

LIVING THE GOOD LIFE?
AN ANALYSIS OF ECUADOR'S *PLAN NACIONAL PARA EL BUEN VIVIR*
DEVELOPMENT MODEL AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO A NEOLIBERAL GLOBAL
FRAMEWORK

by

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In recent years, international relations scholars have focused considerable attention on the position of Latin America within the modern global political economy. A number of Latin American countries have attempted to implement alternative development models to the prevailing neoliberal approach. One such country is the Republic of Ecuador, which has established a development plan called *buen vivir*. This approach is unique because it is grounded in indigenous concepts arising from the Kichwa term *sumak kawsay*. This thesis draws upon data collected from government documents and public interviews to examine how Ecuador's new model challenges neoliberalism in three specific areas: development, environment and culture. The results of this investigation show that in each case there are genuine moves away from neoliberalism, but that ambiguities still exist because Ecuador must still function within a neoliberal framework. Overall, Ecuador's version of post-neoliberalism can be considered a movement beyond traditional neoliberal economics, and its indigenous concepts can provide important context for analyzing alternative development trends. Understanding better how Ecuador's *buen vivir* functions as an alternative to the status-quo global political economy can help advance future research regarding post-neoliberal alternative development models in Latin America.

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PREFACE
THE COMPLEXITY OF SIMPLICITY

“You know, things aren’t always so simple here.” I listened to my friend’s advice as I watched two children from the coastal city of Guayaquil fight over a McDonald’s meal that I had just bought for them. Other children were performing in the street for cars stopped at traffic lights, while even more were selling rare fruits and indigenous handicrafts to people coming out of the fast food restaurant. Before travelling to Ecuador, I never quite understood the complexity of simplicity. The two words are contradictory; to state that something is complex is to imply that it is not simple. Yet, in Ecuador the two words could be used interchangeably. Life seems simpler in the small Andean state, nestled between the Pacific powerhouses of Colombia and Peru. Buying a piece of fruit from a travelling vendor, listening to the sounds of a traditional folkloric band on a bus, and enjoying the feel of a freshly- picked aloe vera plant after a bad sunburn are just some of the ‘simple’ things, or *cositas* that are commonplace in Ecuador. It is a country with a thriving cultural heritage and beautiful natural environment.

But in a country so rich with cultural and natural wealth, why do extreme levels of poverty continue to exist? It is a question that has been asked about much of the ‘global south’. Measurements of poverty and development have frequently been used to determine how ‘successful’ a country is within the global political economy. They are based almost entirely on economic factors and have placed each country on the same scale for success. However, the meanings of such measures have been challenged in recent years, and defining poverty and development is not as simple now as it once was. In Ecuador, the indigenous movement has helped to spark a twenty-year citizen revolution, which has called on government leaders not only to improve social conditions in the country, but to completely rethink its ideological structure. In 2006 the citizen’s revolution elected Rafael Correa Delgado as president of the

republic, and in 2008 a new constitution was drafted that formally recognized the country as a 'plurinational' state and gave concrete rights to the natural environment. Ecuador's new plan for 'good living' has gone beyond trying to simply fix the problems of poverty and underdevelopment and instead has focused on defining these problems in an entirely different way. The Kichwa term *sumak kawsay* has become a watchword in the Andean region, and has been used to redefine the idea of development, focusing more on Ecuador's indigenous belief system rather than taking for granted its widely accepted occidental meaning.

But with each passing day, clashes between Ecuador's traditional culture and an increasingly globalized world become more evident. Just as the country's indigenous history has mixed with colonial aspects over the years, its cultural values and traditional practices have been made more complex through the spread of global capitalism under a neoliberal economic system. As such, redefining development for Ecuador is not a simple task. Just as a plantain vendor in traditional indigenous clothes may find it increasingly necessary to position herself outside of a massive shopping mall in Quito to attract customers, the Correa government has found that it too needs to satisfy certain aspects of the status-quo in order to bring forth the new type of development that it seeks.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION, REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE AND
RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

“We have had to ask but little of imagination, for our crucial problem has been a lack of conventional means to render our lives believable.”

(Gabriel García Márquez, 8 December 1982 Nobel Speech)

It is arguable that no other region of the world has experienced such an enduring colonial imprint as Latin America. The idea that colonialism still exists in some form within formerly colonized regions is examined in the work of postcolonial theorist Abdul JanMohamed. According to JanMohamed, colonialism does not necessarily end after direct governance over a country or region is ceded. Instead a hegemonic phase of colonization might begin, one which can last for an indefinite period of time in which “the natives accept a version of the colonizers' entire system of values, attitudes, morality, institutions, and, more important, mode of production” (JanMohamed 1985, 62). This kind of hegemony can be seen in the western approach to the international political economy, created initially under the Bretton Woods System following World War II and later expanded in the Post-Cold War era. The term commonly used for this model of development is neoliberalism, or the idea that free markets and an open economy will yield higher development in all facets of the state (de la Barra and Dello Buono 2009). However, as a review of the literature will suggest, an economy open to free trade and foreign investment does not always result in a significant increase in development. In fact, it has created the exact opposite effect in many countries, inducing greater social inequality and creating an atmosphere that is not conducive to full democratic participation.

In light of these social and democratic disparities, a new series of transformations have begun in Latin America. These changes, which are altering socio-economic, political and cultural models, have created a new state of mind, or *pensamiento*, in a number of countries

throughout the region. States like Venezuela, Bolivia and Brazil are seeking alternatives in their own ways and with respect for their own political structures. Many Latin American states now have democratically elected leaders with a desire to uproot the status quo. Scholar Arturo Escobar considers these changes to be a postmodern approach to Latin America's current position within the global political economy. He uses terms such as post-liberal, post-developmental and post-capitalist to describe the political phenomenon that seems to be sweeping the region (Escobar 2010). Although there are significant structural differences, these countries share a common goal of developing an alternative to the prevailing neoliberal model of development.

One of the most noteworthy examples is the Republic of Ecuador, which has adopted an ideology of *buen vivir*, or 'good living', as a national *pensamiento* based in pre-colonial indigenous concepts. More than just a mindset, these concepts have been translated to the social and political realm, both granting direct rights to the environment and declaring the Andean country a plurinational state in Ecuador's 2008 constitution. It is an endogenous ideology, unique to Ecuador's regional context and based in the age-old indigenous Kichwa concept of *sumak kawsay* that has been brought to light after decades of strong anti-neoliberal protests from indigenous confederations. Ecuador's *buen vivir* has challenged neoliberalism in a number of ways, but it has also met contention in its endeavors for alternative development. This challenge to neoliberalism and its progress as an alternative development model are the key issues that will be explored in what follows.

This thesis draws upon data collected through government documents and semi-structured interviews to provide a detailed examination of *buen vivir* in Ecuador. It does so in two specific ways. First, I provide an overview of the Kichwa philosophy of *sumak kawsay*,

which emphasizes the mutually-beneficial coexistence between the individual, society, and the natural world. *Sumak kawsay* is an ideology focused on complementarity, coexistence, and life in harmony, and in this way it offers a unique perspective on some of the most basic questions of development. Second, then, I explore how *sumak kawsay* has influenced Ecuador's new development program in three key areas: social welfare, the environment, and culture. In each case, I show how Ecuador's new development model challenges the concept of neoliberalism, but at the same time must function within a broader occidental framework. Because of this, the government's programs are not always popular, and I draw upon the views of Ecuadorian citizens to illustrate some of the challenges and ambiguities that exist with the country's *buen vivir* model. Overall, I conclude that in many respects Ecuador's approach can be considered a hybrid mixture of both Occidental and indigenous concepts, a 'harmonious coexistence' of elements from the European welfare state and the philosophy of *sumak kawsay*.

What follows is a review of the relevant literature regarding the attempt to pursue an alternative development path in Latin America. The review first focuses on the idea of dependency theory and its effect on Latin American governments, followed by a discussion of literature that seeks to define the idea of neoliberalism. Next, I review the literature concerning recent alternative development movements and models in Latin America, focusing in particular on Arturo Escobar's *Latin America at a Crossroads* (2010). The last two sections then focus specifically on alternative development movements in Ecuador. The first discusses the recent impact of indigenous movements and highlights work that analyzes the new policies implemented by Ecuador's current presidential administration. Finally, I compare and contrast different definitions of *Buen Vivir*, Ecuador's newest ideological focus for political, economic and social change.

From Dependency to Neoliberalism

Gabriel García Márquez, an avid journalist and Nobel winning author, made a convincing case for defining the identity of Latin America three decades ago. During his Nobel speech, the Colombian author described a contemporary Latin America that “neither wants, nor has any reason, to be a pawn without a will of its own.” (Márquez 1982, n.p.). What Márquez issued to the international community during his Nobel speech was a call for independence; a plea to western elites to ‘live and let live’ in regard to their influence, whether altruistic or capitalistic, in Latin America. This search for an independent path, proposed by Márquez almost three decades ago, has recently been given significant attention in discussions of international relations and economic development in Latin America.

Arturo Escobar wrote an important article just before the turn of the century highlighting the role of western development models in Latin America and many other regions of the global south. He argued that the end of World War II and the creation of the Bretton Woods economic system, which included the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), resulted in the “discovery” of mass poverty around the globe, a problem that could only be solved through economic development and foreign investment (Escobar 1999). This ideology, according to Escobar, was etched as a universal truth and thus development in the western sense was seen as the only possible solution to this newly discovered concept of mass poverty.

This notion is similar to the arguments made by scholars of Latin American dependency studies. The roots of Dependency Theory can be traced back to the Singer–Prebisch thesis of the 1950’s, which stated that countries on the periphery (the developing countries of Latin America,

for example) should focus on diversifying their economies in order to create manufactured goods instead of simply trading primary products (Baer 1962). Scholars began to suggest that western, developed countries maintain a core of wealth that developing countries cannot access. The result was a continuous, unilateral resource flow from the developing countries to the developed world, which was seen as exploitative and unbalanced (Frank 1967; Cardoso and Faletto 1977; Halperin-Donghi 1982). Dependency theorists thus questioned the overall idea of modern economic interdependence in the 1960s and 70s, determining that the current system resulted in the “development of underdevelopment” within dependent states (Frank 1966; Dos Santos 1970; Cardoso 1972). For Teotonio Dos Santos, a prominent scholar within the dependency school, dependency was the idea that one state’s economy is conditioned and essentially controlled by the actions of another state. Dos Santos suggested that some countries (the ‘core’ presented in the Singer-Prebisch Thesis) can independently expand and, in turn, be self-sustaining, while other countries (the periphery) can only develop in reaction to the development of core countries, for better or for worse (Dos Santos 1970). For dependency theorists, the solution to this structural inequality was a Keynesian approach, one focused on direct state participation in the production of primary goods, services and infrastructure (Frank 1966; Dos Santos 1970; Cardoso 1972). The solution was coined ‘structural development’ which would be based on the creation of a more powerful public sector, resulting in a strong state with the power to reduce dependencies and induce more balanced growth (Stulwark 2005)

Although initially effective, the Keynesian ‘strong state’ became strained under a series of economic recessions beginning in the late 1970s (O’Brien & Williams 2007) which hit countries in Latin America particularly hard. This paved the way for a second stage of dependency, in which many governments in the region were forced to engage in structural

adjustment programs designed under a theoretical concept that promoting private enterprise would strengthen the country as a whole (de la Barra and Dello Buono 2009). The new approach consisted of a series of market reforms initiated by western policies known as the Washington Consensus, and included a liberalization of trade and capital flows, privatization of state assets (primarily within the oil industry), and a deregulation of markets (Escobar 2010). The idea was coined *neoliberalism*, and was promoted as a solution to the failures of Keynesian economics in developing countries (de la Barra and Dello Buono 2009). As David Harvey describes it:

Neoliberalism is a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade (Harvey 2007, 22).

According to Harvey, general well-being is an entirely economic concept in neoliberalism, and development is therefore seen solely in terms of economic development.

Criticisms and Alternative Development Models

The implementation of neoliberalism in Latin America has led to a significant debate about its impacts. Some observers have suggested that the implementation of Washington Consensus policies has led to increased growth within the region (Walton 2004). The problem with such findings is that the definition of development is limited to the realm of economic growth. Critics claim that this has created significant problems. Many countries have witnessed a restoration of ‘class power’, which has led to an even larger divide in social class structures (Harvey 2007). Scholars also point to the ways in which neoliberal economic policy influences democracy, stating that the free-market can influence public policy and political outcomes much more than can the individual citizen (de la Barra and Dello Buono 2009). In Latin America, many people have become increasingly apathetic regarding democratic participation, feeling that their governments are no longer capable of addressing public concerns due to the influence of

trans-national organizations (Dello Bueno 2010). This lack of representation is particularly significant for indigenous groups, which comprise a high percentage of the population in certain Latin American nations. Indigenous groups have come in conflict with state and foreign business operations in regard to land use (Bebbington et al. 1993; Erazo 2010), and the exploitation of resources and the promotion of foreign direct investment have compromised the rights and autonomy of indigenous groups struggling to preserve their land and cultural heritage (Escobar 2010; Walsh 2002).

Such criticisms have paved the way for the nations of Latin America to challenge the status-quo model, and in many ways the region has become a laboratory for alternative development approaches. Although it may seem deceptively easy to understand, the term ‘development’ has been widely debated by international relations scholars. Some authors perceive development from a commonly held western perspective of economic growth, focusing for example on the percentage of individuals living in poverty, which is defined by the United Nations as those living on less than \$1.00 per day (Gordon 2005). Others, however, have questioned the very idea of what defines development, focusing on more humanistic approaches to the concept. Vandana Shiva, for example, critiques the standard definition of poverty, arguing that poverty is created by a nonsustainable and inequitable western model of growth (Shiva 2005). Shiva makes the argument for sustenance economies, those economies below the poverty line that do not necessarily fall into the category of poverty as defined by traditional development agencies. She states that “sustenance economies, which satisfy basic needs through self-provisioning, are not poor in the sense of being deprived. Yet the ideology of development declares them so because they do not participate overwhelmingly in the market economy” (Shiva 2005, n.p.). Shiva’s argument is particularly interesting because it does not attempt to redefine

poverty. Instead, it sheds light on the fact that the term poverty is not even recognized in certain cultures. This is particularly significant for Latin America, where the idea of poverty simply does not exist in many indigenous cultures.

Arturo Escobar has provided insight into alternative development models specifically in Latin America. According to Escobar, efforts are being made in many Latin American countries to implement post-liberal, post-capitalist and post-developmental models in contrast to the current neoliberal model of development (Escobar 2010). Leading this foray into alternative development are three countries: Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. Escobar notes that while all of these countries have implemented alternative development projects in their own respective ways, a number of key commonalities exist: the creation of integrated and participatory democracies, anti-neoliberal economic projects, the acceptance of pluri-national states, and a respect for ecology and the environment (Escobar 2010). These challenges are specific to Latin America and denote an alternative framework based on regional concepts and ideas that take into consideration each country's geographical makeup.

Ecuador and the Indigenous Influence

Catherine Walsh asserts that Ecuador in particular has continuously suffered from a lack of plurality and cultural respect arising from a nationalizing identity called *mestisaje*, which creates an 'us versus them' mentality between the urban *mestizo* and largely rural indigenous classes (Walsh 2002; Walsh 2010). The Spanish colonization of Ecuador left the country with a complex ethnic makeup. Ecuador's latest *Censo de Estadísticas* (Census) declares that the most common ethnicity is the Mestizo (or Spanish-American Indian mix) population, followed by the Indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian, and White Spanish populations (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos* (INEC) 2010). Such categories, however, over-simplify Ecuador's ethnic diversity.

We find evidence of this in Uquillas and Nieuwkoop's (2003) discussion of Ecuador's Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), which has empowered indigenous populations by strengthening unity between three important indigenous sectors: the Amazon region, coastal African-Ecuadorian region and highlands of the Andes Mountains (Figure 1.1). That simple classification of indigenous populations, however, misrepresents the indigenous minority, and this is one reason for the significant discussion of alternative development models in Ecuador.

Since the 1950's, neoliberal economic policies and foreign investment have exacerbated the class divide within the country (Kofas 2001). Different economic trajectories have created a

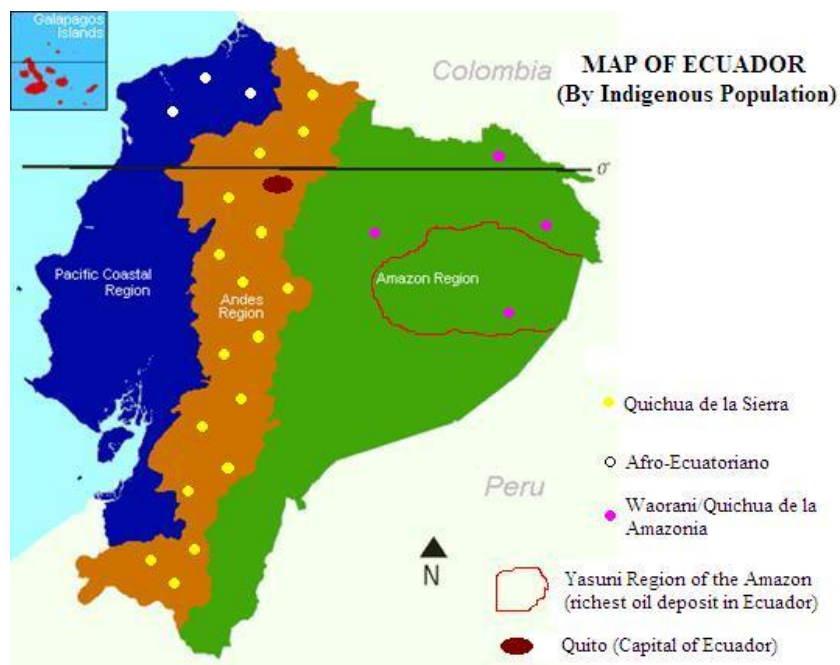


Figure 1.1
Indigenous populations of Ecuador split by geographical region
(Information from: <http://www.ecuador-travel.net/information.ethnic.htm>
and www.ecuadortouristboard.com/regions/regions.html)

regional division “between the agriculturally dependent indigenous people of the temperate highlands and the coastal population, whose livelihood emanated from plantation crops, light manufacturing, commerce, finance, and service industries” (Kofas 2001, 50).

Bebbington et al. (1993) provide background into the evolution of indigenous

politics since the 1960s, stating that there has been a significant increase in indigenous rural

community co-operatives, specifically in the Amazon and the Andes (or Sierra) regions. Such cooperatives have focused on legal land ownership as a means of protecting territorial rights, which have been frequently violated by both the government and foreign investors since the country's independence (Bebbington et al. 1993). Despite an increase in cooperative organizations focused on rural indigenous representation, recent debt crises combined with a greater amount of foreign direct investment, especially in oil-rich regions of the country, have continued to transform the rural landscape (Lerner and Meldrum 1992). Lerner and Meldrum (1992) discuss a surprising phenomenon in Ecuador resulting from rising levels of poverty in urban areas and increases in foreign investment in oil fields. Unlike the great migration from rural to urban areas which is typically associated with developing countries, significant poverty within large cities has forced more residents to follow oil companies into rural areas, particularly the Amazonian region, searching for jobs and in turn causing a displacement of indigenous populations (Lerner and Meldrum 1992). This conflict has laid the groundwork for a new administration in Ecuador, strengthening indigenous organizations like CONAIE that have attempted to change the status-quo government model by promoting concepts of plurality and rural economic sustainability (Uquillas and Nieuwkoop 2003).

Ecuador's 'Citizen Revolution'

Since the 1990's, Ecuador has seen an increase in social movements proposing alternative development models (Bebbington et al. 1993; Uquillas and Nieuwkoop 2003; Barndt 2010). In fact, Ecuadorian presidents Abdalá Bucaram, Jamil Mahuad, and Lucio Gutierrez were all forced to leave office between 1997 and 2005 due to social pressure (Conaghan 2008). The indigenous-led social movements culminated on January 17, 2000 when, "after a decade of movement growth, and increasing coordination (including nationwide protests in 1990 and

1999),” thousands of CONAIE representatives marched on the national congress and overthrew then president Jamil Mahuad due to both the government’s neglect for underrepresented populations and its dollarization policy (Reyes 2012, 5). Shortly after, Lucio Gutierrez, elected in 2002 with the help of CONAIE representatives, was overthrown for promoting the same neoliberal agenda as his predecessor in a series of massive protests known as the *Revolucion Rosa*, or ‘Pink Revolution’ (Reyes 2012). The movement to overthrow Gutierrez contained a component that the movements before had not, an Ecuadorian middle class that had become increasingly frustrated with the country’s political policies. Some have coined these movements the ‘citizen revolution’, which brought together Ecuador’s needs for both socio-economic equality and greater recognition and political representation for its indigenous population (Becker 2011).

In 2007, Rafael Correa took office as Ecuador’s president, vowing to overcome the legacy of *mestizaje* in the country and replace it with what Walsh and Escobar describe as a plurinational, pluricultural state. Nicholls states that Correa has proposed the creation of a ‘new citizenship’ which gives citizens the ability to shape the government system (Nicholls 2010). This, Nicholls argues, yields greater representation for indigenous populations. This can be seen clearly in Ecuador’s new 2008 constitution, which promises an increase in democratic freedoms coupled with a greater respect for the environment (Nicholls 2010). However, the Correa government’s agenda has not always gone hand in hand with the agendas of the indigenous movement, and organizations like CONAIE have claimed that the so called ‘citizen revolution’ has not been entirely successful in providing equal rights and opportunities to the indigenous population (Becker 2011).

Ecuador's New Model of Development

In the wake of Ecuador's citizen revolution, scholars have begun to examine the country's new model of development, as set forth in the 2008 constitution (Republic of Ecuador 2008) and the government's new *Plan Nacional Para el Buen Vivir 2009-2013* (SENPLADES 2009) development strategy. Catherine Walsh (2010), for example, describes a number of prominent development themes, including greater equality between ethnic groups, a strengthening of basic democratic rights, and the establishment of a sustainable economic system based on respect for the environment.

Ecuador's underlying concept of development can be traced back to the indigenous people. It is grounded in the Kichwa term *sumak kawsay* which can be translated as *buen vivir* or "good living" (Lorenzo 2009; Walsh 2010; Gudynas 2011). However, this idea of good living is subject to many different interpretations. Catherine Walsh has published a variety of articles that focus on the idea of *buen vivir* as a notion of 'collective well being'. In her view, *buen vivir* is the embodiment of a pluri-national state in which concepts of liberty, autonomy, coexistence and social inclusion have fostered a form of social consciousness (Walsh 2002; 2010). Other scholars have analyzed this concept primarily in terms of economic development, stating that previous neoliberal policies have failed to address significant poverty issues and that *buen vivir* is an answer to past failures (Martens 2010; Gudynas 2011). Others claim that this post-developmental attitude functions more as a means of producing economic and environmentally-sustainable measures while still maintaining the status-quo global political system (Carbaugh and Prante 2010). Alberto Acosta places the idea in a more specific context, focusing on energy policies in his book *La Maldicion de la Abundancia*. Acosta describes the old neoliberal

developmental system as a ‘curse of abundance’ in which the existence of significant oil reserves in Ecuador led to exploitation by transnational corporations which were empowered by global organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (Acosta 2009). Acosta’s book highlighted how Ecuador’s environmental policies could help both promote a healthy lifestyle and reduce the influence of foreign companies. These various approaches to explaining the concept of *Buen Vivir* have alluded to the same question: To what extent is Ecuador’s new development model a possible alternative to neoliberalism? Although it may be too early to answer definitively, there are three broad areas where Ecuador’s approach appears to be challenging the status-quo.

First, Ecuador has challenged the issue of development. Scholar Rene Ramirez Gallegos suggests that neoliberalism follows a development ideology that defines well-being strictly in economic terms, such as a country’s per-capita income or purchasing power (Ramirez 2010c). Ramirez states that in neoliberalism, the health of the economy is a primary determinant of the overall well-being of a state, but Ecuador has taken other factors into consideration. In his 2010 article on measuring happiness, Ramirez suggests that ‘satisfaction of life’ must be taken into consideration along with economic gains in order to determine the true well-being of an individual or a nation. For this reason, Ecuador has begun to measure individuals’ ‘happiness levels’ in addition to economic gains (Ramirez 2010c). Arturo Escobar also touches on the idea of development, suggesting that Ecuador has begun to move beyond normal development and into a period of ‘post-development’ (Escobar 2010). Escobar states that this idea of ‘post-developmentalism’ has become defined as *buen vivir*, which is an endogenous development model based on the philosophies and practices of Ecuador’s indigenous population (Escobar 2010). According to both scholars, rather than taking for granted the current definition of

development, Ecuador's new model questions it entirely in an effort to determine a more expansive definition of *buen vivir* or well-being.

Ecuador has also challenged the neoliberal perspective of the environment. According to scholars Bebbington and Bebbington, Ecuador's former environmental policies were "so neoliberal that once a private party requested concession [to a natural resource], the state had to grant it" and that these concessions "to a considerable degree, could be renewed indefinitely" (Bebbington and Bebbington 2010, 135). In contrast to this, the Correa government has begun to formulate new ways of 'governing' natural resources, which has given the government greater control over its own resources (Bebbington and Bebbington 2010). While some consider the Correa government's focus on environmental policy a form of 'governing' natural resources, others see it as way of treating the natural environment like a citizen itself. Catherine Walsh declares that Ecuador has developed a unique model in that it has given direct rights to the natural environment in its 2008 constitution (Walsh 2010). Ecuador's agreement with the United Nations has also been a frequent topic of discussion among environmentally-focused scholars. Under one specific project, the Yasuni-ITT fund, the Ecuadorian government will receive \$3.5 billion over the next ten years for leaving the Yasuni region (Ecuador's most biodiverse and oil rich region) untapped and free of all oil drilling operations (Marx 2010). It is what Catherine Walsh (2010) describes as the power of 'doing nothing'.

Neoliberalism has also been challenged by Ecuador's new perspective on culture. The idea of a plurinational state is of particular importance to Ecuador, which has a large indigenous population that, Escobar argues, has not consistently been granted the same rights as other ethnic groups (Escobar 2010). As such, a great class divide has developed between the indigenous and *mestizo* populations, as cited in Harvey (2007) and later expanded by Escobar (2010). Thus, it is

a primary objective of Ecuador's new alternative development model to decrease the class divide by increasing ethnic equality. Promoting an idea of plurinationalism, according to Bob Thompson, creates a 'plurality of vision' that offers a place for exchange, learning and mutual respect regarding other cultures and nationalities (Thompson 2011).

Based on this review, there is evidence that Ecuador's new approach to development may represent an alternative to neoliberalism. Its eventual success, however, will depend in large measure on two important elements of the Correa government's model. First, what are the underlying principles or philosophical concepts that are shaping Ecuador's development changes? Secondly, how have these principles been implemented in the form of government projects and policies, and what can we infer from their implementation so far? It is these issues that will be examined in detail in this thesis.

Research Objectives

This thesis will provide an assessment of Ecuador's new model of development as a possible challenge to neoliberalism, focusing on both its underlying philosophical framework and its implementation as public policy. Accordingly, there are two main research objectives. My first objective is to demonstrate the ways that indigenous ideas and concepts have formed the philosophical basis behind the Correa government's new development model. Drawing on primary government documents and interviews with government officials, I seek to answer the following questions:

1. What are the underlying indigenous concepts that form the basis for Ecuador's alternative model of development, and how have they come to influence Ecuador's developmental changes?

My second objective is to examine more specifically the implementation of these new development changes by assessing the ways in which *sumak kawsay* is being implemented by the Correa government in the form of new plans and policies. Drawing on both government documents and interviews with government officials and citizens, I seek to answer the following questions:

2. What projects and policies have been implemented by the Correa government, and how do certain members of Ecuadorian society view these policies?

In answering these questions, I will first discuss the indigenous concept of *sumak kawsay* as a philosophical basis for Ecuador's new model of development. I will then elaborate on specific themes discovered in my research to determine how Ecuador's development model can be seen as an alternative to neoliberalism. These themes will be examined based on the three primary challenges to neoliberalism described in the literature review: development, environment and culture. Chapter two describes the methodology of this thesis and chapter three introduces the principles of *sumak kawsay* as an alternative to the occidental global political framework. Chapters four, five and six focus specifically on analyzing each of the three challenges to neoliberalism based on the research data. Chapter seven concludes by determining how Ecuador's new development model can be viewed as an alternative to neoliberalism and discussing the significance of these development changes.

CHAPTER 2 EXPLANATION OF THE METHODOLOGY

Overview

In June-July of 2011, I carried out six weeks of fieldwork in Quito, Ecuador. I utilized two primary methods of data collection: the acquisition of documents relating to Ecuador's new development model and interviews with key government officials and members of the Ecuadorian public. The process was inductive, allowing for concepts and themes to develop from the research. This chapter defines what type of data was gathered, describes how the data was gathered, and provides an explanation of the data analysis process.

Data Collection

Collection of Documents

In order to better understand the philosophical underpinning of Ecuador's development plan, I collected a number of government documents relating to *sumak kawsay* and *buen vivir*. Ecuador's 2008 constitution (Republic of Ecuador 2008) and *Plan Nacional Para el Buen Vivir 2009-2013* (SENPLADES 2009) are the two central documents of the country's new development plan. The 2008 constitution describes the rights of citizens based on concepts of *buen vivir*, or 'living well'. The *Plan Nacional*, drafted by Ecuador's National Planning and Development Secretary (SENPLADES) outlines a four-year timeline of projects that comprise Ecuador's new development model. I also collected various documents by Ecuador's Council on the Development of People and Nationalities of Ecuador (CODENPE) which contain extensive information on the indigenous concepts that have formed the basis of Ecuador's *buen vivir* approach. CODENPE's *Sumak Kawsay* describes a number of Kichwa concepts and ideas related to development, and then compares them to the occidental, or western idea of development. *Pachamama* focuses specifically on Ecuador's indigenous understanding of the

natural environment, comparing it to the occidental world. *Plurinacionalidad* and *Interculturalidad* both describe Ecuador’s multi-ethnic background and examine new government projects and plans that focus on improving both rights for and understanding of the country’s indigenous culture. I also collected two documents by Rene Ramirez Gallegos, Ecuador’s National Secretary for SENPLADES, which challenge the idea of development as defined by neoliberalism and explain Ecuador’s new development model based on different ideas of ‘well-being’. Taken together, these documents provide a first-hand understanding of Ecuador’s indigenous concepts, its outlook on development and how the Correa government plans to create an alternative model of development in Ecuador. Some of the key texts are listed in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1 List of Government Documents

<i>Plan Nacional Para el Buen Vivir 2009-2013 “Construyendo un Estado Plurinacional e Intercultural”</i> <i>SENPLADES 2009</i>
<i>Constitución de la Republica del Ecuador, 2008</i>
“Pachamama: Diálogo de Saberes” <i>CODENPE (July 2011a)</i>
“Sumak Kawsay – Buen Vivir: Diálogo de Saberes” <i>CODENPE (July 2011b)</i>
“Interculturalidad: Diálogo de Saberes” <i>CODENPE (July 2011c)</i>
“Plurinacionalidad: Diálogo de Saberes” <i>CODENPE (July 2011d)</i>
Gallegos, René Ramírez “Izquierda Postsocialista” <i>SENPLADES 2010a</i>
Gallegos, René Ramírez “Socialismo del Sumak Kawsay o biosocialismo republicano” <i>SENPLADES 2010b</i>

Interviews

I used a qualitative research design, which aimed to collect and analyze narratives from a carefully chosen set of respondents, rather than to seek statistically valid generalizations from a large sample size. According to research scholar Iain Hay, interviews within qualitative research are conducted in order to acquire a wide range of experiences or opinions (Hay 2000).

Qualitative interviews allowed respondents to share real life experiences, which helped shed light on the realities of daily life under Ecuador's new political changes.

A total of eighteen interviews were conducted. An opportunistic approach was utilized to begin the interview selection process. I initially followed leads provided by acquaintances from my host family at *Universidad San Francisco de Quito* (USFQ). Following from this, I used a purposive selection approach to identify interview respondents with different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. Variables such as age, gender, ethnicity and level of education were assessed in order to ensure a diversity of respondents. Interviews ranged from twenty minutes to 2.5 hours, and followed a semi-structured format, using an interview guide (see appendix B). This allowed respondents the freedom to discuss their own particular experiences depending on their ethnicity, social status and field of work. Figure 2.2 presents a list of interview respondents. All of those listed by first name only are pseudonyms. Interviews were conducted using a pyramid technique. This technique is defined by Hay (2000) as a strategy designed to first establish a level of trust with the respondent and then begin with broader questions followed by more focused, specific questions. Interviews typically began with questions about the respondent's daily life, and then moved to consider the topic of Ecuador's new development model.

Figure 2.2 List of Interview Respondents

Name	Ethnicity	Age	Profession (other)
Alberto	Mestizo	36	Graphics Designer (Cuban national)
Cariaco	Indigenous	*	Director of Education, Kichwa Confederation of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI)
Crisanna	Mestiza	18	Political Science student, Universidad Central del Ecuador
Daniela	Mestiza	35	Mother of two (Cuban national)
David	Mestizo	23	Law student, Universidad Central del Ecuador
Eduardo Paredes	Mestizo	*	Consultant, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Founder of <i>Alianza Pais</i> , Ecuador's political party in power)
Elissa	Mestiza	38	Playwright, mother of two
Esmeralda	Indigenous	52	Domestic worker
Estefania	Indigenous	*	Domestic worker
Francisco Rivadeneira	Mestizo	41	Vice Minister of International Trade and Economic Integration, Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Hector Rodriguez	Mestizo	*	Undersecretary General of Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT)
Inti	Indigenous	19	Student, Universidad San Francisco de Quito
Isabel	Mestiza	28	Part-time English teacher, mother of two
Lissandra	Mestiza	50	Professor of Spanish
Marcela	Indigenous	19	Vendor of fruits, vegetables in central Quito
Marco	Mestizo	*	Founder of the ETHOS Foundation, Mexico, political activist in Ecuador
Marichel	Indigenous	22	Clothing and indigenous souvenirs vendor
Martin	Mestizo	*	Clothing vendor

*indicates unknown age

Data Analysis

Transcription Process

Interview files were transferred from the recorder to a password protected system, and transcribed using DSS Player Pro Transcription Module version 4.8. I engaged in a selective transcription technique, in which I listened to each interview word for word and transcribed pieces of conversation that focused on topics of interest regarding Ecuador’s new development model. This transcription process can be described as “interpretive constructions arrived at through choices made by the researcher” (Lapadat and Lindsay 1998, 9). As Lapadat and Lindsay advise, drawing on Kvale (1946), “rather than aiming for completeness, which is not achievable, researchers should ask themselves, ‘what is a useful transcription for my research purposes?’” (Lapadat and Lindsay 1998, 9).

Once each interview was transcribed, passages were organized into specific themes. All selected quotes were placed in a table-style format, containing the respondent’s name, the quote (in Spanish), and an explanation of the quote in English. Passages were coded based on the respondent. For example, government officials were coded in blue, respondents of indigenous backgrounds were coded in red, and political activists were coded in green. An example of this document is below.

Figure 2.3 Coding of Interview Quotes

TOURISM (Any quote which discusses the economy of tourism in detail)		
Eduardo Paredes	Logramos sostener la amazonia por el medio ambiente y turismo	A move toward a service economy based on tourism
Daniel Alejandro	Producción de los servicios...a tanto tecnológicos como turísticos...es un país hermoso...tu vienes a los ee uu o Europa, un rato estas en la playa y 3 horas estas en la selva...	Argument for moving toward a service, tourism based economy
Segundo de Churuchumbi	Los campesinos, indígenas y productores estamos generando. Generar propuestas alternativas, generales,	Discussing how many of the indigenous

	saludables, no destruyendo la naturaleza, no contaminando el agua o el aire. Se deben generar propuestas alternativas, productivas como el ecoturismo, turismo comunitario o crear empresas comunitarias.	people and residents of rural areas are beginning to Foster in a new era of ecotourism in Ecuador.
Hector Rodriguez	Lo que nosotros estamos plantamos es una economía de servicios...servicios como turismo...turismo es muy distributivo...es decir ingresa...poco dinero por aqui poco dinero por alla, dinero en el restaurante, en el hotel, en el taxi, se distribuyen mejor.	Hector Rodriguez, one of the writers of the Buen Vivir Plan, highlights the importance of moving more toward a service economy, toward tourism

Once all data was organized by theme, I carried out both a manifest and latent qualitative content analysis to determine which themes were discussed with the most frequency. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) define the significance of content analysis, stating that such analysis is used specifically “to identify important themes or categories within a body of content, and to provide a rich description of the social reality created by those themes/categories as they are lived out in a particular setting” (Zhang and Wildemuth 2009, 11). In this way, qualitative analysis “can support the development of new theories and models, as well as validate existing theories and provide thick descriptions of particular settings or phenomena” (Zhang and Wildemuth 2009, 11). The following list contains a short explanation of each theme found during the data analysis process:

- *Environmental Concerns* - Any statement which discusses Ecuador’s natural environment, environmental sustainability or conservation.
- *Energy Investment/Production* - Any statement discussing Ecuador’s domestic production of energy, fossil fuel or renewable.
- *Human/Indigenous Rights* - Any statement which discusses the rights and/or marginalization of the Indigenous population of Ecuador
- *Influence of the Media* - Any statement discussing the media’s influence in Ecuador
- *Foreign Economic Influence* - Any statement that discusses external economic or political influences on Ecuador, including foreign investment
- *Tax System* - Any statement which directly relates to government tax reform and redistribution of wealth

- *Socio-Economic Equality* - Any statement discussing the gap between rich and poor in Ecuador and/or efforts to reduce this gap.
- *Democratic Participation* - Any statement which discusses the general idea of democratic and civic participation of the citizenship in state affairs, including opportunities and inhibitions.
- *State Sovereignty* - Any statement which discusses the sovereignty of the state, lack of sovereignty, or the importance of sovereignty.
- *Education* – Any statement which discusses Ecuador’s education system, its current state or future policies
- *Healthcare* – Any statement which discusses Ecuador’s health care system, its current state or future policies
- *Plurinationality* - Any quote which discusses the idea of plurinationality, pluriculturalism, or the distinct population demographics of Ecuador
- *Tourism and Service Industries* - Any statement which discusses Ecuador’s service industry, including tourism, as an alternative to raw material production
- *Natural Resources* - Any statement discussing natural resources, conservation of or exploitation
- *Global Economic Participation* - Any statement discussing participation in the global economy, more specifically the importance of diversification and regional trade
- *Presidential Power/Power of Government* - Any statement discussing thoughts on changes in government power or presidential power since the arrival of President Correa
- *Domestic Economy* – Any statement discussing domestic economic production, including energy production; also includes statements related to reinforcing the domestic economy
- *Socio-Economic Issues* - Any statement discussing individual experiences regarding the situation of the Ecuadorian economy
- *Violence and Crime* - Any statement discussing matters of crime, delinquency in Ecuador
- *Infrastructure* – Any statement discussing state infrastructure, more specifically transportation reforms in Ecuador

Having identified these themes, I then analyzed each based on the three challenges to neoliberalism identified in the literature. These themes are used to determine how exactly Ecuador challenges neoliberalism based on its idea of development, perspective on environmental sustainability, and outlook on the importance of culture.

CHAPTER 3 'SUMAK KAWSAY', AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE OCCIDENT

To understand what makes Ecuador unique, it is essential to understand the underlying concept behind the country's new development model. This concept is *sumak kawsay*, a Kichwa term that describes a mutually beneficial coexistence between the individual, his or her society, and the society's natural environment (CODENPE 2011b, 7). According to Ecuadorian economist Pablo Dávalos, *sumak kawsay* is a basis for facilitating socio-economic change in the country, by returning to the social foundation that existed in the country before colonialism. Dávalos considers the idea of *sumak kawsay* the “only alternative, at the moment, to the neoliberal discussion of development and economic growth, because the notion of *sumak kawsay* brings about a possibility of connecting man with his environment,” which can create “a new social contract centered on the ethics of real coexistence” (Dávalos 2008, 6).

It is noteworthy that the Ecuadorian government is developing a political model based entirely, at least in theory, on indigenous Kichwa beliefs about how life should be lived. Indeed, it represents one of the few times in postcolonial history that a government has chosen to redefine itself by returning to its indigenous roots. Catherine Walsh describes Ecuador's political changes as “historically significant” for a country that has “long exalted its mestizo character, favoured whitening and whiteness, and looked to the North for its model of development” (Walsh 2010, 18).

What is *sumak kawsay*, why is it so important to Ecuador's new development model, and how does it differ from the occidental model that predominates around the world? In this chapter, I draw upon data collected from government documents, interviews and secondary sources to first provide a context for how influential the indigenous population has been in facilitating a development change within the country. I then examine indigenous beliefs in the

Andean world and contrast them to those in the Occidental world in order to provide a more thorough context regarding the push for an alternative development model in Ecuador. Lastly, I focus on six principles of *sumak kawsay* and describe how each produces a challenge to neoliberalism and the occidental model based on the themes of development, environment and culture.

Understanding the Indigenous Influence

Catherine Walsh states that the “new conceptualization (of this indigenous model) as public policy is a result largely of the social, political, and epistemic agency of the indigenous movement over the last two decades” (Walsh 2010, 18). As Walsh (2010) and Escobar (2010) both suggest, it is important not to disregard the indigenous influence in sparking the citizen revolution that has brought about these political changes. I had the opportunity to interview Cariaco, an official from the Kichwa Confederation of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI), Ecuador’s most prominent organization representing the Kichwa community. Cariaco commented on the uniqueness of Ecuador’s new plan when compared to past political ideologies, stating that “it’s a new and alternative proposal, of course. There have been the ideas of communism, socialism, capitalism...they still speak of socialism in the 19th and 20th century, but this is a proposal based on the indigenous movement, for the entire Ecuadorian society” (Cariaco, personal interview). Ecuador’s new development model has arisen from a desire for change, one fueled by the indigenous population, with the support of organizations like (ECUARUNARI) and CONAIE. Authors Carlos Larrea and Fernando Montenegro Torres discuss the increasing importance of the indigenous population within the Ecuadorian political sphere in recent years:

Today [the indigenous population represented by CONAIE] effectively control 27 municipalities and provincial governments across the country, and in the past five years have had sufficient political leverage to elect key members of the national congress, to appoint an indigenous woman as vice-president of the congress and, in the early months

of the current presidential administration, to select the first indigenous ministers for key cabinet positions (foreign affairs and agriculture) that have traditionally been the stronghold of the dominant elites (Larrea and Torres 2006, 68).

Cariaco also discusses the effort that was undertaken by indigenous movements to facilitate political change. The ECUARUNARI official made it very clear that these movements stem not only from a struggle for greater acceptance of the population by the state, but also from causes dating back to the arrival of the first colonists.

This has been a process for over 518 years, in which the indigenous populations of Latin America have been resisting and fighting the status quo. There was fighting during both the colonial period and the republican period after independence...during the republican period the indigenous population has suffered the most maltreatment and oppression, including human rights violations, territory disputes, and unfair treatment to women...these struggles are now expressed in the constitution, but only after our most recent fight lasting over twenty years (Cariaco, personal interview).

For Ecuador's indigenous population, this resistance may finally be leading to political change. The majority *mestizo* population in the past two decades has risen up with indigenous rights groups to oppose past republican governments, which have functioned primarily under a neoliberal framework. Eduardo Paredes, founder of Ecuador's dominant political party *Alianza Pais* and the country's former Minister of Government, addressed this issue in detail in one of my interviews:

The 1998 constitution did not properly represent the citizenship, and because of that there were many protests. We had many presidential changes with this constitution...we couldn't properly govern. The outstanding majority of the Ecuadorian population did not have faith in the national congress nor its policies; according to national polls congress at this time only had a 10% credibility rating (Paredes, personal interview).

Paredes highlights an important feature of Ecuador's political instability in the decade leading up to the country's 2008 constitution: during this period of political crisis, citizens of both indigenous and *mestizo* ethnicities were fighting for similar changes. Governments in power during this time failed to properly represent the citizenship because they governed under a

constitution that only prioritized the economic sector. “The revolution for those in charge was a revolution only of the economy,” Paredes noted. “We had over seven, eight presidents during this time, we couldn’t govern” (Paredes, personal interview). Because of this, both *mestizo* and indigenous citizens worked together to demand greater representation. The recent citizen revolution that brought Rafael Correa to power signified a milestone by initiating a real, tangible discussion about indigenous concepts and values. Some citizens, such as Crisanna, have come to embrace this lifestyle:

In reality, I’m mestizo, but my mind set is much more indigenous. I mean, I don’t have indigenous relatives. My family is from Quito but we understand their culture, for the most part...their customs and traditions are becoming more familiar...we aren’t moving apart anymore, but closer together now (Crisanna, personal interview).

According to Crisanna, Ecuador’s culture is distinctive mainly because it has retained much of its indigenous philosophy:

There may be other countries that have a better social and economic structure, but their cultures and traditions are almost nonexistent. And the traditions and culture of a country are what fills your heart the most...here we have the *inti raymi*, or festival of the sun, which the indigenous population celebrates...the culture here is extremely rich...the music, food, all of that is what makes this country so unique...and that is what makes me proud to live here (Crisanna, personal interview).

We can see from this that the indigenous influence has been significant enough to facilitate one of the most unique, dynamic political challenges to neoliberal models of development. It is through the indigenous influence that these age-old Andean concepts have been reinterpreted and implemented as the driving force behind Ecuador’s new political model. This has been made possible because the indigenous ideology has always remained a strong, integral part of the country’s overall culture. It is one of the few places in the post-colonial world where indigenous concepts are not just acknowledged, but being implemented as public policy.

The Occidental World vs. the Andean World: A Structural Outline

Susan Strange (1999) provides an interesting perspective on how the current neoliberal global political system can be seen as a derivative of the European unitary state system. According to Strange, the Occidental world has created an inseparable bond between the *Westphalian* state-based international political model and the capitalist market economy. This bond, the basis for the occidental society, is evidently present in the current neoliberal global economy that prevails in the international community today. However, according to Strange, the current system “has failed to satisfy the long term conditions of sustainability” in a number of areas, including ecological and social relations (Strange 1999, 346). The Correa government’s new development plan aims to present an alternative to this model, one based on Andean concepts. Ecuador’s CODENPE has outlined some key concepts of both the Occidental world and the Andean world in order to better suggest the difference between these models. I have translated and placed these models side-by-side, highlighting each concept and then comparing them based on official documents from CODENPE. Figure 3.1 shows that the Andean model is grounded in very different concepts than the Occidental model traditionally maintained by past governments in Ecuador. The figure highlights a number of themes, which are united by one distinctive feature: the idea that everything is alive. In the Andean world, the natural environment is not just a piece of land for human beings to exploit; it is a living, breathing entity in which human beings not only participate, but exist as necessary parts to maintaining universal structure. The world is not split between the anthropocentric society and natural environment, but rather is seen as a holistic environment which survives on coexistence. According to Cachiguango Enrique, the Andean world is not a machine-like system, but rather a complex being organically woven and entirely alive (cited in CODENPE 2011b, n.p.).

Figure 3.1 Comparison of the Occidental and Andean worlds by ideological concept

THEME	OCCIDENTAL WORLD	ANDEAN WORLD
Basis of understanding	Based on the mechanics of rationality	Based on intuition and life-lessons over time
Natural environment	Based on the conquering of territory and the separation of man from the natural environment	Based on a mutual harmonic relationship where human beings are part of the natural environment
Significance of life	Based on anthropocentrism, or the assessment of reality presented entirely through the human species	Based on a <i>Pachacéntrica</i> philosophy in which the assessment of reality is presented through <i>pachamama</i> or ‘mother earth’
Use of Land	Land is seen as simply an object to be exploited for natural resources	Land is seen as a living being which permits the continuance of life for all other beings
Language code	Language is reproduced through the written word, and contracts are formed	Language is reproduced through the spoken word, which is the basis for agreement
Knowledge structure	Knowledge is fragmented among society, where individuals focus on specific specializations	Knowledge is integral and holistic, attained from understanding life as a whole, rather than focusing on a specialized field of study
Dissemination of knowledge	Knowledge is transferred through an institutional system of education	Knowledge is transferred through generations and is primarily centered on the study of agriculture
Social structure	Based on the individual as the principal actor in society	Based on <i>llakta</i> (the community) which is the driving societal force
Measurement of time	Time is a linear concept, based on the past, present and future	Time is cyclical, made up of one continuous space rather than the past, present and future
Music	Expresses feelings between men and women, specifically	<i>Taki</i> (music) expresses feelings for one’s community and the natural environment
Belief system	Religious based: God created the universe and all life forms Scientific based: Life was created on the basis of evolution	Two Gods, one male and one female, gave birth to <i>pachamama</i> , or ‘mother earth’ which brought about existence

Sources: Cachuango Germán, Parco José (2011) and Cachuango Enrique (2010) as cited in CODENPE (2011b) and adapted from CODENPE (2011b)

While the natural environment is viewed as an object ripe for exploitation in the Occidental world, the Andean philosophy suggests that abusing the natural environment entails a mutual

form of abuse to its offender. Simply put, the Andean philosophy does not even recognize the idea that inert or lifeless objects exist within the world, and as such no one being has authority or dominance over another. It is truly a concept of peaceful coexistence, an ideology that, if implemented in its purest form, would indeed be viewed as a challenge to the current neoliberal framework that characterizes much of the occidental world.

The Principles of ‘Sumak Kawsay’: Questioning Neoliberalism

At the conceptual center of the Andean world is the Kichwa term *sumak kawsay*, which represents a societal and environmental balance.

Figure 3.2 Basic Principles of ‘Sumak Kawsay’

* ‘d’ themes represent developmental, ‘e’ represents environmental and ‘c’ represents cultural significance

Relationalism (d)*	The idea that everything is interconnected, and that every action by an individual creates multiple reactions. Everyone communicates with everything.
Complementing and Correspondence (d)	The idea that none of us are fully complete individuals; that we are all simply a part of the universe itself and that we need one another in order to survive. None of us are equal; rather, we are made to complement each other.
Respect for life (e)	The idea that other living entities exist besides human beings, and that life in all forms should be respected. This includes the life of animals, plants, rivers, etc.
Pacha’-centrism (e)	The idea that human beings are not separate from the natural environment, but are rather a vital part of its existence. Therefore, to abuse the environment is to abuse ourselves.
Justice and Equality (c)	The idea that multiple nationalities exist which contain their own cultures, ways of life, traditions, identities, knowledge and wisdom. Forms the basis behind the plurinational state.
Significance of the spoken word (c)	The idea that the spoken word still holds meaning and significance, and should be considered a cultural code.

Source: Adapted from CODENPE 2011b

According to Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca Céspedes, the indigenous philosophy signifies “complementing instead of competing, sharing instead of taking advantage, and living in harmony among all people in the natural environment” (cited in CODENPE 2011b,

29). CODENPE provides six basic principles for a society to function under the ideology of *sumak kawsay*. These principles form the basis for how to structure a society, and therefore a government, that embodies the sentiments and ideology of the indigenous Andean world. Figure 3.2 outlines and elaborates on the six principles of *sumak kawsay*. From this figure we can interpret how Ecuador's political model calls into question neoliberalism. The first two principles challenge the neoliberal idea of *development*, which is seen almost entirely through economic gains and rarely through social welfare. The ideas of relationalism and correspondence bring to light a new development discourse, focusing less on rational calculations and more on general 'well-being'. Development of the individual is also questioned by highlighting the importance of a collective, interconnected society. These development-related concepts will be discussed further in chapter four. The second two principles call for a new way of understanding the *environment*. Rather than just treating the natural environment as a separate, lifeless entity, Ecuador has used the idea of 'pacha-centrism' to grant physical rights to the natural environment, which provides for a completely different outlook on environmental sustainability. This dimension of *sumak kawsay* will be discussed further in chapter five. The last two principles call for a national re-structuring based on the importance of *culture*. Ecuador called into question the traditional occidental nation-state system when it declared itself a plurinational state in its 2008 constitution, by both challenging the traditional existence of states and promoting existing indigenous cultures in an effort to create a post-colonial society. These changes will be the subject of chapter six.

Within these six concepts of *sumak kawsay*, we find three main ways that Ecuador's new political model calls into question the current neoliberal political framework. The following chapters describe each characteristic by drawing on government documents and personal

interviews to examine its questioning of development, environmental sustainability and culture. This will help to gain a better understanding of Ecuador's particular political model and the indigenous concepts that form its framework.

CHAPTER 4 DEVELOPMENT AS *BUEN VIVIR*

“The project that we are creating in Latin America is contra-hegemonic, one that seeks to construct another civilization based in life and not in the individual ambition of accumulation” (Ramírez 2010, 20).

Ecuador’s Secretary for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation René Ramírez Gallegos addresses how indigenous Andean concepts have begun to challenge neoliberal ideals by stating that “a ‘buen vivir’ does not have to be seen only through GDP per capita” (Ramírez 2010, 20). Concepts such as per capita income and poverty are precisely-calculated and rationally-viewed under a neoliberal framework, but Ecuador’s particular model of development calls into question the prevailing definition of these concepts. Secretary Ramírez touches on the meaning of poverty, stating that “poverty is always referenced in terms of income and consumption, and does not take into account additional things like the topic of education, medical attention, etc.” (Ramírez 2010, 20). In his discussion of well-being, Ramírez focuses on the idea of reaching qualitative goals rather than simply taking rationally-calculated per-capita figures for granted.

What is the base of information in the neoliberal model? It is income and consumption, and with regard to social welfare they are only the minimum social requirements to survive...we need to ask ourselves, for example, why is so much attention placed on GDP per capita or economic growth, when really these things don’t tell us that much? (Ramírez 2010a, 8).

In light of this mindset, the Correa government has developed a policy framework that rejects the underlying methodology of neoliberalism, and bases itself in indigenous concepts. This framework is known as *buen vivir*, and represents the way that the pure Andean philosophy of *sumak kawsay* has been implemented in the context of the prevailing global economy. In this chapter, I examine the Correa government’s model of *buen vivir* as a challenge to the neoliberal concept of development. I first present the general concepts of Ecuador’s *buen vivir*

development plan and use these to describe how the model has integrated indigenous Andean concepts into a European social democratic framework. I then turn to two indigenous citizens, Marichel and Marcela, in order to examine how both neoliberalism and Ecuador's new development model influences their daily lives. From this examination of *buen vivir* in the context of its indigenous influence, I conclude that Ecuador's new development approach is a hybrid model based on endogenous Andean concepts, but remaining within an Occidental framework. This has created a 'harmonious coexistence' much like the coexistence described under the general principles of *sumak kawsay*.

The Extent of 'Buen Vivir's Alternative Development

Catherine Walsh suggests that while Ecuador's new development model is based on Andean philosophy, it also contains many similarities to the European welfare state. She states that "'living well' also...takes meaning from the alternative visions of development emerging in the Western world" (Walsh 2010, 19). We might ask, then, whether *buen vivir* is essentially derived from a European model of human development within a neoliberal framework, or more of an endogenous Andean model representing a complete shift away from the status-quo. My argument is that it is best viewed as a hybrid, constructed to fit – perhaps not so neatly – into the current global political framework but also containing a pragmatic approach to incorporating indigenous Andean lifestyles and philosophies in a more endogenous model. It can be considered a derivative of European models, but has its unique qualities as well.

The following two figures outline the principle objectives of *buen vivir* as stated in the country's constitutional framework (Figure 4.1) and official development plan (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.1 Key concepts of ‘Buen Vivir’ as defined by the 2008 Constitution

SECTIONS	EXPLANATION OF CONTENT
EDUCATION	Art. 343 – Promises a national education system designed to develop the abilities and improve potentiality among individuals and the collective society based upon knowledge of technology, the arts, and an understanding of culture.
HEALTHCARE	Art. 358 – Promises a national health care system based on the development, protection, and revitalization of the potential for a healthy, integral lifestyle for both individuals and the collective community based upon a recognition of social and cultural diversity
SOCIAL SECURITY	Art. 367 – Promises a social security system that is public and universal, and not privatized.
HOUSING	Art. 375 – Assures that the state will guarantee a ‘dignified living situation’ for all citizens
CULTURE	Art. 377 – Promises to strengthen national identity through the protection and promotion of diversity and cultural expression
FITNESS AND RECREATION	Art. 381 – Promises to protect and promote time for recreational activities and support physical fitness programs and sports leagues
SOCIAL COMMUNICATION	Art. 384 – Promises the freedom of the free-flow of information and expression
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION	Art. 385 – Promotes the innovation of science and technology undertaken with respect to the natural environment, as well as cultural and political sovereignty
RISK MANAGEMENT	Art. 389 – Promises the protection of individuals, communities and the natural environment against effects from disasters, whether natural or man-made. Promotes improving socio-economic conditions in an effort to reduce the number of people at risk to such disasters
POPULATION AND MOBILITY	Art. 391 – Promises to promote the free-flow of people through territorial restructuring in an effort to increase development throughout the country
HUMAN SECURITY	Art. 393 – Guarantees human security through policies which assure the promotion of a peaceful culture by helping to prevent various types of violence and discrimination, as well as crack down on all types of criminal activity.
TRANSPORTATION	Art. 394 – Guarantees the freedom of its citizens to use any type of transportation service, whether it is terrestrial, air or water-based. Also proposes the creation of an intricate public transportation system regulated by the state
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	Art. 395 – Guarantees a sustainable model of development which will allow for balance and regeneration of the natural environment

Source: Constitution, Republic of Ecuador (2008) as cited in CODENPE (2011) and adapted from CODENPE (2011)

Figure 4.2 Main objectives of Ecuador’s Buen Vivir as addressed in the Correa government’s national plan

OBJECTIVES – NATIONAL PLAN FOR GOOD LIVING
- Foster a cohesive and socially-integrated environment through diversity
- Improve the educational capacities and potential of the citizenship
- Improve the citizenship’s overall health and quality of life
- Improve environmental rights and promote environmentally sustainable programs
- Maintain sovereignty, promote peace and foster greater Latin American integration
- Promote stable, dignified and just work laws and provide work options for citizens
- Construct and strengthen intercultural and public spaces
- Affirm and strengthen plurinationalism and interculturalism
- Guarantee individual rights and ensure a proper system of justice
- Increase the ability of the citizenship to participate politically
- Establish a socio-economic system based on sustainable development
- Construct a democratic state based on the idea of ‘good living’

Source: CODENPE (2011)

As can be seen, the Correa government’s development plan focuses on a wide range of strategies designed to facilitate socio-economic change, ranging from social changes such as education, health care and affordable housing to changes in the collective mindset, such as a mutual recognition and respect for all cultures within Ecuador. According to government officials, *buen vivir* can be seen as a fusion between timeless Kichwa concepts and an occidental model of development. Vice Minister Rivadeneira describes it as “a mixture of some things that have been done in the past with other ideas that are completely new.” In this way, Rivadeneira

notes that *buen vivir* is designed to be incorporated within the current occidental global political framework.

The idea is not to replace the capitalist production system; it is a question of equilibrium...having a society that can of course have entrepreneurs, profit seeking...the ability for people to become richer monetarily speaking. But society should be based and centered on enjoying life...enjoying the best things in life, family, enjoying the environment, enjoying relations with other people, other societies, etc. (Rivadeneira, personal interview).

Seen from a market perspective, Ecuador's development model continues to ground itself within a capitalist framework. However, Rivadeneira notes that there is a distinct difference between the European welfare model and the United States model, stating that *buen vivir* has associated itself closer to a European form of social democracy that focuses more on social well-being than does the United States model. "To find the closest concept to [buen vivir] in the occidental world, it would be what the Europeans call 'qualité de vie' or quality of life. This differs much from the American perception of life...in the United States, life is about success; you have to be successful" (Rivadeneira, personal interview). Rivadeneira continues by explaining how *buen vivir* relates to the European idea of well-being:

For me, the closest concept I ever heard is this idea that in Europe some sectors of society, mainly the Scandinavians, have this notion that instead of working for 12 hours per day, they work from nine to five and that's it. After work they have time to enjoy their families...that's why Europeans tend to be more discreet. It is very normal to see the president of one of the largest banks in Switzerland riding a bicycle to the office, or taking the public transportation system.

Although *buen vivir* does function economically in a capitalist model, certain development strategies contain a more socialist approach, especially in regard to education and health care. To this end, Vice Minister Rivadeneira comments on how Ecuador's social policies function as *buen vivir*.

It's socialism. Two of the main pillars of this process are based on having the government develop and invest a lot of its budget on a good public education system and

having a good public health system. These are the basis of the model...by far the government has spent the most on those two pillars. This government has spent more on these two pillars in 5 years than what all other governments have spent in those areas combined since we returned to democracy in the late 1980s.

From these examples we can see that much of Ecuador's social system based on a *buen vivir* has similarities to a social democratic European model.

Despite these similarities, however, Ecuador's situation is unique because its model is based in the fundamental principles of *sumak kawsay*, which go beyond the occidental political-economic framework to suggest an entirely different lifestyle. Specifically, *buen vivir* is distinctive in its grounding in the indigenous concept of *sumak kawsay* in three ways. First, the political model is based in the idea that everyone must contribute their fair share, which reflects the indigenous concept of complementarity. According to Vice Minister for Ecuador's Office of the Undersecretary-General of Science and Technology (SENESCYT) Hector Rodriguez, the country's taxing and redistribution policies are designed to 'complement' poorer, rural communities with wealth from richer, more urban areas. "The concept of taxes goes together with the idea of redistribution, the more you have, the more you pay," said Vice Minister Rodriguez (interview). Vice Minister Rivadeneira also comments on the way in which *buen vivir* has put into practice the Kichwa concept of complementarity:

This government's main objective is to develop a welfare system...which is basically a system in which you are free to do what you want, but if you are successful in society you have to contribute more to the society. For example if you are an entrepreneur and businessman and make a lot of money that is fine, but you have to contribute proportionately to that success (Rivadeneira, personal interview).

Secondly, the plan proposes the creation of a more collective, rather than individualistic, society. According to CODENPE, the government organization designed to represent Ecuador's indigenous population, the word *sumak* can be understood best in English as 'harmony' and *kawsay* as 'life' (CODENPE 2011b). Thus, a direct translation of the concept can be rendered as

‘life in harmony’. But, with what must we live in harmony? CODENPE presents *sumak kawsay* as a lifestyle that maintains equilibrium among five important elements: the *ayllu* (family), the *llakta* (community), the *marka* (the population as a whole), the *mamallakta* (the country, or region) and the *pachamama* (natural environment). These Kichwa concepts comprise a societal structure focused on maintaining a balance in order to promote a “collective well-being” (CODENPE 2011b). This is in sharp contrast to the occidental model, which stresses the importance of the individual. As Vice Minister Francisco Rivadeneira explains it:

Success [in its Occidental significance] means basically two things. The first is to be somewhat different, to step aside from society and to be better than the rest...to be somebody unique in society. And the other one is material power; the more material riches you have, the better you are, or the higher your status. Life is about having enough money to have the best house, the best car, the best clothes, live in the best neighborhood, having the money to travel, etc. That is the basis of the occidental model.

Material success, according to Rivadeneira, yields a sense of individualism specific to the occidental ideology and, although this can be considered the prevailing idea of development throughout much of the world, it is not the only possible one. This is contrasted with the Kichwa concept of relationalism, and the ability to develop oneself through the community and society as a whole, according to Vice Minister Rivadeneira. “The basis [of *buen vivir*]... is that life should be about enjoying those special moments, developing your relations with society, with people, and living with what is necessary.” This idea of collective well-being is an essential component to understanding the Kichwa lifestyle; the fact that individualist ideals do not exist among the five elements of *sumak kawsay* signifies that the Correa government’s adaptation of the Andean philosophy could present a different socio-political structure to the current neoliberal framework based on an occidental model.

A third way that *sumak kawsay* has influenced the notion of *buen vivir* is a ‘harmonious coexistence’ based in the Kichwa principles of relationalism and correspondence. The Correa

government translates this concept into *buen vivir* through the notion of society's level of 'happiness'. According to Secretary René Ramírez Gallegos, happiness or well-being, whether from the perspective of the individual or the society as a whole, is conceived as both an objective and subjective feature (Ramírez 2010c, 9). Objective features, according to Ramírez, are materialistic and denote such ideas as economic standard of living and freedom of the individual in regard to one's market purchasing power. Subjective features, on the other hand, can be perceived as one's overall quality of life, which is measured based on a variety of social factors including level of education, amount of leisure time, environmental quality and public participation (Ramírez 2010c, 9-10). Based on this principle, Ramírez created a formula for measuring the happiness level of the Ecuadorian population, taking into consideration both objective and subjective factors. In a study, he concluded that a *buen vivir* cannot be attained solely by improving objective factors such as level of income, but must include these subjective elements that help determine an individual's overall satisfaction and quality of life (Ramírez 2010c, 52). Ramírez's findings suggest a close relationship between the more subjective components of quality of life and the key concepts of *sumak kawsay*. Ramírez introduces five important factors for understanding *buen vivir*, and these can be directly related to the 'peaceful coexistence' of the *sumak kawsay* philosophy. These measurements are presented in Figure 4.3 as relational comparisons to the indigenous Kichwa ideology under which Ecuador's development plan has been drafted. These specific measures provide concrete examples of key *buen vivir* concepts that can be directly linked to the country's indigenous belief system. On a communal level, the word *ayllu*, meaning family life, is realized as the importance of maintaining strong marital relationships, while the term *llakta* or community is understood through the importance of personal leisure time and general social interaction. On the national

level we find that the terms *marka* meaning population, and *mamallakta* signifying a country or autonomous region are addressed through the plan’s strong focus on cultural expression and the right to public participation based on the concept of plurinationality. The term *pachamama*, which encompasses the world itself, is addressed in Ecuador’s focus on sustainability with the overall goal of continuously improving the quality of the natural environment.

Figure 4.3 Relationship between subjective measurements of a ‘buen vivir’ as defined by Ramírez (2010) and the indigenous Kichwa philosophy of ‘sumak kawsay’

MEASUREMENTS OF <i>BUEN VIVIR</i>	KICHWA PHILOSOPHY
Amount of leisure, or free time	Time is not a mechanical concept which dictates society; “each life has its own space and time” within the natural environment (CODENPE 2011)
Quality of the natural environment	<i>Sabiduría Pachacéntrica</i> – human beings comprise, rather than compete with, the natural environment
Quality of social interaction and relationships	Coexistence through <i>Llakta</i> (the community) and the belief that every being is interconnected and interrelated
Satisfaction with one’s civil status	The importance of <i>Ayllu</i> (family structure) and the notion that all beings are made to complement one another
Satisfaction with public participation/ability to publicly assert opinions and viewpoints	Respect for social justice based on the recognition of multiple identities (plurinationality) and their right to participation within the <i>mamallakta</i> (country or nation)

Sources: Measurements adapted from Ramírez (2010) and Kichwa concepts elaborated on from CODENPE (2011b)

Just as the basic principles of *sumak kawsay* dictate a lifestyle in constant harmonic equilibrium among the *ayllu*, *llakta*, *marka*, *mamallakta* and *pachamama*, the ideology of *buen vivir* as established by the Correa government suggests that an overall *bienestar* or well-being can be

obtained through a strong participatory relationship with one's family, local community, population, country and the natural environment in which these societal elements exist.

Sumak Kawsay and the citizen revolution: A perspective on current indigenous lifestyles in Ecuador

As we have seen, the principles of *sumak kawsay* form an ideological grounding for the Correa government's approach to *bienestar*, or well-being. But how are the concepts of *sumak kawsay* perceived and understood within Ecuadorian society, particularly among indigenous people, who "began the mobilization process which finally brought Rafael Correa to presidency" twenty years ago (Zibechi 2011, 2)? Here, I introduce two Ecuadorian citizens of indigenous ethnicity who have migrated to urban areas and discuss the daily lives of each individual, examining how each interprets the notions of both *sumak kawsay* and *buen vivir* through their personal experiences.

Marichel is a twenty-two year old who works in one of Quito's largest outdoor markets selling traditional indigenous outfits. Although she now lives in Quito, she was born in a very rural region of the Cotopaxi province, an area with a significant Kichwa population. She is of Kichwa ethnicity and most of her family still lives in rural areas of the country. When asked about her perception regarding the government's implementation of its development plan under an indigenous Kichwa framework, she quickly corrected my poor pronunciation of the term *sumak kawsay* and provided a specific example regarding changes in her family's life.

Of course, I think they have done many good things for the indigenous and poor people. They have brought running water, better housing...they made possible things that were just words from previous governments...they constructed a better house for my aunt [a rural potato and corn farmer] in Cotopaxi, and although the houses are small they are still better than before (Marichel, personal interview).

Marichel's lifestyle is quite different from that of her aunt, a rural vegetable farmer who rides into town on the weekdays to sell her products to local consumers. She is constantly on the go,

working at the open-air market in the Mariscal Sucre district of Quito “from Sunday to Sunday,” and claims she has “no time to raise a family” due to her busy work schedule. It can be argued that most of her income derives from foreign investment, due to the fact that she primarily caters to the tourist population, and she suggests that business has been slow lately mainly due to the recent outbreaks of *gripe*¹. Despite her indigenous heritage, Marichel’s lifestyle differs greatly from a Kichwa philosophy grounded on the importance of free time and a solid family structure. Her satisfaction with the government does not necessarily consist of its conformity to philosophical Kichwa principles, but rather its willingness and ability to provide dignified housing and essential resources, like running water, to rural indigenous communities. From this we can infer that Marichel is more concerned with the practical implementation of basic necessities rather than the ideology behind Ecuador’s national development model.

Marcela is a nineteen year old who works primarily in Quito’s historical central district selling a variety of fruits, from apples to grapes. Unlike Marichel she moves constantly, establishing herself on the busiest streets in order to attract the most business. She is also of Kichwa heritage and a native of Cotopaxi, but most of her family has moved to the city for greater economic opportunity. She has a young child and takes him wherever she goes; an intricate home-made contraption enables her to carry him on her back while she works and goes about her daily tasks. While Marcela, like Marichel, works as a vendor selling traditional Ecuadorian products, she sells her fruit primarily to the local market instead of focusing mainly on the tourist economy.

Marcela seemed to have a much more Andean-centered focus on what constitutes good living, stating that “For me, being able to sustain myself with basic things is a *buen vivir*” and

¹ *Gripe*, translated directly as the word ‘flu’ can be understood in this context as the H1N1 virus which has recently circulated around Latin America and caused various outbreaks in Quito.

that “the environment as well is very important.” She lamented the perforation of land and extraction of oil by both private companies and the government, stating that these actions both destroy the environment and displace communities. In addition, she claimed that her notion of *buen vivir* is challenged due to fact that she does not feel safe performing everyday activities. “I am not in favor of this government,” stated Marcela. “I don’t have freedom because I don’t have security...there are lots and lots of thieves now, when [my child and I] leave to work, they rob me.”

We can see here a conflict between the Kichwa philosophy of the *llakta*, or community, and the primarily occidental economy in which Ecuador is still based. Crime is on the rise, according to Marcela, due to a lack of jobs and economic hardship which, if examined on an international scale, can be attributed to the enduring global economic crisis that has created a chain reaction in many parts of the world. Marichel works every day of the week and is influenced by external events; a slight rise in crime or a regional flu outbreak can be potentially devastating to her business because these factors can drive away tourist activity, one significant form of foreign economic investment. Thus, many individuals, despite their heritage and indigenous backgrounds, can be influenced by neoliberal factors that still exist in Ecuador’s alternative development model of *buen vivir*. As Catherine Walsh suggests, the Correa government still has “some way to go” if the overall goal of its new model of *buen vivir* is the complete “dismantling of neoliberal policies and the construction of endogenous development under a radically different life philosophy” (Walsh 2010, 20). To this end, we find that *buen vivir* is in reality a fusion of key occidental characteristics with an indigenous ideology.

Conclusion: A hybrid alternative

The philosophy of *sumak kawsay* differs greatly from the occidental worldview that lies behind the current neoliberal global economic framework. Ecuador's government under president Rafael Correa has pushed a new development model of *buen vivir*, a set of policies based heavily on this indigenous philosophy and the principles behind it. The translation of indigenous philosophy to social policy, however, is "not without problems, inconsistencies and contradictions" (Walsh 2010, 20). In the end, *buen vivir* is a plan that attempts to blend indigenous concepts based on *sumak kawsay* with the European social-welfare state. Ecuador's model is unique in the way it adapts what Vice Minister Rivadeneira considers the European model of 'qualité de vie', or quality of life, with Ramirez's subjective measurements of *bienestar*, or well-being. Socialist influences such as a stronger focus on education, healthcare and other social programs are combined with the timeless indigenous concepts of *pacha-centrism* (preserving the natural environment) and plurinationalism. These two notions will be examined more thoroughly in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 5
PACHAMAMA AND ECOSOFÍA – ECUADOR’S TURN TOWARD
ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

“...life exists not only in an alpaca or a corn crop. Rivers, rocks, stars, the wind also are understood as forms of life. In their vision of the world, no form of life in the natural environment is autonomous in regard to its own regeneration.”
(Rengifo Gimaldo 2008, as elaborated in CODENPE 2011a)

Pachamama in Kichwa denotes the natural environment, the setting of each and everyone’s life. It has come to be known most commonly in the occidental world as ‘mother earth’, a term that gives the word feeling and describes it as a living, breathing entity rather than just a backdrop to the everyday lives of individuals. This concept is essential to understanding the differences between the Occidental World, a world dominated by the prevailing neoliberal global political economy, and the Andean World, or *Mundo Andino*, which brings to life the environment in which we live and therefore denotes a greater respect for one’s surroundings. This view of the natural world is one of the things that makes Ecuador’s development plan of *buen vivir* particularly noteworthy; it suggests that the natural environment should be respected rather than exploited, something that is a particular challenge for a government as oil and mineral-rich as Ecuador.

Judith Kimerling, in her analysis of judicial battles between Ecuador and Chevron-Texaco, states that “since the oil boom began, successive governments have linked national development plans and economic policy almost exclusively with petroleum policy, and the health of the industry has become a central concern for the State” (Kimerling 2006, 422). The Correa government’s *buen vivir* development model seeks to break away from this link through both regulation and diversification techniques in an effort to both improve environmental sustainability and strengthen state sovereignty. However, these two goals have led to potential

contradictions between the indigenous philosophy of *pacha-centrism* and the intentions of the Correa government through its new biosocialist model.

This chapter examines the notion of *pacha-centrism* as an integral aspect of the Andean world. I examine the significance of the natural environment as a philosophical basis behind the Correa government's new *buen vivir* development model and discuss how Ecuador's citizens feel about these political changes. Since CODENPE has elaborated significantly on this concept, information from the agency will be used to describe the Ecuadorian concept of *biosocialismo republicano* or 'republican biosocialism' which is driving changes being made throughout the country regarding perception of the natural environment. Examining the notions of both *pacha-centrism* and *biosocialism* will provide further insight into both the indigenous philosophy behind Ecuador's development model and also how *buen vivir* can be viewed as an alternative to a neoliberal model of development.

'Pachamama' in the Andean world

Although the United Nations has recognized the idea of *pachamama* as 'mother earth', or the natural environment (CODENPE 2011a), the true meaning of the word in Aymara and Kichwa cultures refers to not only the world's natural environment, but the universe in general. The idea of *pachamama* exists in the form of two words: The word *pacha*, used in both the Kichwa and Aymara languages, describes the universe, space, time, the natural environment and the existence of life (CODENPE 2011a). The second term is *kawsay*, which has come to be interpreted as 'life' but can also be a way of considering, or perceiving life. When used along with the word *pacha*, the word *kawsay* evokes the importance of intuition, wisdom and knowledge gained through life experience (CODENPE 2011a). These two words have been combined to form the idea of *pacha-kawsay*, which I will interpret as 'to grow in knowledge as

your life and the life around you grows’. CODENPE has contrasted this idea with the occidental world, which is described in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Terms *pacha* and *kawsay* as compared to the Occidental world

OCCIDENTAL WORLD	ANDEAN WORLD
COSMOS – Greek term that signifies an orderly universe. One must learn the laws of the universe in order to control it.	PACHA – Kichwa/Aymara term that signifies everything from space and time to the natural world and existence itself. Unable to be ‘controlled’.
VISION – Greek term that signifies the importance of universal theories. Knowledge is gained through the process of ‘reasoning’.	KAWSAY – Kichwa term equivalent to the idea that knowledge or wisdom is gained not through reason, but through life experience.
COSMOVISION – Theory describing the universe as ordered in a particular way that allows beings to reason through its mechanics in order to gain knowledge of how to control and dominate it.	PACHA-KAWSAY – Philosophy which perceives knowledge as gained through growing with one’s natural environment instead of considering the natural environment as the ‘other’ and using reason to understand how it functions in order to control it. Can be interpreted as the idea of ‘wisdom’.
THESIS – The universe is mechanical, a set of ordered processes.	BELIEF – The universe (<i>pachamama</i>) is a living, breathing entity.

Source: adapted from CODENPE (2011a)

This comparison suggests that the commonly held interpretations of *pachamama* as ‘mother earth’ or the ‘natural environment’ do not completely tell the story of the indigenous philosophy, which denotes both a description of the universe as it is seen in the Andean world and also the way knowledge and understanding is gained as a living being participating in the universe. This differs significantly from the Occidental perspective, which sees the universe as a static, natural world order from which theories can develop. These theories (Sir Isaac Newton’s laws of gravity and motion, for example) can be elaborated and studied in order to face natural challenges presented to man by the universe. The idea of *pacha-kawsay* focuses on viewing oneself as an essential component in a living, breathing world; humans do not live within, but among the universe. According to the *pacha-centric* ideology, humans should not see

themselves as separate pieces living within the overall natural environment, but instead perceive themselves as part of the natural environment itself. In this sense, the universe is not something that presents challenges to overcome, but instead provides wisdom, health and regeneration. Hence, *pachamama* can be considered both a physical place of existence and a way of life for those beings living among it.

The 'ecosofía' of 'buen vivir' in accordance with Ecuador's 2008 Constitution

In light of the Andean philosophy of *pachamama* and *pacha-kawsay*, the Correa government has encompassed in its vision of *buen vivir* an idea called *ecosofía*, or ecological-based philosophy. This idea of *ecosofía* is cited numerous times by government agencies, primarily CODENPE, to indicate the importance of considering the natural environment in every facet of development. It ensures that the entire philosophical basis for Ecuador's *buen vivir* contains a strong ecological aspect; even something as economically-oriented as increasing and strengthening the country's domestic production is based on a sustainable theoretical framework. According to SENESCYT official Hector Rodriguez, the idea of a peaceful coexistence with *pachamama* is evident and clearly presented in the country's new development model:

Regarding life in its entirety, you have to take into consideration interaction between man and his community with the natural environment. It is a harmonic coexistence with the rest of the universe. This is a fundamental part of the concept of *buen vivir* (Rodriguez, personal interview).

To understand the Correa government's focus on environmental issues, we can look to Ecuador's 2008 Constitution, which lays out specific articles relating to the natural environment. Figure 5.2 below describes each of these articles in detail.

Figure 5.2 Articles in the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador that pertain to the government's *ecosofia*

ARTICLE AND THEME	SUMMARY OF ARTICLES
Art. 395 – Natural Environment	The state guarantees an economic model based on sustainable development through a focus on environmental concerns. Recognizes the importance of Ecuador's biodiversity and the natural regeneration of the country's ecosystem. To this end, the state assures that everyone is provided what is necessary to live in the present with respect to future sustainability.
Art. 400 – Biodiversity	The state guarantees the sovereignty of the country's natural environment and biodiversity, or variety of life. In particular, the state focuses on protecting biodiversity in agriculture, wildlife, and the diverse genetic makeup of the country.
Art. 404 – Ecuador's natural wealth and ecosystem	The state recognizes that Ecuador's natural wealth is invaluable to the country's sustainability and the physical, biological and geological ecosystems must be preserved. As such, the constitution guarantees the protection of these ecosystems based on a territorial zoning plan for specific areas of the country (example: Ecuador's Yasuni region)
Art. 408 – Natural Resources	The government recognizes that its natural resources, primarily non-renewable and subterranean resources are the inalienable property of the state. This includes everything from mineral deposits to oil and natural gas. These resources can only be exploited in strict compliance with environmental principles established in the constitution.
Art. 409 – Land	The state recognizes land conservation as not only of great public interest but a national priority as well, with special regard to its fertility. As such the state will establish a regulatory framework for the protection and sustainable use of the land to prevent its degradation, in particular causes for contamination, desertification and erosion.
Art. 411 – Water	The state guarantees the conservation and renewability of water resources. As such, all activities that affect the quantity and quality of the country's water supply will be regulated by the state.

Art. 413 – Urban ecology and alternative energies	The state maintains a strong importance on promoting energy efficiency through sustainable development techniques based on the use of environmentally-friendly technology and a focus on renewable energies. Promotes the diversification of energy development in an effort to create environmental equilibrium and sustainability.
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Source: adapted and interpreted from the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (2008) and CODENPE (2011a)

Many of the articles discuss the general idea of environmental sustainability and the importance of maintaining Ecuador’s unique biodiversity, which can be viewed as consistent with *pacha-kawsay*. In other instances, however, the *ecosofia* of the Correa government’s *ecosofia* does not necessarily fit with indigenous Kichwa and Aymara beliefs. Article 408, for example, states the importance of natural resource preservation, but also directly states that these resources are the property of the government to be exploited. Corresponding examples can be found in other articles, such as article 404, which implies that the federal government should decide which territories of the country are to be preserved and protected, and article 411, which states that the federal government is the sole authority allowed to regulate and protect the country’s water supply. By dictating authority over certain aspects of the natural environment, the constitution deviates from the traditional *pacha-centrism* of the Kichwa and Aymara cultures and takes an Occidental perspective, treating the land as something to be controlled. There exists something of a contradiction between protecting state sovereignty and preserving the indigenous philosophical basis of *buen vivir*.

The creation of a ‘bio-socialist’ republic as an answer to environmental sustainability

A key facet of the Correa government’s interpretation of environmental sustainability based on the concept of *pacha-kawsay* lies in its definition of *biosocialismo* or bio-socialism. The idea of bio-socialism as an alternative to neoliberal capitalism has been presented by René

Ramírez Gallegos. It is an economic philosophy that breaks away from the anthropocentric idea of sheer productivity, which takes priority in a purely capitalist society (Ramírez 2010b).

Ramírez suggests that we should not view the economy based entirely on a cyclical framework between producers of goods and their consumers, but also by the amount of natural resources exploited and energy expended for the purposes of production (Ramírez 2010b). Viewed through this framework, according to Ramírez, capitalism in its current form simply cannot guarantee environmental sustainability (Ramírez 2010b). The Correa government has identified two strategies to deal with the negative consequences of capitalist development: regulation and diversification, which seek to both promote environmental sustainability and strengthen state sovereignty.

The first strategy, regulation, can be viewed primarily in the form of government zoning projects that have focused on protecting certain areas of the country deemed environmentally strategic, predominantly in the western orient region of Ecuador. This area encompasses Ecuador's part of the vast Amazon Rainforest, an area rich with natural resources and known for its biodiversity. I met with political consultant and founder of Ecuador's *Alianza Pais* Eduardo Paredes in order to understand better the historical context of the situation within the country's orient region. In order to better explain this situation, Mr. Paredes sketched a basic outline of the country on a piece of paper and pointed to specific areas of importance.

The problem is that previous powers created a situation in which the state had disappeared here [Mr. Paredes points to the northeast border of Ecuador with Colombia]. There is a war here...the state of Ecuador did not have the power to control this part of the country (Paredes, personal interview).

Mr. Paredes spoke of two factors of instability in Ecuador's northeast Amazonian region. The first is the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, an organization that has been in constant conflict with the Colombian government and primarily operates in Colombia's rural

areas, such as the area bordering Ecuador's northeast Amazon region. The organization's existence has blurred official boundary lines between Colombia and Ecuador for decades, thereby bringing instability to this particular region of the country. The second factor can be found in the historical existence of foreign oil companies that have until recent years retained authority over some of Ecuador's most oil-rich regions. Agreements with foreign oil companies have continuously taken advantage of the country by both contaminating the natural environment and monopolizing authority over Ecuador's most historically precious resource. Judith Kimerling states that "international oil companies, at every juncture, have continued to pressure Ecuador to change laws and contracts to favor their interests" (Kimerling 2011, 425). Jason Burke, for example, discusses a number of agreements between Ecuador and Texaco (now acquired by Chevron) that have consistently given authority over certain oil-rich sections of the country to the oil company. After a devastating 1987 earthquake, Texaco had refused to fulfill an agreement with Ecuador to sell a certain amount of oil to the country for a discounted price, largely due to its heavy losses as a result of the natural disaster (Burke 2011, 465). As a result, the oil-rich state had to purchase the vital natural resource from other producers for higher prices, having no control or authority over its own oil reserves. Furthermore, Kimerling notes that a lack of environmental standards has affected Ecuador's Amazon region for decades:

Texaco set its own environmental standards, and policed itself...Texaco's standards and practices, however, did not include environmental protection or monitoring. For example, even oil spills were treated exclusively as economic rather than environmental and human health concerns. The company did not develop and implement contingency plans to contain and clean-up spilled oil and mitigate environmental damage, to provide affected residents with alternative water supplies when local waters were polluted, or to indemnify them when crops and natural resources were damaged (Kimerling 2011, 436).

These agreements, according to Mr. Paredes, have undermined the authority of the state as well as aided in the environmental degradation of one of the most biologically diverse regions of the

country. They also paved the way for the creation of a constitution based almost entirely on external interests.

The [1998] constitution functioned as an agreement between oligarchs to split very well the pie among themselves...in this pie you have petroleum and other exports...here is where the *petroleros* exist [pointing to the same northeastern region on the map as before]...much of the country's wealth depends on this (Paredes, personal interview).

Ecuador's 2008 constitution has served as a response to these past agreements by guaranteeing certain rights for the natural environment, and ensuring that only the government can provide those rights.

One notable regulatory technique that the government has proposed to re-establish its control over its own resources is the Yasuni-ITT fund, which is a unique initiative designed to gain international recognition by not doing anything regarding specific oil-rich regions (Ramírez 2011b). According to Ramírez, the goal is to completely avoid oil exploitation within Ecuador's Yasuni region of the Amazon rainforest rather than simply impose decontamination efforts after such exploitation has occurred (Ramírez 2011b). The initiative works by soliciting monetary contributions from donor countries. The funds can then be used to make up for the revenue lost by not drilling in the country's most oil-rich region. Such revenue is vital to the sustainability of Ecuador's national development plan, given the historical importance of petroleum-based revenue for the national government, as cited above by Paredes (personal interview). The Yasuni-ITT fund is one example of how the 2008 constitution allows the Correa government to regulate its own territory in an effort to ensure state sovereignty and protect its natural environment.

Ecuador's second strategy for environmental sustainability while maintaining economic growth lies in its plan for economic diversification. The general idea behind this lies in the concept of production based on necessity rather than competitive consumption, as outlined by

Vice Minister Francisco Rivadeneira, who states that “the economic model in Ecuador is not necessarily based on increasing the production of material goods and getting profit; we believe also that people can produce for their own needs and that’s it...sustaining themselves, their families and their traditions” (Rivadeneira, personal interview). Under this concept of sustainable production, economic diversification has aimed to shift the country’s export-oriented framework from relying entirely on the production of primary goods (crude oil, bananas, cocoa, etc.) to increasing the intellectual capacity of its citizens in order to shift toward an economy based on biotechnology and ecotourism. To this end the government has pushed to expand education and create opportunities centered on biologically-oriented technologies. According to Mr. Rivadeneira, such a shift in the economic and educational policies of the Correa government can be seen as an opportunity for the state to complement, rather than take advantage of, its ecologically distinct natural environment:

Ecuador is considered one of the most biologically diverse countries in the world, so this is an enormous natural laboratory for biological research...everything that can derive from biological science can be developed in the country; biomedicine is just one example (Rivadeneira, personal interview).

In response, the higher education system in Ecuador has shifted, allowing greater opportunities to students who want to study biotechnology and other applied sciences. David, a law student at Universidad Central, Ecuador’s largest public university, commented on the government’s promotion of polytechnic universities within the country in a national effort to produce citizens trained in the applied sciences necessary for Ecuador’s economic diversification efforts. “For our citizens, the polytechnic universities are free,” said David during one of my interviews, although he further commented that a strict entrance exam must be passed in order to attend one of these institutions. Hector Rodriguez works closely with Ecuador’s higher education system and discussed not only the significance of educating citizens within the country, but also

providing greater opportunities for students to study outside of the country: “We have created over one thousand new scholarships for students to study outside of the country, but these scholarships have specific restrictions.” Such restrictions, according to Mr. Rodriguez, state that recipients of these scholarships must work a specific amount of time within Ecuador in certain key positions which will allow for the advancement of the government’s development plan. Students who receive opportunities for a free education and study abroad experience are obligated to ‘give back’ to the country using their newly developed intellectual talent. It is a cyclical system, one that allows citizens to both benefit from and give back to society, much in the same way that members of the Andean world believe in complementing rather than simply taking from the *pachamama*, or natural environment in which they exist.

Another form of sustainable economic diversification lies in the shift toward an eco-centric tourism industry, which according to both citizens and government officials, has become not only a government-centered initiative, but a strong focus within many communities in Ecuador. According to Cariaco, members of the indigenous community have collaborated in presenting to the government alternative development programs centered on the idea of sustainable tourism. “[indigenous confederations] along with the indigenous rural population, he states, “are generating new proposals, alternative proposals which do not destroy the environment, nor contaminate the water and air. We promote productive alternatives such as community tourism and community businesses.” Cariaco suggests that the idea of community tourism has been adapted from indigenous influences as a unique alternative to standard tourism practices. According to government official Francisco Rivadeneira, community tourism is just one facet of the state’s promotion of niche tourism, or more unique and focused forms of tourism which not only provide the Ecuadorian public with greater and more environmentally sustainable

leisure opportunities but also promote educational programs throughout the experience. Vice Minister Rivadeneira highlights both agro tourism and community tourism as two examples of niche tourism, stating that “community tourism is basically a type of tourism that allows anyone to have the opportunity to live with some of our indigenous groups and learn their customs...and furthermore it is sustainable” (Rivadeneira, personal interview). The tourist industry, according to Undersecretary Hector Rodriguez, also creates greater diversity through the establishment of complementary small businesses. “Tourism is extremely distributive in terms of income earned,” said Rodriguez, “a little bit of money here and a little there...people invest in restaurants, in hotels, in taxis...it is a great form of distribution” (Rodriguez, personal interview). Thus, the promotion of tourism is consistent with Ecuador’s broader strategy of promoting a service economy and establishing greater economic diversity through a shift away from exporting primary products.

The economic development strategies of ecotourism and biotechnology have both bio-centric and socialist aspects. They also contain an underlying cyclical element, one that is essential to understanding the philosophical relationship between the government’s *buen vivir* and the indigenous Andean belief that the natural environment should be complemented, rather than controlled, by human beings. The idea of the cyclical pattern is evident in Ecuador’s development model first through the socialist concept that one must give back proportionally to what one has received or taken (educational scholarships and government redistribution projects from the Yasuni-ITT fund, for example). The *biological* concept that the natural environment is not considered an ‘other’ but rather a ‘necessity’ is noticed in both the Correa government’s shift toward biotechnology as a primary educational and technological objective as well as the promotion of community and agro tourism, in which both domestic and foreign tourists become

more actively involved with the natural environment. We can see that a greater consideration for the natural environment based on the indigenous Andean concept of *pacha-centrism* is a primary goal of the Correa government's development model. Through this development model, the Ecuadorian state seeks to be reformed as what government representatives have labeled a *bio-socialist republic*.

'Ecosofia' as perceived by Ecuador's indigenous citizenship

Although it is evident that the *pacha-centric* mindset exists in Ecuador's new development plan, it is also apparent that the rights given to the state according to the 2008 constitution contradict somewhat the indigenous philosophy of the natural environment as an uncontrollable entity. The Correa government has chosen to take a strong-state approach to managing its environmental policies, and this has not always matched the strong *pacha-centric* stance on environmental protection presented in its broader development model. As a result, many current government projects have elicited a negative public reaction. This section serves to explain how citizens, particularly those representing the indigenous community, perceive these initiatives of the Correa government, while addressing the underlying concept of environmental sustainability based on *pacha-kawsay*.

Although the *buen vivir* development model proposes a variety of social and economic changes based on the goal of environmental sustainability, it also addresses certain strategies that have worked to promote the sovereignty of the state itself rather than the sovereignty of *pachamama* or the natural environment. While programs like ecotourism have provided environmentally sustainable alternatives to typical economic endeavors, the Ecuadorian government has found itself in a difficult position in deciding how to fund a significant increase in social and environmental programs while at the same time reducing oil perforation in some of

its most oil rich regions. According to Vice Minister Francisco Rivadeneira, mineral deposits in the forms of copper, gold, silver, titanium and iron could be the solution to sustaining the Correa government's socio-economic priorities as outlined in its national development plan:

We calculate that we have over eight-hundred million dollars in mineral deposits. That is probably going to be the second boom for the economy after we discovered petrol in the 1970s. If we start exploiting within the next two years we can assure that the economy will continue to grow at a rate of 6-8% per year for the next fifteen to twenty years (Rivadeneira, personal interview).

Government consultant Eduardo Paredes concurs, stating that “we have a great deal of wealth in mineral deposits...the decision of the government is that we are going to exploit this, although there is strong opposition from ecologists.”

It is evident that the Correa government does not only consider mineral extraction a necessary economic strategy, but also as a primary driving force to economic sustainability and growth over the next twenty years. This mindset, which can be argued as more Occidental than Andean, has come under significant criticism from Ecuadorian indigenous organizations due to the presence of indigenous communities in some of the most mineral-rich areas of the country:

Extracting minerals within indigenous areas contaminates [these areas]. They stop extracting and leave us without water, without food or any land in which to cultivate. Everything in this country is sold away; water, land and minerals. Because of this, [indigenous confederations] question the state's policies (Cariaco, personal interview).

These sentiments are expressed not only by officials within prominent indigenous organizations but also members of the indigenous community who are unaffiliated with such advocacy organizations. Esmeralda is a fifty two year-old woman of Kichwa heritage born in the province of Imbabura, a region just north of Quito known for both its beautiful lakes and its rich indigenous heritage. She currently works in the domestic service industry in the mountainous town of Riobamba. Esmeralda is a strong supporter of the Correa government because she says that it has reached out to the poorest and most underrepresented populations more than any other

administration. However, when asked about the current state of the natural environment, she simply stated that “a lot of damage, so much destruction of indigenous people and animals” still exists within the country.

A second source of concern is the country’s changing energy matrix as a result of the government’s new development model. One of the top priorities of the Correa government is to reorganize the country’s energy production system in order to create a more self-sufficient and energy-efficient power infrastructure. This has been realized, according to data obtained from interviews with government officials, through two strategies: the establishment of infrastructure designed to enable the country to domestically refine its own crude oil, and the diffusion of hydroelectric power as an alternative, renewable energy source. Mr. Paredes comments on the importance of state energy production, stating that “we want to have our own production, be able to use our own energy...right now we export most of our crude oil and we import the refined product...as such, constructing our own refinery will allow us to produce and refine our own oil.” While Mr. Paredes addresses the general reasoning behind the government’s domestic refining efforts, Vice Minister Francisco Rivadeneira describes the specifics in regard to what the government is beginning to undertake:

The most ambitious project that we have in Ecuador currently is called the *Refinería del Pacífico* [Pacific Refinery] which is where we want to refine not only Ecuadorian oil, but that of our regional partners as well. We already have an agreement with Venezuela, and they are going to refine half of the petrol that they have...as you know at this moment Venezuela has the largest reserves of oil in the world...and it seems Colombia would be interested in investing in this project, so it could be a project among all three nations.

The Vice Minister also highlights the importance of foreign investment in the project, stating that “we are currently looking for more investors outside; it is a 10 billion dollar project...it will be the biggest refinery in the pacific...the plan is to start construction in 2013 and to have it

functioning between 2016 and 2018.” The country’s shift toward hydroelectric power was also described by Mr. Rivadeneira:

Ecuador is one of the countries with more water in the world by square meter, so there is an enormous potential for developing hydroelectric energy in the country. We have already developed several new projects for hydroelectric plants and of course we are looking for international investment; you have the Chinese and the Russians who have already invested in the area (Rivadeneira, personal interview).

Although these endeavors could undoubtedly enhance Ecuador’s domestic economic capability and significantly improve the country’s energy matrix through sustainable, renewable methods, these projects have faced domestic opposition. Representatives of the country’s indigenous population, for example, view Ecuador’s energy issues quite differently:

Due to our country’s energy issues, the state wants to construct hydroelectric plants in the orient, even though they see that indigenous communities will be affected by its environmental impacts. Ecuador already has sufficient energy, but the problem is that it is not properly controlled and managed. They want to construct these large hydroelectric plants, exploit minerals, create new petroleum refineries and establish new industries...this is what they want, to create more hydroelectric business...but the problem isn’t a lack of energy; The energy needs to be managed better (Cariaco, personal interview).

Scholars have pointed to the influence of Ecuador’s indigenous population in the Correa government’s rise to power (Escobar 2010). And yet, conflict still exists between the current administration and indigenous groups. This is observed particularly in regard to the protection and preservation of indigenous communities in the orient and southern sierra regions of the country, those regions that contain the greatest concentration of natural resource wealth. The struggle for both autonomous recognition and protection of the natural environment is described by Bebbington and Bebbington (2011) as the ‘Andean Avatar’, based on director James Cameron’s recent box office hit. The authors cite an indigenous Shuar leader’s response to the movie, which is based upon the exploitation of natural resources on a planet inhabited by an indigenous population living in constant fear of displacement.

It's an example that makes us think a lot because the indigenous are defending their rights. We have to defend, just as the indigenous so clearly defended in the movie. We had an uprising; we had a confrontation with gases. It's the same as what we just saw in the movie (Mayra Vega, as cited in Bebbington and Bebbington 2011).

Bebbington and Bebbington state that both the historic and present struggles faced by indigenous communities in eastern and southern Ecuador can be related to the struggles of the indigenous population in James Cameron's fictional screenplay.

'Nationalizing' Pacha-Centrism

This chapter has examined Ecuador's turn toward environmental sustainability and its significance as an alternative development model by addressing a number of relevant issues. First, the indigenous Kichwa view of the natural environment extends far beyond certain protected sectors of Ecuador. The idea of *pacha-centrism* means viewing the natural environment as life in its entirety while working to complement, rather than take advantage of, the resources that it provides. The Correa government has integrated this concept into its national development plan of *buen vivir* based on the idea of creating a *biosocialist* state. This type of state, according to the government, can exist by promoting environmentally sustainable programs while diversifying the national economy based on more socialist-oriented models of redistribution. Such a framework is meant to be cyclical in nature; those who benefit more from their society must give back more in much the same way as the indigenous *pacha-kawsay* philosophy dictates a continuously self-sustaining environment. Finally, it is evident that the Correa government is constrained in its full implementation of a *bio-socialist* state due to country's need for a level of income substantial enough to carry out its national development plan. Such income, according to government officials, can be found in the exploitation and sale of valuable natural resources such as minerals and petroleum. Although this Occidental concept deviates from the underlying Andean philosophy on which the country's development plan is

based, the government sees it as a necessary endeavor for maintaining economic growth and reaching its development goals as defined by the *Plan Nacional*.

It is important to note, however, that these actions have caused some tension between the Correa government and its citizens, and especially with representatives of Ecuador's indigenous population. Amazonian communities are still in danger of displacement due to oil and mineral exploitation despite economic diversification techniques such as ecotourism to provide more environmentally-sustainable alternatives to natural resource exploitation. Ecuador's current struggle to secure its own natural resources has potentially fueled the current conflict between the Andean philosophy of *pacha-kawsay* and the Correa government's implementation of this philosophy as *buen vivir*. Ideas of preserving state sovereignty clearly infringe on the *pacha-centric* ideology of preserving the natural environment's sovereignty and, although the constitution grants the natural environment specific rights, it also makes it property of the Ecuadorian state. Nevertheless, the concept of granting constitutional rights to the natural environment makes the Correa government's development model of *buen vivir* significantly different from both a neoliberal political model and other post-neoliberal alternatives.

CHAPTER 6
LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF EQUALITY:
PLURINATIONALISM WITHIN A SOVEREIGN STATE

“...the culture encompassed in this country, although it has many times not been accepted or recognized by a lot of people, this culture that we have here, our customs, the traditional music, food, all of this is what makes our country unique”
(Crisanna, university student in Quito, 2011)

The Republic of Ecuador is characterized by its ethnic diversity as much as its biodiversity. It is home to over thirteen different indigenous ethnicities that account for between twenty eight and forty three percent of the population (Georgetown University 2006). Yet, the existence of multiple cultures and nationalities has not always been recognized under the country’s political framework. It is a framework that has created a “double marginality” where the indigenous population has been largely ignored by the national political system both “for being indigenous” and “for their poor living conditions” (CODENPE 2011d, 15). According to Carlos De la Torre, Ecuador’s indigenous people have been historically “obligated to turn invisible, lower their eyes, and feign humility, ignorance or stupidity in their interactions with the white or mestizo population” (De la Torre 1996, 76).

In response to this historical underrepresentation, the Correa government has placed an emphasis on plurinationalism as part of the country’s new *buen vivir* development model. The term is frequently used, but its meaning is far from clear. Discussion regarding plurinationalism has yielded several different meanings, ranging from the recognition of multiple cultural identities to the creation of autonomous nations within the nation-state. Arturo Escobar (2010) examines the idea of plurinationalism and its relationship with leftist politics. He defines plurinationalism as an “opening up of the political spectrum beyond Eurocentric frameworks” (Escobar 2010). For Escobar, ‘the left’ in Ecuador denotes the proposed shift from a single nation-state to a plurinational state form, one which takes into consideration the importance of

the country's multiplicity of cultures (Escobar 2010). Escobar highlights a possible institutional movement away from the status-quo sovereign state model that exists today.

Other scholars describe the Correa government's idea of plurinationalism as more cultural than institutional. Catherine Walsh (2010) for example discusses plurinationalism as a form of respect for the collective identities of a country. This definition is an ideological change, based on mutual respect and the recognition of different nationalities, rather than a change in the political structure of the country (Walsh 2010). Walsh draws upon Ecuador's Secretariat for National Planning and Development (SENPLADES) which states that Ecuador's new *buen vivir* development model seeks to promote the "recognition, validation, and dialogue of peoples and their cultures, knowledges, and modes of life...and with this, the self-realization and construction of a social and shared future" (Walsh 2010, 19). The focus is on facilitating a form of self-realization, and not the creation of an entirely new political structure.

I argue that the Correa government's development plan interprets the idea of plurinationalism in four facets: recognition of the existence of multiple cultures, acknowledgement of the right for all nationalities and cultures to be able to participate democratically, reduction of socio-economic inequality, and restructuring of its regional framework. This model has combined a socialist egalitarian aspect with a strong cultural component based on the country's multi-ethnic history. In what follows, I first describe the history of multicultural recognition in the state of Ecuador and compare the Correa government's perception of plurinationality to the perceptions of some of the country's most prominent indigenous confederations. I then use collected documents and interviews to examine how Ecuador's four facets of plurinationalism are interpreted by the Correa government and perceived by the public. Discussing how the socialist concepts of equality combine with a

greater emphasis on indigenous cultural expressions within Ecuador will provide a better understanding of how the Correa government's model of *buen vivir* can still be seen as a major shift from the prevailing neoliberal framework, while remaining grounded within an occidental foundation.

Understanding Ecuador's Multicultural Identity

Ecuador's shift toward recognizing the importance of its multicultural identity began with the indigenous movements in the early 1990s. Marc Becker describes these as corporatist in nature, creating organized alliances among indigenous organizations and "launch(ing) indigenous concerns onto the national stage" (Becker 2011, 53). Documents by Ecuador's CODENPE state that the 1998 constitution "demonstrated positive advances in recognizing equality," defining Ecuador as a "pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic state" and recognizing "for the first time the existence of indigenous people as an official part of the Ecuadorian state, unique and indivisible" (CODENPE 2011d, 26). While the 1998 constitution did bring about a multiculturalist sentiment, the idea of true pluri-nationalism was yet to be implemented. Article I of the 2008 constitution stated an intention to do so, declaring that "Ecuador is a 'constitutional state of rights and justice, social, democratic, sovereign, independent, unitary, intercultural, plurinational, and secular'" (República del Ecuador 2008 as cited in Becker 2011, 53-54).

Official definitions of what constitutes a plurinational state are surprisingly similar between the Correa government and Ecuador's indigenous community. Figure 6.1 provides a perspective on what constitutes plurinationalism according to both the Correa government and two of Ecuador's most prominent indigenous confederations.

Figure 6.1 Comparing Definitions of Plurnationalism: Correa Government and Indigenous Confederations

Plurinationalism	Correa Government	Kichwa Confederation of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI) and Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE)*
Definition	“A recognizing of the existence of the diversity of people and nations native to Ecuador, as well as their culture within the country, as part of the country’s coexistence and historical identity.” (CODENPE 2011c, 5)	“building a strong and sovereign state that recognizes and makes possible the full exercise of collective and individual rights and promotes equal development for all of Ecuador and not only for certain regions or sectors.” (ECUARUNAI 2007: 4 as cited in Becker 2011, 54)
Political Framework	“The plurinational state thrives when various people and nationalities unite under the same government and constitution” (CODENPE 2011d, 65)	Plurinationalism should “strengthen a new state through the consolidation of unity, destroying racism and regionalism as a necessary prerequisite for social and political equality, economic justice, direct and participatory democracy, communitarianism, and interculturality” (ECUARUNARI and CONAIE 2007: 5 as cited in Becker 2011, 54).

*Adapted from secondary sources as cited within the figure

It is evident that plurinationalism for both the Correa government and Ecuador’s indigenous representatives suggests a need for both recognizing and promoting Ecuador’s multicultural heritage. In addition, both emphasize social and political equality and participation. We can also see that neither the Correa government nor indigenous representatives try to pull different ethnic communities away from the state through measures to promote autonomy, but instead promote more socialist ideals of equal participation and economic justice within the state itself. The idea is to integrate, rather than isolate, indigenous communities.

Recognition of Multiculturalism under a Plurinational Framework

When asked what makes Ecuador unique, eighteen year old Crisanna pointed to its cultural diversity, and the opportunities to enjoy the various music, dances, crafted goods, food and customary rituals that have retained their significance even through colonization and the country's political shifts. Despite not having indigenous roots, she feels more and more part of this culture, stating that "really, I'm mestizo, but my mindset really fits more with the indigenous people. Although I don't have any indigenous blood in my family, we know a lot about the Kichwa culture and their traditions." She highlights the importance of cultural recognition, comparing it to the priorities of other nations by stating that "many other countries can claim a better social or economic structure, perhaps, but their level of culture is very low, and this is important for a country as well. The level of culture in this country is good, it's rich, and this is what makes me the most proud to live here" (Crisanna, personal interview).

This feeling of pride in diversity is not uncommon: interview respondents frequently cited the importance of pluriculturalism and diversity in Ecuador. Maria, an indigenous fruit vendor in Quito, says being indigenous is becoming something of which to be proud, stating that "I like being indigenous, I would never change my style, or the person I am" (Maria, personal interview) Maya, a mestiza domestic worker in the town of Riobamba, comments on how equality between the indigenous and mestizo population is what truly should be considered a *buen vivir*, stating that "for me, a good life is a life where everyone is equal, and we can respect the different cultures" (Maya, personal interview). Elissa, a mother of two and playwright from Quito, described a focus in recent years on the city's cultural development, stating how the capital of Ecuador had also been named South America's cultural capital of 2011. "I do see that in recent years there has been more support for the arts here," says Elissa. "There is sort of a

cultural trend that is forming here in this town, and it's open to everyone." Elissa describes how the Ecuadorian capital has recently embraced exhibits of indigenous customs, and notes that plays now seem more educational, rather than satirical, as was the case in the past.

However, the push to 'formally recognize' the indigenous population has to this point only elicited an increase in indigenous-manufactured products and performances, and has not completely reached what Catherine Walsh has described as a shared future based on the recognition and respect of the variety of existing cultures within the country. Crisanna describes a culture that is still heavily influenced by a marginalized social structure.

Most people who consider themselves *mestizo* consider themselves entirely different from the indigenous population, but why? To call someone indigenous, or *indio*, on the streets is like an offensive comment...but during indigenous celebrations, in the moment when the people are involved, it is not considered offensive. Only in the moment of celebration do we feel love and think about the indigenous population.

According to Crisanna, this type of indigenous marginalization still exists, and a more widespread acceptance and appreciation for cultural symbols and events will be necessary for Ecuador's growth as a plurinational society.

Plurinationalism as Egalitarianism

Ecuador's shift toward cultural awareness is one main aspect of its new plurinationalist state, but another prominent part of the country's plurinational agenda consists of unifying rather than fragmenting different nationalities. Ecuador's *Plan Nacional* develops specific objectives that seek to promote the construction of a plurinational society through the "overcoming of social and cultural inequality and guaranteeing that each person or collective group can both participate and benefit from the country's variety of cultural expressions and goods" (SENPLADES 2009, 83). Some specific objectives include funding indigenous language projects and securing public space for cultural expression. But the Correa government has also focused on the issue of

equality, adding both democratic and socio-economic components to a plurinational strategy what would otherwise be just a discursive statement on the existence of multiple ethnic groups within the country. This adds a social-democratic aspect to the term in much the same way as Ecuador's overall *buen vivir* development model has fused indigenous concepts of *sumak kawsay* with a European social-democratic ideology. The following sections address both democratic participation and socio-economic equality, highlighting specific examples of how the government has perceived both as inherent aspects of plurinationalism.

Democratic Participation under Ecuadorian Plurinationalism

One example of how the Correa government is promoting a plurinational framework is its focus on democratic participation. Government consultant Eduardo Paredes states that this focus has primarily stemmed from the influence of Ecuador's recent indigenous and middle class movements, which began with the creation of the 2008 constitution. "We needed to create a system of political parties that actually represented the people," said Paredes. One of the primary ways in which the government has called upon direct public action in political affairs is through its recent increase in referendum voting. In Ecuador it is quite common to find graffiti painted on most street corners with one of two simple phrases: *vota si* or *vota no*. These phrases represent the opinions of individuals regarding past national referendums.

Figure 6.2 Referendum graffiti in the town of Ambato, Chimborazo province, Ecuador



Estefania, a native of the mountainous town of Riobamba, discussed her opinion about the Correa government's focus on public inclusion through referendums, stating that it happened "just recently, with the bullfighting events, they asked the public." Bullfights have long been contested as inhumane in many parts of the world, and Ecuador recently decided to hold a referendum which led to the majority of the public voting against having the events. The Correa government has touted these referendums as one of the most significant examples of creating a plurinational state. However, there are varying viewpoints regarding the question of democratic participation and efforts to create a plurinational society. Indigenous representatives have expressed some skepticism about the Correa government's egalitarian and democratic achievements. Cariaco, representative of ECUARUNARI, described briefly the organization's view of plurinationality and contrasted it with how the current government has implemented it, suggesting that for a state to be truly plurinational, all sectors must be represented equally.

Plurinationality means to construct a new type of state, a plurinational state, but it also means that this construction needs to be plural, collective and participative among all sectors in the country, without concern for ethnicity or color. A monocultural state is one with only one language, most likely with only one type of culture, only one ideology, and therefore only one position.

For Cariaco and other indigenous representatives, plurinationality means more than just providing more referendums. The concept means allowing historically underrepresented people their proper representation in legislative bodies and law-making assemblies.

Unfortunately right now the government doesn't want to listen. There still isn't plurinationality here, why? Because decisions are being made by only one person, only by the administration with its advisors. All mandates come directly from the government. This is not plural, this is not collective. On the other hand, you have students, workers, indigenous people, women, ecologists, a variety of groups. Ideally, all of those sectors would generate proposals, create debates and have some presence. But we still continue to live in a monocultural state; interculturality doesn't truly exist.

Nevertheless, a focus on increasing democratic participation throughout the country exists, and is a primary aspect of Ecuador's plurinational state.

Reducing Social Inequality in Ecuador's Plurinational State

Another way that plurinationalism has been approached by the government is through their emphasis reducing socio-economic inequality. Plurinationalism, as it is seen and lived in the small Andean nation, is something that promotes one simple ideal: social equality for all people, regardless of ethnicity, economic status or gender. As is evident from recent indigenous movements, social inequality is a long-standing issue in the country, and one that was frequently mentioned by interview respondents. "Between 1979 and 2005 we had constructed the most unequal society in South America. Levels of poverty increased, and three million citizens had to leave Ecuador" said Eduardo Paredes, "for this country to remain at peace, we need to reduce the gap between the richest and the poorest." Cuban national Alberto describes the issue as one of utmost importance: "inequality is the largest problem that exists in this country...here there is a large difference, there are few who have millions, and millions that have very little." Alberto's wife Daniela calls the social gap "tremendous," but also states that "it is important to understand that the poor live by what the rich do, and what the Correa government is doing right now is placing the poor against the rich" something she thinks will help fuel rather than diminish inequality. Nevertheless, Undersecretary Hector Rodriguez discusses recent reductions to inequality within the country, citing an example specific to Ecuador then discussing the changes made since the implementation of the Correa government's new development plan.

In the flower business for example, the person who picks or cuts the flowers normally gets paid 250 to 300 dollars per month. On the other hand, the owner of the flower plantation is at an extraordinary financial standing...the statistics of the country's inequality gap are now very good. This year if you look at the statistics regarding unemployment and urban areas, you will find a reduction in the amount of people in poverty, and this reduction is extremely important (Rodriguez, personal interview).

Ecuador's complex multicultural society and the country's history of socio-economic inequality have made implementing a plurinational state based on social equality a difficult challenge for the government. Because of this, the Correa government has tried to publicize its social projects designed to reduce socio-economic inequality. Aside from using media and telecommunications such as television, radio and internet, the government has constructed billboards and murals that can be found not only in the country's largest urban areas, but on the sides of roads in very rural locations as well. Estefania elaborates on government's use of advertising to make the public aware of special projects.

For the poorer people, we did not have much knowledge regarding what the government was doing in the past; they never engaged the public. But now they are, and they are repeating, and repeating it and telling us what they are doing. And now yes, we are learning...the people have much more opportunities to learn about political projects now (Estefania, personal interview).

These billboards describe a variety of projects supported or carried out directly by the government, and almost all of them describe the projects as being a direct result of the citizen revolution. The following figures contain examples of government billboard propaganda in a variety of locations throughout the country.

Figure 6.3 Billboard in Quito describing government support for structural improvements to secondary educational institution "Colegio 24 de Mayo"



Figure 6.4 Billboard in the rural Andes mountain region near the town of Riobamba describing the government's work to improve highways and road systems in the area.



Figure 6.5 Billboard in the city of Ibarra, capital of the Imbabura province in northern Ecuador, describing government support for educating and increasing capabilities for textile machine operators in the region



However, this government attempt to 'control the message' has also been criticized for being an infringement on liberty. Marco, an Ecuadorian citizen and political activist, is the founder of a prominent non-profit organization designed to combat poverty throughout Latin America. He spoke to me regarding Ecuador's egalitarian struggles, stating that despite the

government's strong stance on democratic participation and social inclusion, advancement in the area of individual liberties has been constrained.

Insulting citizens is a direct attack to freedom of expression. These types of attacks have always existed in Ecuador; it is part of our country's poverty. However, the level of attacks to freedom of expression has been much greater in these past four years than in the past. There are attacks to the free press, and now they are judicial (Marco, personal interview).

Marco describes a theme that seems to be one of the largest constraints to Ecuador's *buen vivir* development model, one which, according to the political activist, has turned into a judicial issue as well.

It's very important to move forward with respect to liberty, with respect to democratic values and strengthening institutions in the fight against political insecurity, and in this aspect we are not doing well...we need to change. We have to realize that poverty is not only viewed in terms of income, it's a question of liberty and rights as well. A country where its people don't have liberty is a very poor country; a country where women don't share the same rights as others is a poor country (Marco, personal interview).

Isabel, a twenty-eight year old mother of two and a part-time English teacher in Quito, discussed freedom of expression in Ecuador, stating that in recent years the public has had a much greater fear of speaking out against the government due to what she considers recent attacks on basic rights. "The president says that the opinion of the people, the opinion of citizens, really counts...but only when the opinion is in favor of him. He continues to insult and attack people who are not in agreement with him, and do very bad things." Alberto, an Ecuadorian resident of Cuban descent, related the attacks on expression to the political situation in his native country. "Where is the liberty here? It's the same thing that's happening in Cuba." However, he recognizes that democracy does exist, comparing the limited power of the Ecuadorian government to that of Castro's communist government. "The difference is that the

government here can't always do what they want to do, because the people do have a position in the government.”

It is evident that some of the Correa government's actions have elicited public concern. Just as some contradiction exists between Ecuador's environmental policy and the indigenous philosophy of *pacha-centrism*, the same contradictions are found in plurinational endeavors aimed at ensuring that every citizen has a voice. Indigenous representatives, political activists and citizens alike now complain of a government that has consolidated its power and authority instead of allowing for the proper public representation in accordance with the plurinational state. However, another aspect of Ecuador's plurinational focus remains to be examined, its endeavors to facilitate regional equality.

Regionalism in Ecuador's Plurinational State

The notion of facilitating a plurinationalist state through improving socio-economic gaps has also derived from the Ecuador's long history of regionalism, in which certain areas of the country, primarily Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca, were given precedence in terms of investment and development, both economically and socially. The term 'decentralization' in Ecuador's *Plan Nacional* describes plurinationality not as the creation of autonomous nations, but as the re-creation of the regional matrix in an effort to promote both the cultures of those regions and more evenly distribute socio-economic spending within the country. Thus, programs target previously ignored rural areas, especially locations with large indigenous populations (Ramirez 2010b, 32). The government's new zoning agenda, or national territorial strategy, seeks to restructure the country based on eight different zones in order to properly develop the country based on the framework of its *Plan Nacional* (SENPLADES 2009, 110). This new zoning process does not replace the country's current provincial framework; according to the Correa

government, it will enable proper coordination and implementation of national public investment programs designed to increase long-term redistribution to historically underdeveloped areas.

This new regional framework will, for the first time, create administrative zones that cover all three geographical regions: the coast, the sierra, and the orient. According to Undersecretary Hector Rodriguez, the new regional framework is designed not to create autonomous regional entities, but to allow the national government to increase development based on the redistribution and diffusion of public investment. New administrative structures in each of these zones will allow the creation of annual budgets more relevant to each region rather than the state in general, and promote proper distribution of social programs.

This is a regional process, we are working to create recognition for each community, and this means creating equilibrium between different communities and populations, and the territories in which they live...it is a process of planning that is much more integrative (Rodriguez, personal interview).

The *Plan Nacional* states that through new regional administrations, government investment will be dispersed more evenly throughout the country. However, the specific focus of these investment programs is not clearly stated. ECUARUNARI representative Cariaco disagrees with the manner in which public investment based on these zones is being implemented, discussing in particular the country's investment in education and transportation systems.

They say that they have created sixteen 'schools of the millenium', when there are more than twenty thousand educational institutions, many of which in our communities do not have classrooms, benches, proper teachers, blackboards, etc. There is still no help. I don't know how they are investing, or what has happened with the resources...and also with transportation, we still have to walk for hours, in very inconvenient circumstances. This is the indigenous population that they say they are helping, so for whom is this citizen revolution really working?

Improving social equality by redistributing more evenly the country's 'wealth' seems to be a driving factor behind creating a true plurinational identity in Ecuador. This idea of redistribution is very much a Socialist concept, yet it has been used in government discourse to

describe a greater recognition for Ecuador's multicultural heritage (CODENPE 2011d, 4). In the end, it seems that the Correa government has used the concept of plurinationalism as a discursive tool designed to justify the *Plan Nacional's* regional zoning program, rather than to place members of historically underrepresented populations in positions of regional power.

Ecuador's Plurinationalism

Examining the Ecuadorian case for plurinationalism, we find that the Correa government's perception of a plurinationalist state relates closely to Catherine Walsh's (2010) interpretation of the concept as a means of recognizing those populations who have historically been underrepresented. As defined specifically by Ecuadorian official Rene Ramirez Gallegos, a plurinational state must act "under a framework of rights that makes possible the idea of equality through diversity" (Ramirez 2010b, 33). The Correa government has interpreted this as *buen vivir* through both the official constitutional recognition of the plurinational state and efforts to promote social equality, in the form of both democratic participation and regional wealth redistribution.

Despite the conflict and contradictions that have been addressed in this chapter, the Correa government's plurinational model has combined the egalitarian aspect of equality with a strong cultural component evident in the everyday lives of Ecuadorian citizens. It is this combination that makes Ecuador's *buen vivir* stand out from previous political models presented as alternatives to neoliberalism. Analyzing both the novel concepts of both *pacha-centrism* and *plurinationality* has helped shed light on the underlying philosophy of *sumak kawsay*, and examining how they both function as components in Ecuador's *buen vivir* has helped determine how the plan has been implemented in relation to the current global political system. Overall, we find that Ecuador's *buen vivir* model still functions through the prevailing neoliberal global

political framework that exists today. Just as the Correa government must rely on its status quo liberal economic framework of oil and mineral exploitation to fund many of its political changes, the government must also focus its plurinational efforts within a unitary state framework, and the idea of achieving 'equality through diversity' may exist only in the realm of discourse.

CHAPTER 7 LOOKING TOWARD THE SOUTH

It can be argued that since colonialism, most of the world has looked to the north for models of development and state growth. As a result, developed nations have tended to organize, prioritize and conceptualize frameworks for 'proper development' in the countries of the global south. The Occidental model spread quickly throughout most of the world, and its influence was driven so deeply into colonized regions that western customs, traditions and values still dominated those countries for decades after their independence. With the destruction of much of Europe after World War II, the United States replaced Europe in much of these regions as the dominant foreign influence, and neoliberalism was introduced. Under neoliberalism, the concept of liberty is taken to mean entrepreneurial liberty, individual rights are viewed as private property rights and economic property is thought to derive from markets unencumbered by any type of intervention (Harvey 2007). It is a philosophy that promotes complete economic freedom, while simultaneously projecting economic growth as the determinant of overall well-being.

However, all of this has been called into question by countries that seek a new development direction. With the culmination of neoliberalism, some nations have begun to challenge the philosophies and practices of the global north, questioning the idea of development altogether. This is evident in Latin America, a region that has experienced the consequences of dependency economics. Neoliberalism had permeated Latin America so deeply that class divides widened, and the sovereignty of independent states was called into question due to a sharp rise in foreign direct investment. Latin America in particular had no choice but to rely on the global north for its economic models, and thus, the trajectory of its states. However, looking to the north had allowed for only one way of developing, and the recognition of only one

dominant culture. According to Escobar, “Latin America was the region that most earnestly embraced neo-liberal reforms, where the model was applied most thoroughly, and where the results are most ambiguous at best. It was on the basis of the early Latin American experiences that the Washington Consensus was crafted” (Escobar 2010, 2). Thus, the global north had used this region as a laboratory for new economic development and foreign investment tactics, testing the success and failure of different economic models through the issuing of loans that could only be used toward private sector development, and allowing trans-national corporations free reign to also experiment as they pleased in Latin America.

Now, this region of the world has become a laboratory by its own choosing. Latin America has begun to investigate, analyze and experiment with alternative development models that challenge the neoliberal model, calling into question ideas such as liberty, individual rights, unencumbered markets, and free trade. Countries like Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and to a lesser extent Argentina, Paraguay, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador, have all taken a stance challenging the neoliberal status quo of development (Escobar 2010, 2), and each has done so in their own regionally-specific and endogenous ways. As we have seen, Ecuador has focused on its highly influential and active indigenous culture, drawing upon Kichwa concepts based on *sumak kawsay* to focus on the country’s overall well-being. This change was the culmination of twenty years of protest from indigenous confederations throughout Ecuador, and it resulted in the creation of an entirely new constitution in 2008 and a more endogenous national development plan of *buen vivir* in 2009. Both of these documents lay out significant changes to the nation based on its own local context rather than one developed through the influence of foreign entities.

In this thesis I have demonstrated the ways in which Ecuador has challenged its neoliberal past in three ways. It has turned toward an entirely new model of development, one that views ‘well-being’ as something that is not just measured in terms of per capita income and economic growth, but also in more qualitative measurements of happiness, health and knowledge. It has taken a highly different view of environmental sustainability, treating the natural environment as a living entity by granting specific constitutional rights to the *pachamama*, or mother earth, and leaving some of its most oil-rich regions untapped. It has also developed an entirely different outlook on culture, recognizing its state as a plurinational society for the first time, and focusing on reducing the socio-economic gaps have historically plagued the country. In this aspect, Ecuador has been one of the more radical reformers, pioneering an entirely new way of life based on the idea of *buen vivir* or ‘good living’ in order to both increase the democratic participation of its citizens and grant rights to entities that cannot speak for themselves. It is through Ecuador’s national plan based on *buen vivir* that indigenous concepts are both introduced and publicly recognized as legitimate development ideologies.

However, as this thesis also suggests, Ecuador cannot hope to accomplish its endeavors without abiding, at least to some extent, by the status-quo global political economy, one that is still dominated by neoliberal policies and ideology. The country has not closed its doors to foreign investment and trade, nor has it stopped relying on its valuable natural resources to fuel its development. Capitalism is still the driving economic force in Ecuador, and the concept of plurinationality, although significant, still exists within the occidental sovereign state model. Ecuador may have woken up from what President Rafael Correa has declared the “long neoliberal night” (Bebbington and Bebbington 2011), but it has not implemented its alternative development models completely anew.

Nevertheless, it can be said that even the way in which Ecuador has challenged neoliberalism is based on strong indigenous concepts. Ecuador has chosen to focus on regionally-specific topics such as culture and the natural environment to facilitate a developmental change while simultaneously adapting the Occidental framework of the European welfare state. It is a 'harmonious coexistence' of the Andean world and the Occidental world that makes Ecuador unique in its endeavors to challenge the status-quo neoliberal system. As I have shown, the concept of harmonious coexistence is evident in indigenous Kichwa culture, especially in regard to the natural environment and plurinationalism. The same indigenous ideology that has influenced complementarity and correspondence among different cultures in Ecuador has also influenced the country's decision to fuse Occidental concepts with its indigenous Andean philosophy. While terms such as 'post-liberal', 'post-developmental' and 'post-capitalist' have been used to describe these alternative development projects in Latin America (Escobar 2010), it is still unclear which of these, if any, accurately describe this new model. What is clear, however, is that Ecuador has set itself apart from both neoliberalism and other alternative development models through this harmonious coexistence. The neoliberal ideology is being challenged, in both theory and development practice. Ecuador's new approach based on the concept of *buen vivir* could pave the way for future alternative models of general 'well-being' in Latin America.

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Cariaco: indigenous, Director of Education, ECUARUNARI

Crisanna: 18, Mestiza, political science student, Universidad Central del Ecuador

Daniela: 35, Mestiza, mother of two (Cuban national)

David: 23, Mestizo, law student, Universidad Central del Ecuador

Eduardo Paredes: Mestizo, Consultant, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Founder of *Alianza Pais*, Ecuador's political party in power)

Elissa: 38, Mestiza, playwright, mother of two

Esmeralda: 52, Indigenous, domestic worker

Estefania: Indigenous, domestic worker

Francisco Rivadeneira: 41, Mestizo, Vice Minister of International Trade and Economic Integration, Ecuadorian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Hector Rodriguez: Mestizo, Undersecretary General of Science, Technology and Innovation (SENESCYT)

Isabel: Mestiza, part-time English teacher, mother of two

Marcela: 19, Indigenous, vendor of fruits, vegetables in central Quito

Marco: Mestizo, founder of the ETHOS Foundation, Mexico, political activist in Ecuador

Marichel: 22, Indigenous, clothing and indigenous souvenirs vendor

Martin: Mestizo, clothing vendor

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APPENDIX A
LIST OF ACRONYMS

CODENPE	Consejo de Desarrollo de los Pueblos y Nacionalidades del Ecuador (Council on the Development of People and Nationalities of Ecuador)
CONAIE	Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador)
ECUARUNAI	Confederación Kichwa del Ecuador (Kichwa Confederation of Ecuador)
SENPLADES	Secretaria Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo (Secretariat for National Planning and Development)
SENESCYT	Secretaria Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (Secretariat for National Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation)

APPENDIX B
EXAMPLE OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

<i>Question #</i>	<i>Question Description</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your name? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o How old are you? 	Personal Detail
2.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where are you from? - Where were you born? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Would you describe yourself as Mestizo, Indigenous, or something else? 	Personal Detail
3.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If you could, please take me through a typical day in your life... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o What do you do for a living? o What does your family do? o May I ask what your average income is? 	Personal Detail
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In your opinion, what makes Ecuador unique? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o To other places in South America, and perhaps to other places in the world? - What are you most proud of in regard to your country? - What are the biggest problems that you think have to be overcome in this country? 	Opinion Gathering / Open-Ended with prompts
5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you follow politics? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o What political party would you affiliate yourself with? o What would be an ideal form of government to you? 	Opinion Gathering / Open-Ended with prompts
6.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - President Correa's government has created a new policy called <i>Buen Vivir</i>. Can you tell me a bit about it? 	Opinion Gathering / Open-Ended with prompts
7.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does <i>Buen Vivir</i> mean to you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Do you think it's the right name for this policy? Why or why not? 	Opinion Gathering / Open-Ended with prompts
10.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you think this new idea of <i>Buen Vivir</i> is effective? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Have you personally seen any changes that have benefited or hindered you in any way since this policy has come into effect? 	Opinion Gathering / Open-Ended with prompts

APPENDIX C:
EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM (SPANISH)

INTRODUCCIÓN

Este documento puede contener palabras que ud. No entiende. Usted debe preguntar al investigador a explicar cualquier palabra o información que no entiende.

Usted ha sido invitado a participar en un estudio llevado a cabo por Ryan Cobey, un alumno de East Carolina University en Greenville, Carolina del Norte, E.E.U.U. La meta del estudio es mejor entender las políticas del *Buen Vivir* y la percepción pública de los ciudadanos en Ecuador. La investigación explora las percepciones del *Buen Vivir* según a los ciudadanos y los oficiales del gobierno para aprender el nivel de comprensión así como el nivel de acuerdo a los ciudadanos que son afectados directamente por las políticas nuevas. Los resultados del estudio nos ayudarán a comprender mejor las políticas y la situación política en el Ecuador.

El estudio consiste en entrevistas con ciudadanos para aprender de sus experiencias y opiniones sobre los cambios políticos en el Ecuador a partir de la nueva constitución en 2008 que presentó y explicó la nueva ideología que se llama el *Buen Vivir*. Se ha pedido de ud. proveer una entrevista que durará una hora, más o menos. La información que ud. provee será estrictamente privada y usada sólo por este propósito. Su nombre no será vinculado a la información que ud. provee.

El entrevistador pedirá su permiso a grabar la entrevista para permitir documentar correctamente sus repuestas y para consultarle más tarde. La grabación no se usará para fines fuera de este estudio.

ACUERDO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Yo he sido invitado a participar en una investigación llevado a cabo por Ryan Cobey. Yo entiendo el propósito de la investigación y entiendo que los riesgos a mi persona son mínimos. Yo entiendo que cualquier información que yo doy se mantendrá privado y confidencial.

Yo entiendo que mi participación en este estudio es voluntaria y puedo terminar cuando yo quiero. Yo puedo elegir no responder a ciertas preguntas sin dejar de participar. Si yo en cualquier momento tengo preguntas sobre este estudio, el investigador estará disponible para correo electrónico: cobeyr05@students.ecu.edu

- ☞ He leído y/o entiendo toda de la información arriba, hice preguntas y he recibido respuestas satisfactorias en las áreas que no entendí.
- ☞ Acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación.

PERSONA ADMINISTRANDO EL ACUERDO: Yo he llevado a cabo el proceso de acuerdo y he repasado oralmente el contenido de este documento de acuerdo. Yo pienso que el participante entiende la investigación.

Participante	(LETRAS)	Firma	Fecha
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Investigador(a) Principal	(LETRAS)	Firma	Fecha
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APPENDIX D: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
1L-09 Brody Medical Sciences Building • 600 Moye Boulevard • Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 • Fax 252-744-2284 • www.ecu.edu/irb

TO: Ryan J. Cobey, Graduate Student, ECU, Department of Geography
FROM: UMCIRB *KWB*
DATE: May 10, 2011
RE: Expedited Category Research Study
TITLE: "Investigation into Public Opinion of the Ecuadorian Citizenship Regarding el Buen Vivir, an Ecuadorian Political Initiative of Alternative Social and Economic Development"

UMCIRB #11-0291

This research study has undergone review and approval using expedited review on **05/09/2011**. This research study is eligible for review under expedited category numbers six (6) and seven (7) which include collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes and research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior), or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus groups, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this **unfunded** study **no more than minimal risk** requiring a continuing review in **12 months**. Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

The above referenced research study has been given approval for the period of **05/09/2011** to **05/08/2012**. The approval includes the following items:

- Internal Processing Form (UMCIRB receipt date 04/28/2011)
- Informed Consent – English version (version date 04/27/2011)
- Informed Consent – Spanish version (no version date)
- Interview Schedule – Spanish and English version
- Survey – Spanish and English version

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

The UMCIRB applies 45 CFR 46, Subparts A-D, to all research reviewed by the UMCIRB regardless of the funding source. 21 CFR 50 and 21 CFR 56 are applied to all research studies under the Food and Drug Administration regulation. The UMCIRB follows applicable International Conference on Harmonisation Good Clinical Practice guidelines.

ACUERDO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

INTRODUCCIÓN

Este documento puede contener palabras que ud. no entiende. Usted debe preguntar a la investigadora a explicar cualquier palabras o información que no entiende.

Usted ha sido invitado a participar en un estudio llevado a cabo por Ryan Cobey, un alumno de East Carolina University en Greenville, Carolina del Norte, E.E.U.U. Le meta del estudio es mejor entender la policia del *Buen Vivir* y la percepción pública de los ciudadanos en Ecuador. La investigación explora las percepciones de la policia *Buen Vivir* de acuerdo con ciudadanos para aprender el nivel de comprensión así como el nivel de acuerdo de los ciudadanos que son afectados directamente por los policias. Los resultados del estudio nos ayudarán comprender mejor las policias y la situación política en Ecuador.

El estudio consiste de entrevistas con ciudadanos para aprender de sus experiencias y opiniones sobre los cambios políticos en Ecuador desde el nuevo constitucion en 2008 que presentó y explicó la nueva policia que se llama el *Buen Vivir*. Se ha pedido de ud. proveer una entrevista que durará un hora, mas o menos. La información que ud. provee será estrictamente privado y usado sólo por este propósito. Su nombre no será vinculado a la información que ud. provee.

La entrevistadora pedirá su permiso a grabar la entrevista para permitir documentar correctamente sus repuestas y para consultar más tarde. La grabación no se usará para fines fuera de este estudio.

ACUERDO DE CONSENTIMIENTO

Yo he sido invitado a participar en una investigación llevado a cabo por Ryan Cobey. Yo entiendo el propósito de la investigación y entiendo que los riesgos a mi persona son mínimos. Yo entiendo que cualquier información que yo doy se mantendrá privado y confidencial.

Yo entiendo que mi participación en este estudio es voluntario y puedo terminar cuando yo quiero. Yo puedo elegir no responder a ciertas preguntas sin dejar de participar. Si yo en cualquier momento tengo preguntas sobre este estudio, el investigador estará disponible para correo electronico: cobeyr05@students.ecu.edu

- 3 He leído y/o entiendo toda de la información arriba, hice preguntas y he recibido respuestas satisfactorias en las áreas que no entendí.
- 3 Acepto participar voluntariamente en esta investigación.
- 3 No quiero participar en esta investigación.

PERSONA ADMINISTRANDO EL ACUERDO: Yo he llevado a cabo el proceso de acuerdo y he repasado oralmente el contenido de este documento de acuerdo. Yo pienso que el participante entiende la investigación.

Persona Obteniendo Acuerdo (LETRAS) Firma Fecha

Investigator(a) Principal (LETRAS) Firma Fecha

UNCIRB
 APPROVED
 FROM 05-09-11
 TO 05-08-12

