimize policies. This is evident in policies concerning extraction of natural resources such as minerals, oil and gas. These activities are sustained and made legal through discourses that they will increase employment rates, local development and economic growth.

Moreover, according to Sachs (2010) development goes beyond a solely socio-economic endeavor and plays also a crucial role in cultural processes. He suggests that development is also *"a perception which models reality, a myth which comforts society and a fantasy which unleashes passions"* (Ibid: 16)

This leads us back again to the idea of coloniality of power; on how development discourses shapes policies agencies, notions of change, improvement and subjectivities. The question is then whether conventional notions on development, in spite of its heterogonous character and the changes on study focus, are entrenched in modern postulates on growth that rather to be the solution seems to be the underlying problem of the present crisis. But in order to avoid narrow-minded explanations I will undertake a brief socio- historical introduction on development and the main theories shaping this field. I do so in order to understand the main postulates forming conventional development, and the reason behind growing criticism.

3.4.1 From a metaphor to the invention of underdevelopment:

The concept of development has had various meanings and connotations throughout history. Traditionally development has been used to describe a process through which the potentialities of an object or organism are released (Esteva et.al. 2010). Development then has been used to explain the natural growth of plants and animals and became an important

39

category in explaining the evolution of living beings. It is crucial to highlight three main features that involves the development of a living organism 1) directionality; growth has a direction and a purpose followed by clearly identified stages, 2) continuity; there is a change of appearance but not a change on nature itself, 3) cumulativeness; the stages of growth from lower to higher stage depends upon each other and fortunately leads to a state of completion (Rist 2011: 27).

Although development had been transferred from a biological metaphor to a social metaphor (social change) in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the idea of social change or development was still thought in terms of biological growth (Ibid.). As such, according to Rist (Ibid) development, understood as social change, was caught in the clutches of naturalist ideology, a perspective that was reinforced with the notion of progress. Development was then understood as ''a natural principle with its own source of dynamism, which grounds the possibility of a grand narrative'' (Ibid: 39). In this view neither progress nor development can be interrupted, thus both follows natural stages of progression imposed as a natural law for all. These stages, in spite of the differences, agree on three main postulates: 1) progress has the same nature as history, 2) all nations travel the same road, 3) all nations do not advance at the same speed as western society, which therefore has an indisputable lead because of the greater size of its production, the dominant role that reason plays within it, and the scale of its scientific and technological discoveries'' (Ibid: 40). These suppositions led to two main concerns. First, because all nations travel the same road of progress and development, non-western societies that had own previous forms of self- governing structures, were deprived from their own history and culture. Development seems to be one and the same for all in accordance with modern perceptions. Moreover by arguing that some nations advance faster than others due to their production rates and technological innovations, colonialism and historical power- relations, that made the gap between rich and poor nations possible in the first place, are naturalized and ripped out from modern history.

In general, since the formation of colonial world system and modern capitalism, concepts and ideologies from the enlightenment period, such as growth and progress, have shaped the notions of development. Although these notions have changed throughout history, Rist (Ibid.) suggests that they are still embedded in naturalistic approaches to what is considered change and improvement. Many views on development are still deeply bound to economic growth and capital accumulation and, are as such entrenched in modern epistemic tradition of change

and improvement. By this we mean that there are close historical linkages between the enlightenment ideology, modern civilization and conventional development discourses.

In the following section the aim is to outline some of the most dominant theories that have shaped the field of development.

3.4.2 Transformations or Mutations?

Although the term development had been constructed some time before, it was not until the aftermath of the Second World War that this term started to play a crucial role in the formation of a new international order. It was with the famous speech in 1949 by the then president of the United States, Harry Truman that the development age was inaugurated through discourses and institutionalized policies. Development was then presented as a set of scientific and technical measurements detached from political and even more so from ideological positions. "It was this emblematic epic which gave rise to a new era of development policies and strategies as well as the creation of underdevelopment regions synonym for economically backward areas" (Rist 2011: 72).

Truman's speech took place during a complex world-wide situation. Europe was in the beginning of a reconstruction process after the war and United States achieved an undisputable position worldwide. In this context, various international agencies emerged, such as the United Nations, the WB, the IMF and the international joint defense organization, NATO among others.

In Truman's speech we can identify two fundamental ideas that still play a crucial role in the construction of development discourses. The first and perhaps most important are the notions of economic growth and the overall production of material goods as synonyms of progress and welfare. From this point of view the key stone to solve the worldwide concerns on poverty and malnutrition is based on economic imperatives of growth. If we go back to previous assumptions made before the 1800 century, we can identify a series of similarities that displays similar premises of development. These include the idea of growth as natural and sequential with clearly defined stages and the idea of cumulativeness, that is the perceptions on change from inferior to superior, from lower to higher to finally reach a completely developed stage. From this point of view development is presented as a natural order of

growth, and when this is done the risk is to obscure the historical circumstances that made growth possible in the first place.

Second, with the speech of Truman the noun underdevelopment was also introduced. This new term, referring essentially to economically backward areas, altered significantly the way international relations were conceived. A new binary division between the different parts of the world was introduced, mainly characterized by countries' capacity to increase economic growth and achieve certain levels of welfare. But this division was not antagonist it rather involved the idea of underdevelopment as something incomplete. As such "underdevelopment was not the opposite of development, only its incomplete form; an acceleration of growth was thus the only logical way of bridging the gap" (Ibid: 74). This new concept changed radically the way of perceiving north- south relations, thus it was no longer about the hostile colonizer/colonized opposition, but about a single family where the laws of development are supposedly the same for all (Ibid.).

"*The world is conceived not as a structure in which each element depends upon the others, but as a collection of formally equal individual- nations. One recognized here the ideology of equal opportunities and the 'self- made man*" (Rist 2011: 75).

3.5 Modernization Theories

Since its formal inauguration in 1949, the concept of development based on economic imperatives of growth, was reinforced and intensified with the theories of W. W. Rostow. His thesis was deeply embedded in modernization theories and played a crucial role in shaping the field of development. In his book, The Stages of Economic Growth, Rostow (1960) proposes a series of stages which will eventually lead to a complete degree of development that is the age of high mass consumption. More specifically he divides between the following stages: 1) the traditional society, 2) preconditions for takeoff, 3) takeoff, 4) the march toward maturity, and 5) the age of high mass consumption. According to Rostow's thesis, societies have a natural desire of improving their economic and material conditions and therefore pursue a superior stage of maturity. Moreover, in order to achieve this goal, technological advancements, industrialization and exploitation of nature must be embraced so that high mass consumption societies can be constructed upon the bases of increased goods on the market (Ibid.).

Moreover, according to Rostow, the conditions for accomplishing capital accumulation in a society depend on the pursuit of a take-off- stage which can eventually lead to self-generated growth. By this he means that each and every society is responsible for achieving a stage of improvement that can successfully lead to a high mass consumption society. This theory has been criticized because it intends to portray development as a universal strategy for improvement, without taking into consideration cultural differences, local histories, identities and traditions. Moreover, this position also tends to naturalize power- relations when affirming that the stages of immaturity are due to poor technical knowledge and inefficient economic systems that inevitable leads to weak or low levels of productivity. Accordantly, Esteva (2010) suggests that development is, in this respect, understood as a "*comparative adjective whose base of support is the assumption..(..)..of the oneness, homogeneity and linear evolution of the world. It displays a falsification of reality produced through dismembering the totality of interconnected processes that make up the world's reality and, in its place, it substitutes one of its fragments, isolated from the rest as a general point of reference*" (Ibid: 8).

In this respect, some of the most central critics on Rostow's approach to development as divided in stages are concerned firstly by his linear approach to history. For Rostow cultural diversity is not an element that is considered when analyzing social improvement. In the same way, socio-historical circumstances are not taking into account. As such, this theory fails in recognizing the existence of other ways of perceiving and practicing development, change, improvement and welfare which does not necessarily respond to market-orientated solutions nor to patters of material accumulation.

Overall, Rostow has been criticized for adapting an evolutionists approach to society that fails to look at social dynamics and cultural changes throughout history. As a result of growing criticisms and increased poverty rates at a global scale, theorists and development policy makers saw the necessity of amplifying the notion of development so that other social determinants in addition to economic growth would to be included. The reconceptualization of development, as J.B Lara (s.a.) asserts, is mainly due to the shortcomings that modernization theories on development have faced in theory and practice.

As a result, a new development strategy emerged, that is *The Basic Need Approach.*

3.6 The Basic Need Approach

The Basic Need Approach came to be known with the speech of the then WB President, Robert McNamara, in 1972. This approach to development arose in a complex context where it started to become obvious that increased economic growth not necessarily led to decreased poverty rates. On the contrary these processes were even perceived as interdependent where one causes the other. The Basic Need Approach arose as an attempt to reconcile the imperative of economic growth with social justice.

In general terms, the central idea of this approach was to request developing countries to invest in areas of nutrition, housing, health, literacy and employment (Rist 2011). The primary objective, from this point of view, is to increase the productivity of the poor so that they can be integrated to the global economic system. That is, the aim was to relocate development strategies within the frame of basic necessities, without altering or questioning the global economic order.

In this sense, this new development framework sought out to bring a new turn on the way development was traditionally perceived and managed. It was then no longer economic growth the only factor that needed to be pursuit but also the redistribution of growth and the satisfaction of basic human needs. Central to this strategy were national food and nutrition planning and integrated rural development. The latter component was pursued in order to increase the production of food crops by small farmers. According to the WB "Rural development is clearly designed to increase production and raise productivity. It is concerned with the monetization and modernization of society, and with its transition from traditional isolation to integration with the national economy" (Ibid 1975: 90- 91).

However, although this development strategy raises questions on growth and distribution policies, this framework remain within the narratives of economic growth, productivity and modernization. This has inevitably shaped the way this strategy contemplate needs that seem to be entrenched in the tenets of economistic thinking where needs can only be solved through high productivity, markets, investments and progress.

But, according to some critical views, needs are not only about productivity and access to material possessions, but needs are also socially constructed and they obey to different historical and cultural contexts that are all shaped by values, norms and social perceptions.

For instance, for national authorities and the WB, rural poverty can only be reduced by integrating peasants into the modern economy. However, from the point of view of the peasant this "integration" itself is the root of their problems (Escobar et.al 2010). This is because incorporating a modern economy into their livelihoods also leads to changes in their production and consumption patterns that might dismiss their own local structures.

This development approach has also been criticized for entailing a conciliatory position regarding the economic imperative of growth, and as such, although it stresses that growth alone is not enough to reach development, it bases its view on the idea that needs are necessarily linked to scarcity and can only be solved through the production of commodities.

"*Within such a perspective, only the (unlimited) growth of production can lead to the happiness of final satisfaction*" (Rist 2011: 168). Hence, in this way, growth is perceived as a natural law of society detached from historical, political and social determinants. This leads to the idea that the only way to satisfy the basic needs of the human being is by unlimited production of growth and the mediation of the market.

3.7 Sustainable development

As a result of theoretical and practical limitations on the basic needs approach, more attention has been given to current wellbeing and its linkages with the wellbeing of future generations. In addition, policies on how to combat poverty has remained a crucial issue in studies on development along with the continued debates and discussions on limited natural resources, climate changes and growing socio- environmental conflicts. In this context, it has been given increasing attention to studies on how to preserve eco- systems as well as contesting poverty. In this respect, two factors were acknowledged; poverty had to be abolished so that resources could be managed in a sustainable manner and needs have its socio- ecological limitations and consequences (Sachs 2010)[16]. Accordantly, the problems caused on the environment were focused on high poverty rates and the solution at stake was to lift out people from poverty through further economic growth and development policies.

---

[16] According to W.Sachs (2010), widespread deforestation and desertification all over, made it possible to identify the poor as agents of destruction and targets of campaigns to promote 'environmental consciousnesses and this without considering the socio-economic implications, mostly induced by displacement of poor farmers and their occupation of vulnerable and unfertile land.

The Brundtland commission (1987), composed mainly by environmentalists, seems to be a positive as well as necessary turn in this respect. The first report published by this committee in 1987, *Our common future*, introduces a whole list of threats to the planet's ecological equilibrium (Rist 2011:180)[17]. The central objective of the Brundtland commission was to articulate environmental concerns with development policies. As such a new and persuasive development category emerged, namely **sustainable development**.

"*Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable- to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept of sustainable development does imply limits- not absolute but limitation imposed by the present state of technology and social organization on environmental resources and by the ability of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. But technology and social organization can be both managed and improved to make way for a new era of economic growth*" (World Commission 1988: 8).

In general, this development strategy suggests balancing human needs, by embracing a new era of economic grown and environmental policies (Ibid.). This framework pursues development through a new and innovative management of science and technology, while searching for equilibrium between human needs, economic growth and the preservation of the environment. As such, this new development perspective maintains the idea of further consumption patterns but within a sustainable ecological framework (Lara s.a.).Therefore, from an ecological point of view, when focusing on sustainability, the emphasis is mainly on how to continue using nature within a framework that allows the ecosystem to regenerate itself.

However, although important international institutions, NGOs and others devoted substantial attention to this strategy, it cannot withstand criticisms. One central critique is that although sustainable development embraces a new perspective on the role of the environment for future generations and society as a whole, this notion still stays within the frames of economic growth and hence; "doesn't suggests anything that would encourage the industrial countries to

---

17Deforestation, soil erosion, greenhouse effects, the hole in the ozone layer, food chain, water supplies, energy, urbanization, extinction of animal species and biodiversity (Rist 2011: 180).

make basic changes in their consumption patterns" (Rist 2011: 185). It does not involve any attempt to consider any reduction of material standard of living or to slow down the logics of accumulation. As Sachs (1995) asserts "In the eyes of developmentalists, the "limits to growth" did not call for abandoning the race, but for changing the running technique" (Ibid: 4). Indeed, sustainable development was the result of growing concerns on how growth not only depends on technological innovations, capital formation and skilled manpower, but also on the long- term availability of natural recourses   (Ibid: 3). This was a decisive turn, thus it opened way to the emergence of new strategies that can conserve natural resources in order to maintain unlimited growth.

In this sense, the logics inscribed to this development strategy, *produce more with less*, holds on to a contradictory position that conceives nature and society as two detached realms. It fails in recognizing that nature has its limits mainly because of extraction- policies, inexorable consumption patterns and further contamination that respond to the processes of profitability, competition and accumulation of capital. According to Shiva et.al (2010) "*sustainability in this context does not involve recognition of the limits of nature and the necessity of adhering to them. Instead it simply means ensuring the continued supply of raw materials for industrial production, the ongoing flow of evermore commodities, the indefinite accumulation of capital- and all this to be achieved by setting arbitrary limits on nature*" (Ibid: 240)

Furthermore, according to Rist (2011), sustainable development follows similar premises of previous conventional theoretical approaches on development. This is because it fails in questioning the dominant economic paradigm on growth and rather identifies growth as the main determinant for accomplishing equal distribution of wealth. This has shown to be a false assumption (Rist 2011). Although sustainable development unfolds interesting projects on environmental conservation, such as the use of alternative energies, the creation of better means of waste disposal, production of less carbon, recycling mechanisms and others, it still remains a contradictory framework that responds to short- term strategies (Ibid). Critical voices have argued that if we really want sustainability, then we need to change the economic paradigm, otherwise sustainable development remains either rhetoric or a localized project of short lasting mechanisms[18].

18Among these critical studies we can find the work of: L. Boff "Sustainable development: A critique of the standard model", W. Sachs (1995) "No sustainability without development", G. Rist (2011) "The history of development", among others.

Furthermore, if the aim of the Brundtland commission was to redefine the relationship between development and the environment; firstly it should have looked at how people and societies perceive and interact with their environment and secondly, it should have located growth culturally and historically (Ibid: 187). This means to understand growth as a process that simultaneously involves mechanisms of enrichment and impoverishment. This task implies to deconstruct growth from the social imaginary as something natural and universal. Having failed to consider these issues, sustainable development remains in the clutches of the economic imperative of growth and the question at stake is whether it is possible to imagine an economic growth that is socially and environmentally sustainable.

3.8 Human development

When searching for a new development model, UNDP formulated a new initiative taken ahead by Mahbud ul- Haq whom have had experience in working for the WB, the Hammarskjöld Foundation Report and others. Together with important consultants such as Amartya Sen, Frances Stewart and the UNDP secretariat among others, the concept "human development" was officially known in 1990 through the series of annual reports named *Human development report* (Ibid.).

Human development is defined as "*a process of enlarging the opportunities of being human. In principle these opportunities can be infinite and change over time. However, at all levels of development, the three most essential are: enjoy a long and healthy life, acquire knowledge and access to resources needed to achieve a decent standard of living*" (UNDP 1991: 34).

More specifically, human development is presented through an "internationally comparative level of deprivation", which determines how far from the underdeveloped countries are from the most successful national cases (Esteva et.al. 2010: 14). The methodology consists of ranking 130 countries along a numerical scale that reflects the global level of human development combines with social variables that seek to create a broader picture of the level of development of a specific country (Ibid).

The objectives behind this strategy are twofold. In one hand, the intention is to break- off with the economic imperative that has dominated the notion of development in order to facilitate that development performance of southern countries can be perceived in a different way (Rist

2011). On the other hand, it aims to accomplish the former objective by replacing the conventional economic variable GDP with a new *human development indicator* (HDI) which can capture and measure income, life expectancy, education and freedom. Indeed, when suggesting that wealth is not synonym of growth per se, but rather a mean that needs to be fairly distributed among the population, conventional notions on development are challenged. Likewise *human development* acknowledge that there are not necessary causal links between increased economic growth and greater human wellbeing, as there are countries with less income but more human development achievements and vice versa. As such, this development strategy unfolds a new and broad perspective on the relationship between means and ends and invites to analyze development as a process rather than just merely economic or material results (Satrústegui 2009). This idea is explicitly asserted in the Human development report from 1990:

"*..according to this conception of human development, income is clearly only one option that people would like to have, albeit an important one...development must, therefore, be more than just the expansion of income and wealth. Its focus must be people*" (Ibid: 10)[19].

Although this new development strategy has been positively accepted, there are still some important critics that are crucial to outline. Firstly, although HDI (The index of human development) attempts to broaden up development strategies by introducing new development variables into its analysis, complex social relations such as inequalities, discrimination and participation are important factors that remain unmeasured.

Moreover, although HDI is an instrument that has managed to reveal that there is not necessarily causal linkages between income and welfare (Villa 1999), this proposal remains detached from a continued and systematic analysis on why economic imperatives of growth perceives material scarcity as an obstacle to the enlargement of possibilities. This means that although human development has managed to distinguish between economic growth and social welfare, this view fails in challenging the abundance versus scarcity loci embedded in modern imperative of growth. This is an important element because it has often been this binary division that has defined the perceptions on quality of life. Human's possibilities are today, if not determined, at least dominated by what the market has to offer in terms of material objects. In this context, expansion on choices and possibilities also means the

---

19 Own translation from Spanish, (Satrústegui 2009).

expansion of commodity production that necessarily involves social and environmental consequences. Moreover, a range of possibilities does not only have social implications on the environment, but it also involves interpersonal relations. For instance one can chose between different car models, and that is not necessarily something negative, but the problem at stake is that when choosing and changing different car models, one is also limiting or reducing people's access to clean air. As such, a choice made by one person does necessarily have an impact on the rest. A choice or possibility is not an individual act; it involves the society and hence the personal and the social spheres are interwoven. Lastly, it is crucial to take into consideration that needs and choices remain embedded in cultural traditions and alternate knowledge systems that cannot be proclaimed universal. This means that when human development proclaims the expansion of possibilities, the way of looking at possibilities will necessarily be different or even contrasting depending on socio- historical determinants.

3.9 Reflection and Considerations

In this section I started my analysis by arguing that modern world system has historically created modern social constructs that shapes policies, structures and social imaginaries that today seem to be immersed in a multidimensional crisis of economic, political, environmental and cultural concerns. In this sense, my thesis holds on to the idea that development, being a modern construct based on the imperatives of economic growth, is also a category that is in crisis.

I have outlined a brief and systematic analysis on the main theories and approaches that have shaped the field of development (although many have been left out due to lack of space), and it has been shown that development strategies are still shaped and determined by economic imperatives of growth. This can be illustrated in Truman's speech on the new era of development and underdevelopment, the Basic Need Approach, the concept of sustainable development and lastly the human development strategy. Although the last proposal seems to entail a critical view on economic growth as synonymous of wellbeing, it still stands within the frames of growth by not fully problematizing the consequences behind the expansion of human's possibilities and choices.

In general terms, by revealing that imperatives of growth still shape most of the development strategies suggested, the question at stake is whether development takes part of the problem rather than the solution of the present crisis. This is important to note thus, as portrayed in the

introductory part, conventional views on economic growth denotes further exploitation of natural resources, market economy, high consumption patterns, faith in progress and accumulation of capital. The inquiry then is whether it is possible to imagine a development strategy outside conventional imperatives of growth. According to Rist, development responds the promise of abundance as something natural, positive, necessary and indisputable (Rist 2011: 214). By this it is shown that development is an historical construct based on modern culture on exceptional growth.

In overall, this analysis offers two main ideas: On the one hand, although there are distinctive differences between each and every one of the development strategies presented, there is a common character for all; development is a way of thinking which ties many different practices and aspiration to a common set of assumption (Sachs 1995: 1) And because "knowledge is intimately related to power, development thinking inevitably featured certain social actors (for example, international agencies) and certain types of social transformation (for example, technology transfer), while marginalizing other social actors and degrading other kinds of change" (Ibid: 1).

In the next Chapter, I attempt to give a brief overview on the treatment on development in Latin- America, specially drawing particular attention to the CEPAL school, and the dependency theories. Moreover, in section II of the same chapter, I intend to outline the main criticism on conventional development taken place in the continent.

CHAPTER IV

Section I

"Approaches to Development from Latin- America: The Periphery and Development as a Socio- Historical Construction"

In contrast to other continents, Latin- America achieved political independence as early as the 19th century. And, as time passed, certain ideas on nationalism, modern-states and market economy were reinforced. Parallel to the processes of independence and nationalism, the emerging dominant classes on the continent incorporated similar if not identical social perceptions of governance as the ones of previous colonies and, at the same time as they were highly influenced by the enlightenment ideologies of progress and growth (Quijano 2000). More specifically, according to Rist (2011), modernization theories have played a crucial and constant role in shaping views on development for the countries of the north and countries of the south. He suggests that "modernization theory, for the countries of the south, entrusted the promise of a better future to the new ruling classes that were accumulating tokens of Westernization as they lined their own pockets" (Ibid: 109).

Similarly, the modern-traditional dichotomy, based on Lewis, A. (1955) approach to development, also shaped the social imaginaries of improvement. An example of that is the fact that rural areas were still considered backward due to their non-rational processes of decision- making and limited social mobility. The division line was drawn between export-oriented production sector and subsistence sector. Dominant views on change were mainly determined by the notions of modernization that, with the emergence of national bourgeoisie, was conjugated with the ides of development (Roitman s.a).

In this context, perceptions of change and development were, if not totally dominated, at least very much influenced by modernization theories that holds on to the idea of growth as synonymous of development. These views have historically been challenged by different counterparts. On one hand it has been argued that it is possible to achieve development as long as the economy changes focus from export of primary products to expanding industrialization strategies. On other side, since the 1990s, different movements, both social

and intellectual, have succeed in casting a serious doubt not only on the viability but on the very desirability of development (Escobar 1995).

It is central to my analysis in this section to illustrate the fundamental debates on development in Latin-America. The main purpose is to show how colonial imperatives of growth are still key elements that constitutes and shapes perceptions on development in the continent. In order to embark on this task I will enhance a brief and systematic analysis on the main theoretical approaches on development in the continent, namely the theories of the CEPAL and the dependency school. It is important to keep in mind that although my attention is drawn to these specific approaches to development, there are still other perspectives that I, due to lack of space, will not touch in detail in this section[20].

4.1 The CEPAL School (Economic Commission for Latin America): Theories and strategies on how to solve underdevelopment

In addition to the modernization theories, roughly portrayed in the previous chapter, a new model of economic development, encouraged in the late 1940's by a group of the Latin American economists in the economic commission for Latin America (**CEPAL**), was becoming widespread.

The CEPAL school was concerned about the consequences of Latin-America remaining a producer of raw materials. These economists belonging to this school considered that being a producer of raw materials only had serious limitations in terms of international trade, considering that market prices were in constant fluctuations and because the periphery[21] was not equipped with high technological mechanism for making the production more efficient.

"*The CEPAL economists based their approach on the empirical demonstration of the historical deterioration of the terms of trade against primary goods from the countries of the periphery… the deterioration of the term of trade was seen as a reflection of the fact that the advances in technical progress were concentrated in the industrialized center*" (Escobar 1995: 80).

---

[20]In this respect I am mainly pointing at studies on post structuralism, postmodernism, postcolonial and cultural studies (Clark 2006).

[21]The terms central and periphery were used by CEPAL as elements of their explanation for an unequal trade system. This critique of international trade was enhanced by G. Myrdal in 1956. To expand on this idea look at development and underdevelopment. G. Myrdal 1956.

In this way the CEPAL school encouraged a new model of economic development based on the import substitutions industry with the aim of building a regional economic grouping (Rist 2011). Moreover, this school of thought also emphasizes on the role of the state as a mediator of inequalities and as the central actor in carrying out land reform and ensuring a better distribution of investment and wealth (Ibid).

In this respect, the CEPAL school proposed a series of economic solutions to the conditions of underdevelopment in the region. At first hand, they argued that because capital accumulation in the periphery is low, specific domestic industrialization policies are needed in order to increase it. Escobar explains this by stating that:

"*The answer thus lay in programs of domestic industrialization that would allow countries to manufacture at home goods there were previously imported. The name given to this strategy is import substitution industrialization*" (Ibid: 80).

In general, the CEPAL's theories challenged a number of orthodox economic theories, such as those concerning international trading, and they provided a more complex view on development by including structural factors such as distribution, central- periphery relations and the role of the state. Nonetheless, the CEPAL school received growing criticisms from two sides; on the one hand, conservative sectors claimed that the new economic policies proposed were not more than another socialist economic proposal in a camouflaged form, while progressive and left- orientated sectors argues that the CEPAL was only interested in capital accumulation and did not include analysis of class into their studies. Moreover the dependentistas[22] argued that, although this economic school contributed with interesting inputs to understand development as a worldwide phenomenon, they still remain within the imperatives of economic development. As Cardoso (1977) put it, the ideas of the CEPAL constituted the "originality of a copy". This discussion is taken ahead by the dependentistas,

---

[22]The term dependentistas is used to portray the members that established the dependency school. Among them we can include, Paul Baran, Paul Sweezy from the US, Raul Prebish, Oswaldo Sunkel in Chile, Dos Santos, Fernando H. Cardoso , Enzo Faletto and Celso Furtado in Brazil, Orlando Fals Borda in Colombia, Rodolfo Stavenhagen in Mexico, and later international researcher, such as André Gunder Frank, Pierre Jalée, Dieter Senghaas, Samir Amin and Johan Galtung were included.

4.2 The dependency school: A radicalization of the CEPAL's theory:

The main concern of the **dependency school**[23]was to study the historical phenomena of dependency within the Latin-American countries, and this was considered crucial in order to understand their relationship to the international capitalist system (Rist 2011: 116). In line with the CEPAL school, the dependentistas were concerned about the economic dependence of the peripheral countries upon central capitalist countries, but above all they were interested in how dependency- relations go beyond economic concerns as well as it involves cultural and political aspects (Shanmugaratnam 2005).

"*By analyzing the relationship between development and underdevelopment within a historical- structural perspective, they thought they could show that foreign domination was passed on in internal domination*" (Rist 2011: 116) By this is meant to say that dependency is not only sustained by external forces, but also with the collaboration of the ruling classes of the dependent countries (Shanmugaratnam 2005). In other words, the dependency theory suggests the existence of external dependency and internal exploitation. This analytical framework managed to provide an alternative view on development by linking internal and external constraints within the structures of worldwide capitalism. Indeed, the dependency theory provided an opportunity to broaden and redefine the scope of economics by inserting it into the socio- political order, "so that it was no longer treated as an independent variable" (Rist 2011: 118).

However, the dependency theory has contributed with important views to the field of development; there are still some shortcoming and oversimplifications that are central to the outline. One of them is the idea that development of the Center is based on the underdevelopment of the periphery. This assumption makes the peripheral countries into passive victims of the expanding capitalist society, placing the responsibility for the process of development- underdevelopment in the Center (Ibid). Moreover, the dependentistas are also characterized by not offering concrete solutions to the problems they posed. According to Cardoso (1977), one of the critical views within this framework, the dependentistas are content to propose the same type of development for underdeveloped countries. As such, it seems that for the dependency school the problem was not much with development as with capitalism. In this respect, it has been argued that this theoretical perspective might have

---

[23]For a more in-depth review on the debates of dependency, see M. Blonstrom and B. Hettne,, *Development theory in Transtision(1984)*; Z. Press Junt. The dependency debate and beyond (1989); R. Tansey and M. R. Hyman Dependency theory (1994).

managed to deconstruct underdevelopment, revealing its origins, class interests and international relations, but on the other hand they have not managed to fully grasp on development itself (Clark 2006). One might then question whether this framework managed to challenge modern perceptions on wellbeing. Cardoso stressed that the dependency theory left the cultural aspect of development unquestioned and in doing so it also failed in looking at alternate models based upon different political, ideological and cultural foundations.

In spite of the shortcoming of these development approaches, these have still made important contributions in the field of development. Below I have summarized some of the central arguments of both theories that have some points in common and other where they disagree:

4.2.1 Shared ideas between the CEPAL's theory and the dependency theories:

1. These theories share one common idea, that is that a center- periphery relationship exists between advanced, developed countries and less developed, immature, neocolonial and dependent countries. Both agree on the idea that the developed and the underdeveloped regions integrate the same unity or system and follow the same line of thought as A. G. Frank (1969); we are immersed in an age of "development of the underdevelopment."

2. The gap between the developed and the underdeveloped is caused by the asymmetrical distribution of economic and political power between the center and the periphery. This division was created and reinforced with capitalist modern system. The center gains disproportionate benefits of trade comparable to the periphery.

4.2.2 Disagreements between the CEPAL's theory and the dependency theories:

These schools of through differed in the analysis of modern capitalism and its effects upon underdeveloped regions.

According to the CEPAL school, it is possible to improve the social conditions of the underdeveloped regions within the capitalist system, by encouraging specific industrialization policies. With time the proposal of import substitutions policies (ISI) proved unsuccessful,

and it is at present time being replaced by productive transformation with equity policies (TPE). *"This is to say that Cepal's proposals were easily assimilated into the established views, to the extent that they lent themselves to a modernization process that international experts and national elites were eager to undertake…One may say generally that at the level of discursive regularities, the Cepal doctrine did not constitute a radical challenge* (Escobar 1995: 81).

However, according to the dependency theory, it is not possible to improve the social condition of peripheral regions unless the economic and political structures of power are modified. This is because the dominant economic order has failed in improving the social, economic and political conditions of the most vulnerable population. More importantly, the dichotomy of development/ underdevelopment needs to be critically assessed within the historical and social determinants. The question at stake is not whether we want further development, but rather to question what type of development and also the origins of underdevelopment. Hence, it is about questioning the very definition of underdevelopment, and more specifically in relationship to poverty, scarcity and other social imaginaries. At present time, critical intellectuals have sought to deconstruct notions of development and poverty. It has been recognized that local communities and indigenous groups for the last decade have encouraged the reconstruction of their territories and, as such, their own cultural knowledge systems outside dominant prescription on the dichotomies of development-underdevelopment and abundance- scarcity. We can even find communities where the meaning of poverty have historically represented something different than the modern concept of poverty, created by the spread of the market system (Rist 2011).

"For a long time, and in many cultures of the world, poor was not always the opposite of rich. Other considerations, such as falling form one's station in life, being deprived of one's instruments of labor, the loss of one's status or the marks of one's profession, lack of protection, exclusion from one's community … defined the poor" (Rahnema et.al. 2010: 174).

According to Rahnema (Ibid), it was not until the expansion of the mercantile economy and the monetization of society that poverty was firstly defined as a synonymous of lack or deficiency. In this sense, neither the CEPAL school nor the dependency theories managed to go beyond a set of dominant prescription on development.

4.3 Concluding remarks

In this section I have portrayed some of the most significant development theories in Latin-America and that is the approaches of the CEPAL school and the dependency theory. Both have significantly contributed to the field of development studies by introducing new elements for analysis. These have contributed to expand the field of development by including external and internal factors, such as international trading, industrialization, capitalist economy and internal exploitation, unequal distribution of wealth, the high class dominance, and the role of the State. Nonetheless both theoretical approaches also diverge in terms of whether it is possible to develop Latin America within the capitalist system. The CEPAL economists argue that this is possible as long as the countries of the region enhance new industrialization policies orientated toward domestic growth. The dependency school on the other hand, argues quite opposite, claiming that while the capitalist system is not challenged, Latin-America will not be developed.

Moreover, it is important to highlight that although both perspectives reveal structural economic differences between Center and periphery, none of them, to a lesser extend the dependency theories, offers a critical view on the idea of development itself. This theoretical gap has lately been exposed to criticism, especially within the field of cultural studies and post- colonial studies. The main argument is that the development-underdevelopment dichotomy is not only the product of ongoing asymmetrical relationships, but this dichotomy is also inscribed in modern ideas of wellbeing that itself seem to be the root of the present crisis and therefore need to be questioned an exposed to a critical analysis. .

As Escobar puts it; "Little by little this consensus started to erode because of a number of factors, both social (the increasing inability of development to fulfill its promises, the rise of movements that questioned its very rationality) and intellectual (the availability of new tools of analysis) (Escobar s.a 1).

In the 1990s, various critical approaches to development emerged. Some pursued a redefinition of development strategies while others aimed at questioning the very rationality of this enterprise. As such, a growing interest in studying development as a social construct that shapes the way social reality is perceived and acted upon emerged.

This is clearly illustrated in the following quote by Escobar (1995):

"*The early models had an implicit standard… By constructing the underdeveloped economy as characterized by a vicious circle of low productivity, lack of capital, and inadequate industrialization; development economists contributed to a view of reality in which the only things that counted were increased savings, growth rates, attacking foreign capital, developing industrial capacity. This excluded the possibility of articulating a view of social change as a project that could be conceived of not only in economic terms but as whole life project, in which the material aspects would be not the goal and the limit but a space of possibilities for broader individual and collective endeavors, culturally defined*" (Ibid: 83).

In this respect, I will in the next section, embrace a critical analysis on development by enhancing a deconstructive approach. I will mainly assess the primary postulates of conventional notions of development by drawing on critical analysis.

4.4 "Critical Latin- American Thinking and the Attempt to Deconstruct Conventional Notions of Development"

> *"It is becoming increasingly evident, at least for those who are struggling for different ways of having a voice, that the process of deconstructing and dismantling has to be accompanied by that of constructing new ways of seeing and acting. Needless to say, this aspect is crucial in discussions about development because people's survival is at stake"*
>
> Escobar (1995: 16).

In this section I examine a number of critical approaches to development promoted mainly by the Latin-American critical strand of thought. These critics will serve to contextualize and understand the origins of el Buen Vivir, that will be further analyzed in the next chapter.

This study adopts the method of *deconstructing development discourses*[24] , meaning an approach that look at the phenomena of development as an encompassing cultural space where knowledge systems, policy- making and subjectivities are formed and where people come to recognize themselves as developed or underdeveloped. In this matter development will not be looked as something positive per se, but rather as a modern cultural construction which goes beyond the economic endeavors and as such creates social representations and conceptual formations.

As portrayed above, underdevelopment was constantly problematized by various theoretical approaches such as the theories on modernity, the CEPAL school, the dependency theory and others. In this way underdevelopment was seen as the result of either weak economic productivity, lack of industrialized policies, inefficient domestic growth and asymmetrical power relations between the Centre and the periphery. However when further development strategies seem to have failed and growing disappointments and impoverishment of people

---

[24]Notable reviews on deconstructing development can be found in the works of J. Ferguson on Development in Lesotho (1990), and. Sachs (1992) book: The development dictionary.

could no longer be overlooked, development itself started to be questioned. It was no longer a matter of improving development strategies, but to question the very rationality of development itself.

"There are no spaces left to redefine or re-conduct development, thus doing so we will continue to understand the existence of human beings based on the premises of further productivity, the exploitation of nature, the defense of western modernity and its irreversible result of victims and failures" (Satrústegui 2009: 18)[25].

This resulted in the formation of various critical approaches such as post- development, anti-development, and mal- development. These got reactions from all sides of the scholarly political spectrum, "resulting in a vibrant, albeit and time somewhat scattered debate" (Clark 2006: 3). Among the principle theorists along these lines of thought we can find; A. Escobar, G. Esteva, W. Sachs, G. Rist, S. Latouche, M. Rahnema, I. Illich and V. Shiva among others[26].

In this section, I don't intend to undertake a detailed analysis of each and every one of the theoretical approaches mentioned, but to rather emphasize on a general "deconstructive approach to development" by using theoretical contributions from different authors such as A. Escobar, W. Sachs, G. Esteva, E. Gudynas. In this sense, my primary focus is on development as a cultural construction rather than as an economic endeavor only.

4.5 Growth and development:

Historically, development has been closely connected to growth. In the previous chapter, I outlined how the term development initially was used as a biological metaphor to describe the evolutionary growth of plants and by the 19th century, passed on to be incorporated into the social field of science and more specifically to be inscribed into the economic imperatives of growth. As such, development and growth are not only linked, but they historically constitute modern ideas of wellbeing.

---

25 Own translation from Spanish

[26]In order to understand the shift of focus on development it's important to consider three primary moments that have shaped the field of development with three main theoretical orientations. The modernization theories in the 1950s and 1960s, with main focus on growth and development; the dependency theory and related perspectives in the 1960s and 1970s; and the critical approaches to development as a cultural discourse in the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s. For a comprehensive review on these debates see D.A Clark (2006: 3).

This is because development and growth are entrenched in the Enlightenment ideologies of progress, capital accumulation, science and technology that are displayed as the main elements in modernizing and developing societies. As such, the dichotomy of abundance-scarcity became a generalized if not a central element in development discourses that hold on to the idea of growth as the chief instrument for humanity to "free itself of the iron yoke of scarcity" (Davalos s.a: 1).

"According to this belief the "good life" can be assured for all through technological progress and ever- rising production of goods and services- from which everyone will eventually benefit. Such 'development' then, offers the promise of general abundance, conceived in biological imaginary as something 'natural', positive, necessary and indisputable" (Rist 2011: 214).

The postulates on growth and the dichotomy of scarcity/abundance are also reaffirmed by the notions of lack and poverty. These notions have inevitably shaped development policy-making and the solutions at stake were considered generally in terms of unlimited economic productivity and increased access to market commodities. Yet, although development policies have reoriented their scope towards human- centered development, economic growth has remained unchanged (Ibid).

Moreover, according to Escobar (1995) the conventional notions on development not only legitimize certain economic and technical strategies, but they also entail a peculiar role in the formation of social representations. According to this theorist, conventional notions on development have historically been embedded in the particular experience of the European modernity that present development as something positive per se and that follows a sequential idea of improvement (as in Rostow's economic stages of growth). The cultural apparatus, embedded in dominant development discourses that make the poor come to recognize themselves as underdeveloped by nature, is a social phenomenon that have been naturalized through institutions, policy- making and social representations. This has undervalued alternative knowledge systems that perceive wellbeing in other, if not opposite, terms.

"The relationship between institutions, socio- economic processes, forms of knowledge, technological factors, among others; defines the conditions in which the objectives, the theories and the strategies of development should be incorporated into the construction of this universal discourse" (Escobar 1995: 10).

In this way, Escobar (Ibid) asserts that notions on development not only produce dominant representations on poverty, wealth, and improvement, but they also shape forms in which reality is imagined and acted upon. As such this author suggests that development being a central postulate of modern civilization; it generates dualistic thinking based on:

"- The rational individual, not tied to a place or a community

- *The separation between nature and culture*
- *The economy separated from the social and natural domain*
- *The Dominance of expert knowledge above all other forms of knowledge's*

(Escobar 2009: 26)."

Along the same lines of thought, Esteva (2009) suggests that development is a political strategy designed by experts in order to orientate societies within the frames of a specific life-style, defined and encouraged by the market. Various anthropological studies proves that these types of life- styles are not only unreachable for the majority and that copying the industrialized consumption patterns implies a vast destruction of natural resources, but they also stands in contradiction with localized models and perceptions on what is considered improvement [27].

"*It's no longer possible to dream our own dreams: they have being dreamed, thus the dreams of the developed seem as our own, although that for some and for them they turn to be nightmares* " (Ibid: 2-3).

As such, Esteva (2010) suggests that development is not more than another form of coloniality; a more pervasive and widespread form that involves the construction and reinforcement of imported imaginaries that manage to replace or even dismiss other forms of perceiving reality.

The development enterprise, according to Esteva (2009), is nothing more but a process where environment, solidarity, interpretations and traditional cultures are all sacrificed in the altar of the ever- changing advice from the experts (Esteva et. al. 2010). This process deepens dependency and gives legitimacy to a model that refuses to recognize cultural diversity. Development is hence, paraphrasing Esteva; "the most subtle and conciliatory way to recolonize minds and knowledge" (Ibid: 14). In this sense, if we relocate Quijano's theory, conventional notions on development is a clear expression of coloniality of power. This is because dominant discourses on development undertake a twofold processes; they shape and

---

[27] A. Mueller (1986, 1987, 1991) and C. Mohanty, studies on women in development. S. L. Pigg (1992), studies on development and health practices in Nepal, J. Scott (1985), F. Borda (1984), Taussig (1980) emphasize on the forms and processes of resistance to development in the so-called Third World.

define the road towards development, making it appear natural and universally desirable, and they also manage to homogenize cultures and identities through a deep process of symbolic and subjective coloniality. Indeed, the notion of development creates subjectivities, desires and social representations which follow cultural, political and epistemic structures of coloniality (Ibid).

Certainly, critiques to conventional development unfold on different fronts. For instance, we can identify reactions to specific development projects such as roads and hydroelectric plants where social actors mobilize for the protection of their territory and their natural recourses. On the other hand, these reactions also serve to study how governments, politicians, NGOs, companies and other actors involved uses discourses on development as a strategy to legitimize specific development projects and also to create specific forms of knowledge systems (Gudynas 2011).

Nonetheless, deconstructive approaches to development have been criticized for not expose concrete alternatives to conventional notions of development and remain a rhetoric analysis only. However, in the 1980s grassroots movements emerged in opposition to conventional development programs, activating new forms of resistance clearly manifested in socio-environmental conflicts. This gave room to the appearance of new cultural- political mobilizations from below that encourages political activation of relational ontologies, differing from dualist ontologies of liberal modernity (Escobar 2010a).

"*Relational ontologies can be differentiated from the dualist ontologies of liberal modernity in that they are not built on the divides/divisions between nature and culture, us and them, individual and community*"   (Ibid: 5)

These new ways of resistance, based on new interpretations of politics and the production of alternative knowledge systems were strengthened in the Latin- American continent in 1995 when changes in knowledge production and a re-valorization of marginalized cultures were took place (Escobar 2010a). As such, the knowledge produced by social movements along with their own local histories and practices has become an essential ingredient for rethinking development (Ibid).

Indigenous communities, Afro- descendants, students and feminist groups have played a crucial role in this concern by "delinking the desire for equity from economic growth and

relinking it to community- and culture- based notions of well- being" (Sachs 2010: 12). As such, according to Motta (2009):

"*The new forms of popular politics that are developing in Latin America challenge the politics of representation, the market economy, and the state form by reinventing territorialized experiments in self- government. They politicize place, subjectivities, and social relations* "(Ibid: 31).

As a concluding remark it is worth reiterating the importance of linking critical theory and social practices, first in order to go beyond discursive criticism and second to examine concrete alternatives to conventional development. It is in this relation that questions of daily life, local histories, political practice and the redefinition of development can most fruitfully be pursued (Escobar s.a: 12). The central inquiry in this concern is to recognize social practices that counteract conventional notions of development by activating other forms of social and communal organization. As Sachs (1995) suggests, the challenge on the conventional view on development consist in designing cultural- political limits to development.

"*Each society is called upon to search for indigenous model of prosperity which allow society's course to stay at a comfortable distance from the edge of the abyss, living graciously within a stable or shrinking volume of production*" (Ibid: 6).

In this respect, in the next section, I introduce el Buen Vivir and my case study in the attempt to articulate theory and concrete practices that challenges conventional notions on development.

CHAPTER V

"El Buen Vivir; challenging conventional notions of development and findings from the Indigenous community of Choquecancha"

5.1: El Buen Vivir: A socio- historical approach

In previous chapters I have described conventional views on development and its main postulates on growth, scarcity- abundance dichotomy, progress and wellbeing. Thereafter, through enhancing a deconstructive approach, I have outlined the main criticisms that have been made on the conventional concept on development. All of this has permitted me to defend the argument that "conventional development" is still entrenched in the imperatives of economic growth, faith in progress and a linear approach to history. This part turns to examine some of the specific characteristics of el Buen Vivir and the ways in which this proposal challenges conventional notions on development. By drawing on my fieldwork in an indigenous community I intend to make come connections between ancestral practices of self-subsistence and el Buen Vivir. More specifically I will focus on the bartering system (Chalayplasa), and the communal agricultural work Ayni and Minka and analyze to what extend these practices respond to the theoretical framework of el Buen Vivir and manage to challenge conventional views on development.

Image 1. The indigenous community of Choquecancha.

El Buen Vivir is a recent proposal that has its origin in Latin- American. It is the result of a twofold process; on the one hand a vast production of critical knowledge and on the other hand the emergence of new subjectivities that unfold other ways of perceiving and doing politics based on self- governing strategies of resistance. These are interwoven processes that are simultaneously enriched. In other words el Buen Vivir, is not a fixed- framework, but a proposal that is in construction.

El Buen Vivir expresses the idea of good life, not a better life nor a life better than others, but a good living together with human beings and the natural surroundings (Krabbe 2009). It is then not about improving the quality of life in terms of material possession but to improve the social, economic, political and ecological condition by seeing society as an integrated totality where nature also plays a crucial role. Indeed, nature is seen as an inherent part of society. According to Francois Houtart, in an interview, El Buen Vivir encourages a new way to perceive the environment by abandoning the idea of nature as a "commodity and a relation of exploitation and to embrace an attitude of respect to nature as the main source of life"[28].

El Buen Vivir has its origins in the Andes region of South America where indigenous ancestral practices are conserved. However, although its roots lie in this part of the continent, it is still possible to identify similar proposals all over the continent. The Ecuadorian Achuar people use the term shiir waras that means domestic peace and a harmonious life. The Mapuche people of the southern part of Chile, uses the term Kume Mongen to represent a living well together in harmony. The Guarani people uses ñande reko, and expression that invokes a way of being in the pursuit of a "land without evil"- (Tierra sin mal) (Gudynas and Acosta 2012). These are some of the many examples of the plural character of el Buen Vivir which can also be identified among multi-ethnic groups, non-indigenous groups and in critical western thinking (Gudynas 2011).

This means that el Buen Vivir does not necessarily respond to specific contexts or actors, but it "serves to group diverse positions, each with its own characteristics, but which overlap in questioning actual development and seek substantial changes, calling for other relationship between people and the environment" (Ibid: 9). Hence, el Buen Vivir serves as a general platform where distinct cultural manifestations and proposals meet and complement each other and this is precisely one of the central characteristics of el Buen Vivir; the very

---

28 Personal Interview, Havana, March 2012

possibility to recognize diversity as a positive and crucial element for new social and political practices. Moreover, el Buen Vivir is taken ahead by various mechanisms; 1) through constitutions and policy- making, especially in the case of progressive governments such as Bolivia and Ecuador, 2) social movements and 3) indigenous communities. Although el Buen Vivir involves a plurality of knowledge systems and different actors, Gudynas (2011) suggests that it is possible to establish a set of shared principles.

I will, in this regard, put special emphasize on the debates concerning the conventional views on development. In this way I will highlight the critiques to development from the perspective of el Buen Vivir and reveal the proposals they trigger by giving concrete examples from my fieldwork in the indigenous community of Choquecancha.

As Gudynas asserts; "a central aspect in the formulation of el Buen Vivir takes place in the formulation of a critique of contemporary development. For example, it questions the rationality of contemporary development, its emphasis on economic aspects and the market, its obsession with consumption, or the myth of continued progress" (Ibid: 2).

Essentially, el Buen Vivir questioned two main development postulates; directionality and cumulativeness. These were reinforced with modernization theories where development, entrenched in the logics of stage- based improvement, saw economic growth and progress as a way out of underdevelopment. From this perspective, development is though in terms of sequential stages. From the perspective of el Buen Vivir, however, time and history is cyclical because the idea on change and improvement is embedded in specific cultural and historical contexts.

5.1.2 Characteristics and Critiques to Conventional Development

El Buen Vivir entails two important tasks; it questions the central postulates of modern civilization. In this regard it is important to note that it is not about questioning the emancipatory potential of modern reason "but of 'modernity's' underside, namely the imputation of the superiority of European civilization, coupled with the assumption that Europe's development must be followed unilaterally by every other culture, by force if necessary, what Dussel terms 'the development fallacy' (Escobar s.a.: 7). Furthermore el Buen Vivir offers and reveals other ways of doing, thinking and dealing with wellbeing. According to Larrea (2010) this framework suggests to overcome the limitations of

development planning as it has been conceived in Latin- America, by rethinking other forms of perceiving improvement based on local initiatives.

  "*The construction of new societies is enriched by different epistemologies: we are no longer talking about economic growth, neither GDP; we are talking about relations, about broad relations between human beings, nature, community life, the ancestors, the past and the future. The aim which is calling is no longer development, from its traditional one-dimensional perspective of history, but rather the construction of a society based on the principles of el Buen Vivir*" (Ibid 2010: 2)[29].

It is important to note however, that development is in overall heterogeneous. There are different mechanisms, tools, strategies and policies that have managed to reduce poverty, yet, in an interview with Gudynas (2012), Gudynas asserts that developments potential to eradicate poverty as such is questionable. This is "because development is based on unequal access to resources and profits, so inequality is always there, resulting in poverty[30]."

Likewise, it is crucial to keep in mind that el Buen Vivir might not enable us to make rockets reach Mars (Krabbe 2009: 3) but this framework serves to rethink "democracy and conviviality so that they also include the environment and the life of future generations "(Ibid: 3). El Buen Vivir is hence a proposal that invites us to rethink certain aspects of society with different inputs and resulting in different proposals (Gudynas 2012).

5.1.3 Ontological Conflicts: Between Dualistic and Relation Ontologies

Perhaps the most influential and profound challenge exposed by el Buen Vivir towards conventional notions of development is based on ontological considerations. When speaking of ontology we refer to the ways we understand and interpret the world. As such ontologies define and shape the social representations of our reality. In relation to this, my intention is not to fall into an abstract philosophical debate, but to rather look at ontology as an inherent part of social constructs that will necessary obey to socio- historical processes.

The modern western ontology is based on a dualistic reasoning that has historically separated reason from mind, society from nature and the economy from society. Along with the Enlightenment period in Europe, these division lines were reinforced and in this way, nature and society went through a profound detachment process that enabled nature to become a set

---

29 Own translation from Spanish, (Larrea 2010).
30 Virtual Interview with E. Gudynas, April, 2012

of objects exposed to external control, manipulation and exploitation. According to Gudynas, conventional development corresponds to modern ontology in different ways:

"... the separation of society from nature (duality), a unfolding of history which is considered linear, the pretension of control and manipulation, faith in progress, the insistence on separating the 'civilized' from the 'wild' and so on. It appeals to expert knowledge which determines the best strategies, and imposes a notion of a similar quality of life for all nations" (Ibid 2011: 11).

In this respect, el Buen Vivir not only argues that development corresponds to the modern ontology, which again defines policies, discourses, agencies and institutions, but more importantly el Buen Vivir makes it clear that there are "other" ontologies; "which are built differently and have their own mechanism to generate validity and certainty, and which understand, value and appreciate their worlds differently" (Ibid: 12).

As such, it is not only about different ontologies but perhaps even antagonist that leads to different ways of conceiving reality. In this respect, indigenous ontology, constituted before colonization and maintained in present time, have played a crucial role due to the relational character through looking at the community, human beings and nature as part of a whole. According to F. Houtart, this is precisely one of the central contributions that indigenous cosmovision bring about; to reconstruct a holistic view on reality. This doesn't mean to adapt the indigenous philosophy as the only truth, thus this knowledge system responds to specific contexts and actors[31], but to embrace certain aspects that are useful to understand society.

Accordantly, A. Garcia asserts that principles of el Buen Vivir are clearly expressed in indigenous communities that still conserve own ways of organizing society and that have managed to take a distance from mercantile relationships imposed by the market. As such el Buen Vivir "do not emerge as an empty and abstract discourse, but it arises from concrete practices of the 'past' that, for many indigenous people, is the present and the future"[32]. Although colonization and modernity saw and still sees indigenous practices as obstacles for modernization and advancements in which many were displaced from their territories and attributed new geocultural identities as inferior, many communities have resisted and conserved their traditions and territories.

---

31 Personal Interview, Havana, March 2012
32 Personal Interview with Angel Garcia, a social researcher of the Institute of Philosophy in Havana, February, 2012.

5.1.4 Territory

Social movements and indigenous groups have realized that displacement from their land and natural resources also implies the displacement from the very possibility to create or preserve their own local structures and knowledge systems. As such, the intersection between territory and community has gotten more attention in order to "transcend or recreate the state into a series of localized, yet linked, self- governing communities" (Motta 2007: 35) and it is in this point where Buen Vivir and the way to put it in practice turns relevant.

As Gudynas (2011) outlines: *"El Buen Vivir also symbolizes the re-significance of geographical spaces in front of what is regarded as an invasion or usurpation, not only of natural resources but of lifestyles. It then attempts to return to give meaning and control to the land. "*[7]

El Buen Vivir needs to be further connected to the intersection between territory and community so that territorial form of power can encourage concrete proposals of change. Quoting Luis Macas, a community represents the process of "reconstruction of indigenous people and their ancestral views on nation…[a necessity] ... in the historical and ideological reproduction of the Indian peoples." (Houtart s.a: 9)

In an interview with R. Orjeda (2011)[33], an historian and journalist from Cuzco, it was argued that although modern notions of wellbeing have reached the most remote areas in Peru, indigenous communities have shown an ongoing struggle against these perceptions by conserving own knowledge systems. This is clearly shown in the way indigenous people, after the agrarian reform in Peru in the 1970s, preferred to rearticulate their communal structures and governing bodies instead of embracing the asymmetrical structures of the colonial "haciendas" as their own, and this despite of 500 years of colonization.

In this respect, it is worth alluding to the Andean *ayllu*[34]; a space of well- being with people, animals and crops (Gudynas 2011: 6) of Choquecancha that have managed to conserve their land and traditions and consciously chosen not to embrace modern economy in its totality but to rather reinforce own self- sustained economies. This community is a clear example of resistance first against the colonizers and later against further modernization policies.

---

33 Personal Interview, Cuzco December 2011
34 Ayllu, is the traditional form of Andean communal organization. It represents the basic political and social units of pre- Inca and Inca governing structures.

Similarly, this community embraces communal practices of local food system such as; Ayni, Minka and Chalayplasa (bartering exchange system) where relational ontologies can be identified in hence correspond some of the elements that constitute el Buen Vivir.

5.2 Ayni and el Buen Vivir

Ayni is an ancestral communal practice that is based on the idea of mutual help. The guiding principle of this system is reciprocity between the families of one Ayllu. The principle is that when a "comunero" [35] asks his neighbor for help with agricultural work or house construction, he or she is expected, as a return for this assistance, to deliver similar support. In this way neither wage nor money determines this activity, but the principle of mutual help. According to a young farmer from Choquecancha whom I, during my field work, got the possibility to visit and participate in his Ayni- arrangement, Ayni is a necessary practice that facilitates the cultivation of extensive areas of land. "One day I help my brother and another day he comes and help me. Today we are only two but yesterday we were ten *comuneros* working in my piece of land. We work hard but we also enjoy by drinking chicha[36]."

This practice might sound simple or even irrelevant as far as el Buen Vivir and the ontological conflict is concerned, but if we look more in depth, this practice holds a crucial role in defining the way indigenous farmers of this specific community define and perceive themselves in relation with the community. In other words, Ayni reveals a different ontological position regarding the individual and the community. Accordantly, R. Orjeda asserted in an interview that Ayni, besides from accomplishing an economic objective in terms of material subsistence, is also a social practice that entails a different way to interact with other comuneros and was reciprocity is the underpinning element. Similarly, economic reciprocity is not only a cultural tradition but a fundamental economic strategy for the community. Ayni accomplish then two essential tasks; on the one hand it responds to a necessary economic strategy for the individual household subsistence where the members of the community help each other and on the other hand it plays an important social role for society and for the identity of being a comunero. In this sense individual needs are mediated by communal reciprocity and entails a crucial cultural aspect of what conviviality means for indigenous communities. Contrary to the Basic Needs Approach, needs are not mediated by

---

35 *Comuneros* is a Spanish term which means "member of a community."

36 This information is drawn from conversations with residents living in the community. *Chicha* is a natural fermented and none- fermented beverages often derived from maize.

high productivity, markets, investment and progress, but rather embedded in notions of needs subscribed to self- subsistence and mutual help.

Moreover Orjeda (Ibid) underlines that the indigenous ontology is different from the modern ontology because indigenous cultivation of the land is perceived as a social relation of reciprocity rather than a social contract between different partners. He argues that reciprocity in this sense is perceived in terms of values and ethical considerations while conventional reciprocity might be determined by economic or material interests and benefits. As such, Ayni is much more than a practice of exchanging services, but it also brings about different social relations between the members of the community and their environment. It hence plays a crucial role for communal welfare.

In this way; the household subsistence seems to go beyond mercantile conceptions of needs that are solved through access to commodities and it rather incorporates values on reciprocity, complementarity and solidarity. This practice seems therefore to challenge conventional views of wellbeing and needs that are subscribed within the logics of high productivity, markets and commodities, consumption and private property (Gudynas 2011).

Image 2. Ayni; two neighbors helping each other in agricultural work.

5.3 Minka and el Buen Vivir

Moreover, it is worth highlighting that the Choquecancha community, as many other Andean indigenous communities, is based on an interwoven process between individual household subsistence (Ayni) and collective community agreements.

This is specially illustrated through *Minka*; an ancestral practice based on collective work on communal property that plays a fundamental role for communal subsistence. Activities such as cultivation, constructions and irrigation channels are taken ahead through this system and this is done for the sake of bringing welfare and benefit for the community (Stadel s.a.). Minka, also named *faena* in Choquecancha, is mainly undertaken by the members of the community but also by other smaller communities around the same area. All of them agree on the day the activity should be taken ahead, the type of work and who should be involved; all this is done through communal assemblies (asamblea communal) that are arranged once a month. In total there can be about 350 participants in the Minka. All of them are men and the local authorities are expected to participate at the same level as the members of the community. The ones whom do not participate must pay a tax or perform a communal task as a form of payment. As such this activity is compulsory for the members of the community, but my overall impression, after taking part of Minka arrangements and having informal conversation with the comuneros of Choquecancha, is that they participate mainly due to the benefits these activities bring to their private household and community. This is also because participating gives the right to decide on how communal lands or other community resources should be distributed and how to go about different communal projects and collaboration with local authorities.

An indigenous farmer of Choquecancha asserts that:

"*This tradition is ours and we cannot lose it. This practice was introduced by the Incas and our grandfathers maintained it and that is why we also need to keep this tradition. This is our own way to move on…*[37]"

In this sense, Minka, mainly applied in agricultural work, plays a crucial economic function. The excess of food production goes either to communal storage, in case of vulnerable

---

[37] Interview with the vice-president of the Choquecancha community Nazario Laguna Quispe, Choquecancha, December 2011.

agricultural conditions, or to the bartering exchanges system to be sold in Lares or Calca. The latter is done in order to deal with some necessities that can only be solved with currency, for example buying products such as sugar, salt and materials for construction or transportation. All decisions are taken according to the necessities of the community that are collectively determined in the communal assemblies.

But being more than merely an economic practice, the Minka also reveals a different perception on production, labor and land that inevitable creates other forms of looking at collectivity, nature and the environment. In the last Minka arranged in Choquecancha namely ' la ultima lampa del mais' [38], the last cultivation of maize, while the majority of the comunero were finishing the second last cultivation before taken a break, another group composed by men and women had the task to prepare and bring the meals to the farmers. As such two simultaneous Minka's were going on, one in the communal lands and another in the communal kitchen. Both parts, accomplishing their responsibility, finally met in the entrance of the community where the last lampa was waiting. All comuneros were served their dinner accompanied with traditional music, chicha and celebration. The last cultivation was done as a form of ritual where the earth (Pachamama) was talked to by the farmers begging and thanking her for a fertile season of production. Although it is difficult to understand this practice in all its complexity, this gives us an insight in the ritual character behind the Minka. This cannot be simply reduced to labor understood as wage and time, but it is embedded in cultural and symbolic thinking. As such the Minka reinforces economic reciprocity but it also creates other subjectivities based on collective values and responsibilities. Indeed a strong link to communal welfare is established, drawn on responsibility towards each other and nature.

Moreover, the Minka also reveals a different way of conceiving production and welfare, different from what modernization theories suggests, thus Minka is not encouraged by the logics of high levels of productivity per se, but productivity is through in terms of land-conservation, biodiversity and enjoyable labor in favor for communal wellbeing and respect to nature. Xavier Albó[39] asserts that the goal of Buen Vivir is to live well, but this should not mean living better at the expense of others or the environment (Albo 2009).

---

38 "*La ultima lampa del mais*" is the last cultivation of maize. The cultivation of maize implies various processes.
39 Xavier Albó, is a Bolivian professor in language and anthropology,

Rist (2011) asserts that, according to conventional views on development, "good life, can be assured for all through technological progress and ever- rising production of goods and services, from which everyone will eventually benefit" (Ibid: 214). This is perhaps not totally false, considering the existence of development projects that have succeed in reducing poverty as well as alleviating basic material needs. However it is clear that economic growth, far from bringing development and good life for all, has increased inequalities, marginalization and transformed social relations into marketable goods where life and nature are reduced to commodities (Ibid) That is why el Buen Vivir inevitably needs to encompass "changes in the field of production; in the perspectives and policies on who and how politics is made, what and how we can produce, what and how to consume; this is meant to say, above all, how to reproduce life instead of destroy life" (León 2010: 8)[40].

Choquecancha might be a clear example of a different production system based on the idea of reproduction, thus for the members of this community, nature is not only part of society, but nature needs to be taken care of in order for the land to reproduce and regenerate. The logic is hence that 'we' do not only take care of nature in order to fulfill our needs in a more sustainable manner, but we do so because we are part of nature. In this respect, disturbing the organic rhythms of birth, growth and reproduction of earth also has negative outcomes for human beings, and the risk is environmental changes that will eventually lead to climatological, agricultural and cosmic disturbances (Stadel s.a). As an indigenous political activist in Cuzco asserted in an interview; "all living things are alive; stones, animals. Nothing is death, everything is alive. As our wise grandfathers said; everybody depends on everybody, if something fails in the ecosystem it will also affect us[41]."

---

40 Own translation from Spanish, (León 2010).
40 Personal interview with Julian Condoriqueso, an indigenous social activist from Socuani. Cuzco, January 2012.

Image 3. "Minka" in Choquecancha. La ultima lampa, the last maize cultivation of the season.

Image 4. "Minka" in Choquecancha. A comunero distributing the meal.

5.4 Chalayplasa (the Bartering Exchange System)

As mentioned earlier, a part of the production obtained through Minka goes to sale, storage and bartering exchange. This exchange system, called Chalayplasa, is an ancestral network of marketplaces in which about 50 communities exchange their agricultural products (IIED 2005).

Chalayplasa allows indigenous farmers, from different agro- ecological zones, to exchange their surplus from subsistence farming. As such, products from the *puna* zone (above 3500 MSL) where Andean tubers, meat and wool are produced, together with products from the *quechua* zone (2300- 3500 MSL) such as maize, grains, medicinal plants, can be exchanged for coca leafs, coffee, fruits and yucca; produced in *yunga* zones (2300 MSL). The farmers from Choquecancha mainly exchange maize, potato and other crops for coca leafs, coffee and fruits[42]. However, since the 1970s, with the introduction of 'local development assistance programs'; this system has been weakened in certain areas. This is mainly due to the replacement of local food systems with policies focusing on intensive farming, increasing production and the transformation to a cash economy. This led to dramatic consequences on nutrition, access of food and exchange since farmers were now producing for the urban markets and "could no longer grow or buy the food that they needed for their own consumption " (IIED 2005: 3). The creation of the National Program of Food Assistance introduced by the former government of Fujimori was an attempt to solve this problem through the distribution of food in the communities. However, this policy failed thus indigenous farmers were still compelled to produce for the urban market making them dependent on external assistance (Ibid). Nevertheless, although the practice of Chalayplasa was affected by these policies, various communities have managed to preserve and reinforce this tradition through indigenous governing bodies[43]. This means that contrary to modernization theories and the CEPALs argument on domestic growth as well as Basic Needs Approach on rural development, indigenous local food system, by embracing own production and consumption structures, they question these development strategies on productivity, monetization and modernization of society. Instead of perceiving the idea of taken part of

---

42 Based on informal conversations and observations during the field work, December 2011.
43 About 86 per cent of listed crops in the *Quechua* zone are bartered, along with 100 per cent of recorded crops in the *puna* zone, while only 34 and 60 per cent of crops from both zones are sold in the cash economy. (IIED 2005)

modern economy as a way out of their "impoverishment", they rather prefer to sustain own economic activities and structures.

Today there are approximately 4000 farmers from different communities, situated in Lares, Cchain and Choquecancha[44], that take use of Chalayplasa The majority of the participants are women, and they are the ones who take ahead the bartering system by transporting their products and exposing them to exchange. On overall, women take an important role in household food management thus most commonly; it is women that manage the household budget and it is also women that participate in the agricultural planning.

According to studies provided by the local authorities of Lares, about 4- 5 tons of food from various agro- ecological zones, are brought per week for exchange. Indeed, IIED (2005) argues that this amount represents 15 times more the volume distributed by the National Program of Food assistance since the 1990s. This is important to note because it implies that almost a third of the household food consumption comes from the barter market and the markets therefore plays a crucial role in achieving a diverse diet, maintain self- managed food production and covering the main necessities of the communities involved.

To summarize, the Chalayplasa stimulates crucial economic, ecological and social achievements. Among them we can find food security, nutrition, conserving agricultural biodiversity through the preservation of organic production and native food crops, local control of food production and consumption. Nonetheless, these achievements are not detached from social determinants such as values, culture and practices on communal reciprocity. In this sense contrast to the premises of the sustainable development framework on poverty as the main cause of further climate changes, indigenous farmers show important sustainable practices that conserves the eco- system of their communities

For instance it is not the amount of food that decides whether a comunero o comunera can participate in the barter market. Quite the opposite; widows, older people and others whose productive capacity is low are also able to participate, and in some cases, they are given *yapas*, an extra proportion of food. In this sense, the principle of reciprocity is again an element between the actors involved. The main concern is access to food where all communities, through participation, serve this purpose. In this sense, although currency is also used, it is not the logics of accumulation, economic growth and profitable exchange that

---

44 These are the three most populated communities in the valley of Lares.

govern in Chalayplasa. As a women from the yunga zone once asserted: *"Not everybody has money, therefore I prefer Chalayplasa because here everybody can contribute with their products and their hard work. It is more stable than money because it never ends"*[45].

Moreover, Chalayplasa is also a space that serves for social integration between communities because it is not only food that is been exchanged, but also crops and, more importantly, knowledge. Indeed, this exchange network underlines a space of communication among the widely distributed communities across the vast region of Lares Valley, where it is possible to discuss and share livelihoods strategies, cropping practice and other issues. As a result, this network also represents a symbolic and cultural exchange system where social relationships are strengthened.

In this respect, Chalayplasa accomplishes different objectives. On the one hand they keep alive their traditions on self- subsistence and decentralized governance of local livelihoods. Moreover, this tradition also enables the communities to maintain agro- biodiversity conservation, thus fertilizers are not commonly used. Lastly, this practice enables social and cultural exchange of knowledge and continued integration between the members of different communities. In overall, this practice through independent strategies on food production and social economy, manage to overcome the uncertainty of food markets and increase prices. As such, economy, production, consumption and reciprocity are all part of an integrated the Andean cosmovision of wellbeing.

"With the Chalayplasa, local communities redefine their economic system and incorporate a combination of monetary and non- monetary forms of exchange that sustain fragile mountain systems, biodiversity and culture" (IIED 2005: 10)

---

45 Field notes: 7.01.2012

Image 5. "Chalayplasa"- bartering exchange system in Lares- Cuzco, December 2011

5.6 Concluding remarks:

Buen Vivir arises in a complex socio- political context in Latin- America. It is a moment where it is no longer about claiming a better distribution of goods and services, but to question the very definition of development, economy, nature and society as a whole. This is the result of an ongoing critical knowledge production, the emergence of new social movements and the recognition of other subjectivities of change, such as women, indigenous people and afro- descendants. In this concern, conventional notions of development have played a crucial role, especially in connection with extractive policies and socio- environmental conflicts. Conventional development policies in Latin America have been questioned by various fronts, thus they not only legitimize certain policies but they also obscure and deny other ways of perceiving improvement and change.

As such, according to Gudynas (2011), it is not enough to make economic adjustments or political reforms. What el Buen Vivir proposes is "a substantial challenge to contemporary ideas of development, specially to its adherence to economic growth and its inability to solve the problems of poverty, not to forget that its policies lead to severe social and environmental impacts" (Ibid 2011: 2).

Accordingly Mamani, an intellectual Aymara, asserts that el Buen Vivir cannot be equated with development because:

"Development, as conceived in the Western world, is inappropriate and highly dangerous to apply in indigenous societies. The introduction of development among indigenous peoples, slowly destroys our own philosophy of Living Well, it disintegrates communal and cultural life of our communities to settle the foundations of both the subsistence of our abilities and skills to meet our needs ourselves "(Gudynas 2011: 43).

El Buen Vivir challenges the conventional notions of development in various forms, although it is mainly on ontological concerns where conventional development is profoundly contested. Accordingly, this framework asserts that conventional notions on development, based on dualistic thinking, sees social reality in separated spheres. The economy is separated from culture, culture separated from politics, and politics is separated from nature. This dichotomist approach is also perceived in the way economic growth, material consumption, linear stages of improvements and faith in progress is treated as issues detached from historical and cultural determinants and assumed as universal, natural and applicable for all nations without considering cultural differences.

As such el Buen Vivir, by functioning as a political platform where different views converge, holds on diversity as its main postulate. This is important because el Buen Vivir makes it possible to recognize other views on welfare and improvement where contemporary and ancestral knowledge can meet and create other views and practices. In this sense it is not only about pluralizing knowledge, but also about revealing other forms of conceiving and practicing politics, the economy and society as a whole. In this concern, territory becomes also a crucial element in the process of materializing el Buen Vivir.

In this respect I have tried to illustrate, by basing on my field work in the indigenous community of Choquecancha, how certain elements that can be identified as part of el Buen Vivir are been put into practice through territorial and communal practices of self- governing in which identity and resistance are crucial factors.
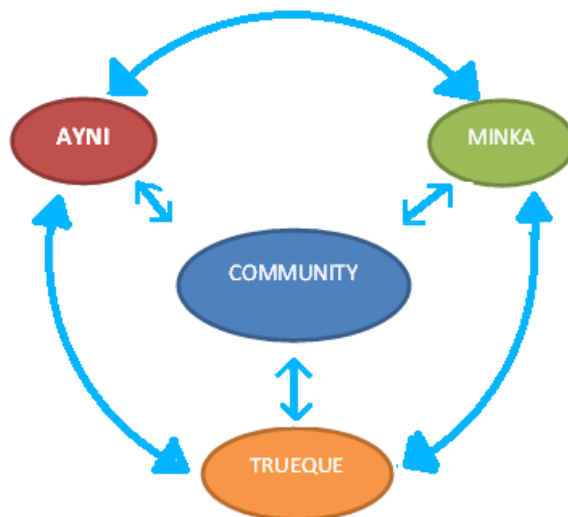
Figure 1: The relationship between the Ayni, the Minka, the Trueque (Bartering exchange) and the community[46]. Source: Paloma León

I have mainly identified local food systems such as Ayni, Minka and Chalayplasa and illustrated how all of them involve an economic and self- subsistence mechanism that is not detached from cultural and traditional practices on reciprocity, complementary and solidarity between the comuneros and the communities as a whole. As such I, have analyzed to what extend these practices have the potential to challenge conventional notions on development by marking distance from conventional postulates on growth, accumulation and welfare and instead reflecting other concerns and forms of doing and thinking communal welfare. But, it is important to note that although this community reflects an interesting and well- organized livelihood, it is not free from internal conflicts, constraints on housing and sanitation or vulnerability to climate changes. Similarly, it is important to note that indigenous communities are not necessarily the solution that are to be taken in order to solve the crisis, thus communal practices are unthinkable in urban areas. However, A. García asserts that because indigenous communities have preserved non- mercantile relationships, they can contribute with fundamental principles and practices that can be encouraged in urban and

---

46 This figure illustrates the way in which Ayni, Minka and Trueque (Bartering system of Exchange also called Chalayplasa in Choquecancha) are all interconnected processes that depends on each other in order to fulfill the wellbeing of the community as a whole. This means that individual household subsistence is connected to communal work and these are again connected to other communities through bartering exchange. This illustrates the way ancestral practices on local food systems are arranged, but also it clearly shows the relational ontology of indigenous practices.

rural areas[47].Correspondingly; the ancestral practices maintained in Choquecancha invite us to think and recognize the existence of other forms of organizing society. In this sense, the logic is not about helping the poor, but to question poverty itself and to learn from the ones conceived as poor. In this sense although Ayni, Minka and Chalayplasa are practices that are constrained to local forms of structures and to specific local settings, and thus makes them difficult to apply them on a macro level, they still reveals an interesting view on welfare based on communal thinking and practice.

Hence el Buen Vivir entail another way of being and living "*where the links among human beings and between human beings and nature are not based on ideas of ontological separation, utility and exploitation but on ontological complementarity, reciprocity and respect*" (Krabbe 2009: 3).

However, although el Buen Vivir has a potential to reveal other ontologies and challenge conventional views on development, is crucial to keep in mind the constraints and shortcoming of this framework. Firstly, the risk is that el Buen Vivir is reduced to a merely assistance policy that can be solved with technical support and as such abandoning its critical potential. Moreover, el Buen Vivir can also be cooped by different authorities in order to calm and neutralize structural political demands. Also el Buen Vivir can go in another direction that is even more damaging, and that is to treat this framework as if it is only for indigenous groups and as such excluding other subjects and knowledge.

These constraints are crucial to identify, yet el Buen Vivir seem to be one of the latest proposals that challenges and invites us to rethink society, nature and subjectivities. As such, el Buen Vivir is not a matter of returning to the past, but to learn from the past in order to forge and endorse a different future. As Orjeda (2011) asserted in an interview, indigenous people do not look at their traditions as part of the past, but as part of the present and as a tool to create the future. As such past, present and future are all interconnected; there is not a clear cut division between old and new but rather a continued complementary relation. This perception also influences the way el Buen Vivir looks at production which necessarily needs to be accompanied by a process of reproduction and regeneration of nature.

---

47 Personal Interview, A. García, Havana, 2012

Chapter VI

6.1 Conclusions

The structural crisis at present time is expressed through various forms. It is no longer possible to talk about an exclusive economic or financial crisis which can be solved through short-term reforms. Climate changes, environmental degradation, commodification of life, loss of values and a continued homogenization of cultures, are just some few features of the present crisis. In other words, we are talking about an alarming situation that stretches beyond the economic realm and, as such involves political, ideological, social and cultural domains.

In this concern, critical Latin-American thinking has argued that it is not a crisis within the current capitalist system but a crisis of the system itself. As such, various scholars, activists and social movements have asserted that the root of the crisis is modern capitalism and the postulates and principles that this system embrace.

In this research I have undertaken a socio- historical analysis on the universalization of this system by relating it to colonization, arguing that this process made possible a worldwide economic order where not only new patterns of labor, production and consumption were introduced, but also a whole set of modern postulates and knowledge systems. It is important to note that this thesis do not try to challenge the emancipatory potentials of modern reason but instead it entails a critical perspective concerning the postulates on economic growth, faith in progress and conventional notions on development. In this respect, the first part of my thesis attempts to explain the roots of the crisis by arguing that it is not a matter of an economic/capitalist mode of production per se, but rather about a series of principles that have historically guided and sustained the modern world system through policies, institutions, social representations and imaginaries. In this concern, I make use of Quijano's concept on coloniality of power to illustrate how modern culture and its postulates are maintained through the dominance of culture, behavior and thinking. As such, colonization is not seen as an historical moment, but rather as an historical process in which modern postulates are reproduced and incorporated in the minds and behavior of people worldwide.

In this investigation I have primarily put emphasize on conventional notions on development by drawing on its discursive and cultural effects. Critical analysis of the main theoretical

approaches that have shaped this field, growing criticism reflected in socio- environmental conflicts in Latin- American and critical studies on development have served to argue that conventional notions on development are still embedded in the economic imperatives of growth, progress and material wellbeing. As a result, these modern constructs have been increasingly contested by critical scholars and new social actors and movements that no longer intend to rethink development strategies but rather to question and deconstruct the nature of development itself. This social imaginary have been exposed to criticism not only because it has failed to lift out the poor from inhuman conditions, but also, and maybe more importantly, because this social representation stands in conflict with other ways of looking at welfare and improvement.

In this context emerges the proposal of el Buen Vivir in the Latin- American continent. This proposal is taken ahead by new social actors such as indigenous people, women, afro-descendants among others. Indeed el Buen Vivir serves as a political platform where critical views on development are shared. The main concern of this proposal is to display other views on how to organize society that challenges modern postulates on economic growth, progress and development. This framework asserts that it is no longer possible to solve the current structural crisis through economic or political reforms, but the question at stake is rather to question modern rationality where development takes part and to reveal and encourage different practices. In this regard, el Buen Vivir unfolds two main objectives, in one hand to question the main postulates of modern reason and the second objective is to generate critical thinking and create alternative practices.

The main characteristics of this proposal are based on ontological concerns where modern dualistic thinking that separates society from nature and nature from economy is questioned. This framework encourages another type of ontology that can integrate nature, society and economy. This perspective has specially been encouraged by indigenous cosmovision.

The issue on territory is also another important feature that el Buen Vivir unfolds. The recovery of territories has become a central demand for the new social movements in the Latin- American continent and this is clearly illustrated in growing socio- environmental conflicts where the dispute is essentially about the control of territories. In this sense, the framework of Buen Vivir highlight the importance of recovering territory, not only because this means regaining control over natural resources, but also because having a territorial space involves the possibility to create new production and consumption patterns. The creation of

new social structures that integrates the economy with the environment, can serve to reinforce non- mercantile relations and a society based on social principles. As such, relational ontologies and localized self- governing structures are some of the underpinning elements to *materialize* el Buen Vivir.

However, it is important to note that these characteristics do not emerge as abstract philosophical debates. In this regard, perhaps the originality of this proposal is that these features are essentially taken from indigenous people's practices and cosmovision. Indeed, certain practices that el Buen Vivir promotes can be found among indigenous groups who have managed to preserve their ancestral practices of reciprocity, solidarity and communal wellbeing.

Accordantly, through a case study on the indigenous community of Choquecancha, I have explored a number of ancestral practices that, despite colonization, are still conserved. I focus essentially on self- sustained local food systems such as Ayni, Minka and Chalayplasa (a bartering exchange system) and I analyze the ways in which these practices challenge conventional notions on development by promoting other views on growth, welfare and improvement.

Ayni, being a system based on mutual help between neighbors and the members of the community, display and integrate the relationship between the *comunero* and the community. Through this practice not only relationships of reciprocity are reinforced, but the very identity of being a comunero is strengthen. This is because Ayni goes beyond a merely mercantile relationship of exchange, and involves a practice of broad social relations where the principles of reciprocity, solidarity and complementarity are the underpinning elements. In this respect, this practice challenges conventional views of wellbeing and needs, reduced to income (in terms of money), material possessions solved in the market, consumption and private property. Indeed, Ayni accomplishes two main objectives; first it serves as an economic necessity for individual household subsistence, and second it entails a crucial element for communal conviviality.

In similar lines, **Minka**, an ancestral practice based on collective work on communal property, reveals other perceptions on production, labor and welfare. This is clearly illustrated in the way comuneros make use of organic crops and sustainable production of the land. Moreover, indigenous farmers through the communal work, rituals and festivities display a different view on labor that is not mediated by wage and time, but is rather seen as a social

responsibility were the community and their environment are the main priorities. As such, because Minka is not encouraged for the sake of high productivity per se neither for economic growth, this practice challenges the conventional views on labor and wellbeing that are reduced to salary, accumulation and the possession of objects.

However, although Minka is a useful economic strategy for the benefit of the community it is not an economic practice detached from cultural and symbolic thinking. In this way, this arrangement manages to reinforce economic reciprocity and simultaneously it creates collective subjectivities based on the principles of responsibility and solidarity.

The last social practice that I have included in my research is an ancestral network of marketplaces where different communities exchange their food products. This system is called **Chalayplasa**. This bartering exchange system integrates about 50 communities and 4000 farmers where they all exchange their food products that which can vary from potatoes, vegetables to coca leaves, coffee and fruits. Currency is used to a lesser extent, which means that farmers mainly exchange their product and in this way they manage to achieve a diverse diet and cover individual household necessities. This system reinforces the food security, nutrition, conserving agricultural biodiversity through the preservation of organic production and native food crops, local control of food production and consumption. However this system serves also as a place for socialization where many comuneros from different communities meet, interact and exchange food but also knowledge. As such, Chalayplasa is not merely an economic practice, but it is a practice embedded in cultural, social and symbolic thinking where the relationship of reciprocity between comuneros and communities in the Valley of Lares are strengthened. As such, this practice unfolds various objectives, some of them are independent strategies on food production, and overcomes the uncertainty of food markets and increase prices, but more importantly this practice integrates economy with society and culture, making all part of communal wellbeing.

Although there are a numbers of elements within communal livelihoods that I have not included in this research, such as participation mechanisms, the role of women and others; ancestral indigenous practices of local food system seem to be a crucial aspect that corresponds to the proposal of el Buen Vivir specially concerning ontological debates and the importance of territory/ community.

As such, my field work has served to reveal not only other ways of conceiving production, consumption and the economy, but also to challenge modern dualistic reasoning where

indigenous people, through their practices, manages to integrate social, environmental, economic and cultural domains. In this sense, these ancestral activities reveal other ontological positions based on the principles of reciprocity, solidarity, conviviality and respect to nature. As such, the indigenous community of Choquecancha might serve as an example of the existence of other knowledge systems and social imaginaries of improvement and wellbeing that differs from modern perceptions of wellbeing and development.

Overall, by basing my analysis on el Buen Vivir and drawing upon indigenous practices, the purpose of this research has been to question conventional development as universal and alike for all. I have questioned the "universality" of development itself, its linear approach to history and its obsession with economic growth.

Finally I would like to end by pointing at two crucial aspects. First, the purpose of this research has not been to present indigenous practices as the solution of the present structural crisis. This is even an impossible task due to the constraints on context, local histories and actors. However, my central argument is that indigenous practices serves to illustrate the existence of social principles that look at production, consumption, labor and the relationship with nature with different eyes. It is precisely these principles that can contribute to rethink society based on a holistic approach. In this way conventional notions on development that establishes binary divisions between the underdeveloped- developed, traditional- modern, nature- human being and scarcity- abundance can be further discussed.

Secondly, the purpose of this research has been to contribute the framework of el Buen Vivir with the hope that it is not reduced to a merely governmental- policy or coopted by personal interests, but to rather enhance a broad political project that can serve to rearticulate different social actors and proposals.

El Buen Vivir is in regard not an abstract philosophical discourse, neither a strategy to romanticize indigenous communities, but rather a critical framework that strongly supports the need to explore alternatives to development beyond conventional modern knowledge. It is about giving new answer to the present crisis by learning from local experiences and initiatives and start to question the rationality of modern capitalism itself.

Reference List:

Acosta, A (2010): "*Respuestas Regionales para Problemas Globales.*" In: Sumak Kawsay/ Buen Vivir y cambios civilizatorios. Edición Quito, FEDAEPS

Albo, X. (2009): "Suma Qamaña= El Buen Vivir." Revista Obets, Alicante

Braudel, F. (1994): "*Las civilizaciones actuales. Estudio de historia económica y social.*" REI, México

Bryman, A. (2008): "Social Research Methods". 3rd Edition. Oxford University Press, New York

Cardoso, F.E (1977): The originality of a copy: CEPAL and the ideas of development. Cepal Review.

Clark, D.A. (2006): "The Elgar Companion to Development Studies". Edward Elgar Publishing Limited. Glensanda House, UK.

Davalos, P. (s.a.): "Reflections on Sumak Kawsay (Good Living) and Theories of Development."; <http://alainet.org/active/33609&lang=es&>, Accessed March 23

Dussel, E. (2000): "*Europe, modernity and eurocentrism*". Nepantla: View from South. Duke University Press

Escobar, A. (2010): "*Latin America at a crossroads.*" In: Cultural Studies, 24: 1, 1—65; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502380903424208>, Accessed November 25

Escobar. A. (2010a): "Worlds and Knowledge Otherwise." In: Cultural Studies, 21: 2, 179- 210. University of North Carolina- Chaper Hill. Publisher Routledge, London; <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162506 > Accessed November 25

Escobar, A. (2009): "*Una Minga para el Postdesarrollo.*" In: La agonía de un mito: ¿Cómo reformular el "desarrollo"? Publicación Internacional de la Agencia Latinoamericana de Información. ISSN No. 1390- 1230 June 2009

Escobar, A. (s.a): "Imagining a post- development era? Critical thought, development and social movements; <www.jstor.org/stable/466217> Accessed February 18

Escobar, A. (1995):"Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World. Princeton University Press, Chichester, West Sussex

Esteva, G. (2010): *"Development."* In: The Development Dictionary- A guide to Knowledge as power. Zed Books, New York.

Esteva, G. (2009): "Mas allá del desarrollo: La Buena Vida." In: La agonía de un mito: ¿Cómo reformular el "desarrollo"? Publicación Internacional de la Agencia Latinoamericana de Información. ISSN No. 1390- 1230 June 2009

Esteva, G. and Prakash, M.S. (1998): "Grassroots Post- Modernism, Remaking the Soil of Cultures." Zed Books, New York.

Frank, A. G. (1969): *"Sociology of development and underdevelopment of sociology."* In Latin America: underdevelopment or Revolution. New York. Monthly Review Press.

Gudynas, E. and Acosta, A. (2012): "L*a renovación de la crítica al desarrollo y el buen vivir como alternativa*" In: Jornal of Substainablity Education

Houtart, F. (s.a.): *"El concepto de Sumak Kawsay (El Buen Vivir) y su correspondencia con el Bien Comun de la Humanidad."* <http://www.alainet.org/active/47004> Accessed February 5

Houtart, F: (2010) "For a general well-being of humanity", ALAI; <alainet.org/active/36554&lang=en> Accessed March 4

IIED (2005): "Barter Markets: Sustaining people and nature in the Andes." Sustainable, Agricultural, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Program International Institute for Environment and Development. London

Krabbe, S.J. (2009): *"Epistemologies of Tranformation: The Latin American Decolonial Option and its Ramifications. Department of Culture and Identity."* Roskilde University, Denmark.

Lander, E. (2000): "*Ciencias sociales, saberes coloniales y eurocéntricos*" In: La colonialidad del saber: eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas Latinoamericanas. CLACSO, Buenos Aires

Lander, E. (2002): "*Eurocentrism, Modern knowledge, and the Natural Order of Global Capital."* Nepantla: Views from South 3.2, Duke University Press

Lara, J.B (s.a.): "Introducción a las teorías y problemas del desarrollo." FLACSO-Cuba

Larrea, A.M. (2010): "*La disputa de sentidos por en Buen Vivir como proceso contra hegemónico.*" In: Los nuevos retos de America Latina. Socialismo y Sumak Kawsay" SENPLADES Quito.

León, I.et.al (2010): "Sumak Kawsay/Buen Vivir y cambios civilizatorios."
Irene León, coord.2da. Edición FEDAEPS, Quito- Ecuador

León, M. (2009): "*Cambiar la economia para cambiar la vida.*" In: *El Buen Vivir, una vía para el desarrollo*, Alberto Acosta y Esperanza Martinez Comp. Editions' Abya Yala, Ecuador

Lewis, W.A. (1955): "The Theory of Economic Growth." Homewood, Ill.: R. D. Irwin. Oxford University Press.

Motta, C. S. (2009): "*Old Tools and New Movements in Latin- America: Political Science as Gatekeeper or Intellectual Illuminator*?" University of Miami <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1548-2456.2009.00039.x/abstract> Accessed November 23

Pieterse, N. J. (1996): "The Development of Development Theory: Towards critical Globalism." Source: Review of International Political Economy, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter, 1996); <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4177204> Accessed February 12

Quijano, A. (2000): "*Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism and Latin America.*" Nepantla: View from South 1.3. Duke University Press; <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/lander/quijano.rtf> Accessed November 12

Quijano, A. (1992): "Colonialidad y modernidad/racionalidad."Perú Indígena , 13. Translated as "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." In Globalization and Modernitites, Edited by Goran Therborn in 1999, Stockholm: Forskningsradnamnden.

Rahnema, M. (2010): "*Poverty.*" In: The Development Dictionary: A guide to Knowledge as Power." 2nd Edition. Zed Books, New York.

Rist, G. (2011): *"The History of Development – From Western Origins to Global Faith".* Zed Books

Rostow, W.W. (1960): "*The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non- Communist Manifesto.*" Cambrigde University Press, Cambridge

Roitman, M. (s.a.): "Pensamiento Sociológico y Realidad nacional en América Latina" Rebelión Edición; <www.rebelion.org>, Accessed November 21

Sachs, W. (2005): "No sustainability Without Development". In: "Critical Reflections of the Culture of the West". The Ecumenical Association for Church and Society, Brussels

Sachs, W. (2010): "*The Development Dictionary: A guide to Knowledge as Power*." 2nd Edition. Zed Books, New York.

Satrústegui, K.U. (2009): "*Desarrollo,Subdesarrollo, Maldesarrollo y Postdesarrollo: Una Mirada Transdisciplinar sobre el Debate y sus Implicaciones*." Carta Latinoamericana, Contribuciones en Desarrollo y Sociedad en América Latina, Nr.7.CLAES

Shanmugaratnam, N. (2005): "Development: Theory and Practice (1&2)." Noragric

Shiva, V. (2010): "*Resource*." In: The Development Dictionary: A guide to Knowledge as Power." 2nd Edition. Zed Books, New York.

Stadel, C. (s.a.): "Lo Andino: Andean Environment, Philosophy and Wisdom."Salzbr University, Austria

Soto, D.P. (2007): "*Modernidad, Eurocentrismo y Colonialidad del Saber*". Universidad Nacional de Colombia

Soto, D. P. (2007a): "*Una Nueva Perspectiva Filosófica en América Latina: el Grupo Modernidad/Colonialidad.*" Universidad Santo Tomás

UNDP (1991): "Human Development Report". Oxford University Press, New York

Villa, J.M.V. (1999): "Mundialización y Desarrollo Humano." Faculty of FLACSO, Havana.

World Commission on Environment and Development (1988): "*Our common future*" London: Fontana Books

World Bank (1975): "Assault on world poverty" Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press

Yehia, E. (2006): "De- Colonizing Knowledge and Practice: A Dialogic Encounter Between the Latin- American Modernity/Coloniality/ Decoloniality Research Program and Actor Network Theory." In: Journal of The World Anthropology Network, p.91- 108; <http://www.ram-wan.org/e-journal>, Accessed February 15