Suma qamaña in Bolivia

Indigenous Understandings of Well-being and Their Contribution to a Post-Neoliberal Paradigm

by
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In recent decades there has been increasing interest in academic, governmental, and nongovernmental circles worldwide in developing universal definitions of well-being. Governments have progressively shifted their policies on this concept and are currently engaged in improving the well-being of their populations. Bolivia's concept of suma qamaña *(living well together) is broader than "well-being," emphasizing the importance of harmonious relations between nature and human beings and providing an important link to sustainability that current conceptions of well-being fail to make. Exploring the concept is highly relevant at this historical moment because the Morales government is engaged in a wide-ranging process of social transformation to implement it. Its translation into public policy and the adoption of a development model consistent with it have proved problematic. While the introduction of the concept into the National Development Plan, the new constitution, and the Law of Mother Earth has addressed the need to move from individualized understandings of well-being to collective ones, the government has not overcome the conflict between growth-driven approaches and sustainability that is inherent in all its legislation. Moreover, understandings of the concept are constantly being negotiated and transformed, calling for an understanding of it that is rooted in people's practices and beliefs rather than in theoretical constructions.*

En las últimas décadas ha habido un creciente interés en los círculos académicos, gubernamentales y no gubernamentales de todo el mundo en el desarrollo de las definiciones universales de bienestar. Los gobiernos han cambiado progresivamente sus políticas en este concepto y se dedican actualmente a la mejora del bienestar de sus poblaciones. Concepto de suma qamaña *(vivir bien) de Bolivia es más amplio que el "bienestar," enfatizando la importancia de las relaciones armoniosas entre la naturaleza y los seres humanos y proporcionando un vínculo importante con la sostenibilidad que las concepciones actuales de bienestar no pueden hacer. Explorar el concepto es muy relevante en este momento histórico, porque el gobierno de Morales está involucrado en un amplio proceso de transformación social para implementarla. Su traslación en las políticas públicas y la adopción de un modelo de desarrollo coherente con ella han demostrado ser problemático. Si bien la introducción de este concepto en el Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, la nueva Constitución, y la Ley de la Madre Tierra ha abordado la necesidad de pasar de entendimientos individu-*

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LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVES, Issue 204, Vol. 42 No. 5, September 2015, 216–233
DOI: 10.1177/0094582X14547501

ales de bienestar a los colectivos, el gobierno no ha superado el conflicto entre los enfoques impulsados por crecimiento y la sostenibilidad que es inherente a toda su legislación. Por otra parte, las comprensiones del concepto están siendo constantemente negociados y transformados, reclamando una comprensión que está enraizada en las prácticas y creencias de las personas y no en las construcciones teóricas.

Keywords: Suma qamaña, *Well-being, Bolivia, Indigenous knowledge, Sustainable development*

For quite some time, Bolivia's "cultural and democratic revolution," led by the Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement Toward Socialism—MAS), has swung between two alternative paradigms that are misunderstood or conflated, often within Bolivia itself. Both claim to move Bolivia beyond capitalism and neoliberalism, but they do so in very different ways. The self-development constructed by indigenous intellectuals since the emergence of Katarismo in the 1980s places emphasis on the role of indigenous social movements in the process of change and represents the new Bolivia in terms of "decolonization." Championed by intellectuals such as Raúl Prada (2012), it criticizes the capitalist model of development as a byproduct of foreign domination and suggests that Bolivia can turn to its indigenous peoples for an alternative. An alternative discourse presents Bolivia as part of an emerging wave of nations from the global South that for the first time in history is challenging the Northern domination of the capitalist world system. The first paradigm proposes a metaphorical return to the Inca Tawantinsuyo, whereas the second takes its cue from other nations of the Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America—ALBA) and claims some continuity with mid-twentieth-century revolutionary processes. These two paradigms are inextricably linked in current political and intellectual debates in Bolivia and in the national project envisioned in the 2009 constitution, which incorporates indigenous principles and struggles to turn them into public policies that apply to all Bolivians.

One example of this lies in the interpretation of the concept of *suma qamaña*, "living well together" under principles of conviviality and reciprocity (Albó, 2011a). What constitutes living well together is of fundamental importance to the epistemological coherence of any society. In addition, the concept provides an important critique of dominant understandings of well-being that is worth exploring. Suma qamaña emphasizes harmonious relations with nature, providing a link to sustainability that dominant conceptions of well-being fail to make and marking a transition from an anthropocentric to a biocentric understanding of humans as part of nature. Its translation into public policy and the adoption of a model of development consistent with it have proved problematic. By exploring the various aspects of suma qamaña that are apparent in key policy documents, this article explores some of the contradictions of an unfinished process.

WELL-BEING: AN UNFINISHED DEBATE

The academic literature on well-being is vast and complex, spanning multiple disciplines, concepts, traditions, and epistemologies. The study of

well-being has followed the parallel research traditions stemming from the hedonic and eudemonic approaches, the first conceptualizing it in terms of happiness and pleasure and the second in Aristotelian terms, as part of a virtuous life and as linked with human growth, flourishing, or self-realization (Ryan and Deci, 2000).

A key objective from the point of view of the hedonic school of thought is the understanding and measurement of subjective well-being—what makes experiences pleasant or unpleasant (Kahneman, Diener, and Schwarz, 1999). This tradition is increasingly making inroads into policy making, where governments are looking to measures of subjective well-being in the form of happiness as a proxy for well-being (Donlan and Metcalfe, 2012; Layard, 2005). A similarly one-sided pursuit of an understanding of well-being has been conducted in economics, often conflating the many aspects of well-being into a single element of utility best reflected by income. As Sen (1985) has argued, this limited approach confuses well-being with being well-off. The evidence suggests that, beyond a certain point of material comfort, income and wealth are only very loosely connected to subjective well-being (Searle, 2008). Indeed, regardless of wealth, inequality is linked with low levels of collective well-being, whether measured in the form of subjective well-being or in terms of employment, educational achievement, or levels of crime (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009).

Thus it is perhaps not surprising that conceptualizations and theories of well-being that go beyond the use of per capita wealth as a proxy are increasingly appearing in the literature. The concept of human development has been accepted since the 1970s, delivering measurement tools such as the Human Development Index (HDI), which uses indicators such as health, employment, and civic participation to produce holistic measures of national well-being. The HDI has become the standard measurement utilized by the United Nations Development Program in its annual reports (UNDP, 2010). Sen's (1999) theoretical model has contributed to this process by making explicit the partial role of income in the development of human capabilities. It does not specify any particular list of "universal" capabilities, focusing instead on the particular capabilities of individuals and communities. Yet, precisely for this reason, it has been criticized as incomplete (Doyal and Gough, 1991; Nussbaum, 2000). Gough and colleagues, studying well-being in developing countries, have shown a commitment to moving beyond the theory in two related areas: analysis of empirical examples of culture-specific understandings of well-being (Gough, McGregor, and Camfield, 2007) and the exploration of the institutional mechanisms that can bring about well-being as part of a broader commitment to social justice.

This has important implications for our understanding of well-being. As Taylor (2011) has argued, implicit in recent political discourses on well-being are normative assumptions about (mainly) subjective well-being that apply to autonomous individuals. Here neoliberal discourse is being used to justify the further retreat of the state from welfare provision by holding individuals responsible for their own well-being. The question, then, is the relationship between well-being defined in individual terms and well-being defined in social and collective terms. Gigler (2005: 1) argues that the capabilities approach is not useful for considering the well-being of indigenous peoples because while it "provides an effective framework to analyze the individual well-being

of people, it has important limitations in evaluating the collective well-being of groups, such as indigenous communities."

In addition to a collective understanding of well-being, there are understandings of it that address the wellness of the planet. Dasgupta (2001) has explored the relationship between the natural environment and well-being, but this does not move us beyond the individualist/economic paradigm critiqued above because he places a value on the environment as a way of measuring quality of life. From a health perspective, Corvalan, Hales, and McMichael (2005) have explored the implications for health and well-being of environmental degradation. The emphasis is on counteracting the negative effects of pollution, environmental degradation, and resource depletion but not necessarily on living in balance with nature. Since it pits the human against the environmental, this concept is not particularly helpful for understanding well-being in collective and sustainability terms.

ALTERNATIVES AT THE MARGINS: OTHER WORLDS, OTHER ACTORS, OTHER FORMS OF KNOWLEDGE

The transformation that has allowed the emergence of a possible alternative to our understandings of well-being in Bolivia is intimately tied to the resistance to the high human costs of the "neoliberal revolution" that took place in the country in the mid-1980s (Kohl and Farthing, 2006). This resistance challenged a laissez-faire economics that promoted the market over democratic regulation and accountability in the delivery of services. In addition to the human suffering, popular discontent, and grassroots mobilization in favor of the current process of change (Arze and Kruse, 2004), neoliberal economics came to be widely understood among Bolivians as the pillage of the country's natural resources, from minerals to gas, forests, and even water, by a small global capitalist class (Orozco, García, and Stefanoni, 2006). The ideological response of the social movements spearheading the political resistance to the neoliberal project took the form of "resource nationalism" (Kohl and Farthing, 2012).

Besides the crisis brought about by the imposition of neoliberal economic policies, the return to democracy in the 1980s brought with it a system of representative democracy that soon degenerated into what Bolivians call a "partidocracy," in which political institutions mired in corruption failed to represent the views and demands of the electorate (Exeni, 2007; Whitehead, 2001). At this point, civil society stepped in to fill the void left by a delegitimized formal political system. Bolivia's majority indigenous population came into its own and became the spearhead of change, the historic agent for a refounding of the country (Wilson and Stewart, 2008). The adoption of the concept of suma qamaña was at the heart of this national revival.

SUMA QAMAÑA: A POLICY ROAD MAP

Three key documents reflect the crucial importance of suma qamaña in the Bolivian change process. The first, formally promulgated in September 2007, is

the National Development Plan, the operating plan for a radical transformation of society that takes Bolivia beyond the colonial and neoliberal models of development and into a post-neoliberal stage (MPD, 2007). This document is organized in terms of four broad descriptions of a Bolivia under suma qamaña—dignified, sovereign, productive, and democratic. It constitutes the yardstick against which progress in achieving the ideals of suma qamaña can be measured (Cunha Filho and Gonçalves, 2010).

The chapter entitled "Bolivia digna" relates to social policies, rights, the recognition of excluded sectors of society, and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in the social and cultural life of the country. It refers to the nation's plans in health, education, access to basic services such as water and electricity, and social safety nets to minimize poverty. "Bolivia soberana" advocates establishing a new set of relations with countries in the international community that defends new national values of independence (e.g., in expelling U.S. Ambassador Goldberg in 2008), solidarity (e.g., in entering into a strategic alliance as part of the ALBA), and national culture (e.g., in defending the traditional usage of coca internationally). The chapter "Bolivia productiva" discusses strategic sectors for the economy such as hydrocarbons, mining, electricity production, and forestry resources, as well as the industrialization of natural resources through which the Bolivian government aims to increase economic growth. In addition, it outlines traditional areas of the economy such as agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing and describes the government's plans for the creation of a national development bank. Finally, the chapter "Bolivia democrática" outlines plans for the refounding of Bolivia as a plurinational state, bringing into the fold historically excluded sectors of society. It signals the move toward new, participatory forms of democracy to replace the discredited party political system of the neoliberal era and emphasizes the role of organized civil society in a new, decentralized state (MPD, 2007).[1]

The second document that contributes to the framework for translating suma qamaña into a set of principles, values, and policies is the constitution approved by referendum in January 2009. Article 8.1 states: "The state assumes and promotes as ethical and moral principles of the new diverse society the following: *amaqhilla, amallulla, amasuwa* (don't be lazy, don't lie, don't be a thief), *suma qamaña* (living well), *ñandereko* (harmonious life), *tekokavi* (good life), *ivimaraei* (land without evil), and *qhapajñan* (noble life or path)" (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008: 6, our translation). Thus the new constitution recognizes many of the concepts found among the various indigenous groups in the country. However, reflecting the dominance of Aymara intellectuals, suma qamaña or its Spanish translation is normally taken as representing these many concepts.[2]

The influence of a small group of Aymara intellectuals on the construction of a collective understanding of well-being has been fundamental. The exploration of well-being from an indigenous point of view is inextricably connected with the development, beginning in the 1970s, of an indigenous movement, especially among the Aymara-speakers of the Department of La Paz. This movement played a key role in the formation of a number of political parties and nongovernmental organizations and of the peasant confederation. Intellectuals of Aymara origin such as Fausto Reynaga, Genaro Flores, Felipe

Quispe Huanca, and Simon Yampara have written extensively on suma qamaña, whereas not much has been produced, for example, on the Quechua equivalent, *sumac kawsay* (Spedding, 2010: 4).

In Article 8 of the new constitution suma qamaña is identified as "one of the most important ethical-moral principles of a plural society," alongside of solidarity, equity, harmony, and redistributive justice (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008: 6). The concept is also found in Article 80, which emphasizes a form of education that strengthens the understanding and the practice of the protection of the environment, biodiversity, and territory to achieve this ideal: "Education will be oriented to the individual and collective formation; to the development of the physical and intellectual aptitudes that link theory with productive practice; to the conservation and protection of the environment, biodiversity, and territory in order to live well" (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008: 18). The economics chapter returns to the principle of suma qamaña, especially in Articles 307 and 314 (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008: 55):

> The Bolivian economic model is plural and is oriented to improving the quality of life and the well-being [suma qamaña] of all Bolivians. . . . The plural economy brings together different forms of economic organization under the principles of complementarity, reciprocity, solidarity, redistribution, equality, sustainability, harmony, justice, and transparency. Social and community economic models will complement the individual interest with collective well-being (suma qamaña).

Articles 307.1 and 307.3 refer to a plurality of economic models designed to deliver suma qamaña by means of increasing the quality of life of all Bolivians (García Linera, 2008). The new economic model recognizes four main forms of production: state, private, social-cooperative, and community (MEFP, 2011). At the same time, it argues that all economic models have to be built on principles of solidarity, redistribution, sustainability, and social justice in ways that complement individual and collective interests.

There is an obvious difficulty in translating these principles into objective and measurable goals, but the constitution includes an idea of what those goals might be in Article 314: the elimination of poverty and social exclusion, wealth redistribution, the reduction of inequalities, and the contribution of the public and community sectors of the economy to the productive capacity of the Bolivian economy (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008). Although suma qamaña does not appear in the section on the territorial organization of the state, Xavier Albó (2009) has argued that it is implicit in the creation of territories in which indigenous groups are guaranteed the right to exercise self-government under institutions that reflect their own forms of political, economic, social, and judicial organization. In addition to regional and municipal-level forms of decentralization, the new constitution recognizes these forms of decision making and makes traditional indigenous autonomous areas a reality. (These institutions of self-government are works in progress; only 11 municipalities are currently undergoing the transition [Cameron, 2012].)

A third document that reflects the concept of suma qamaña is the Law of Mother Earth and Holistic Development to Live Well, promulgated at the end of 2012. The law declares suma qamaña the compass for the creation of a

societal and cultural alternative to capitalism that is borrowed from the country's indigenous nations but aims to contribute to every Bolivian's well-being and promote dialogue between different forms of knowledge.[3] The law contains a number of chapters that cover, among other things, the values of suma qamaña already discussed, the approach to suma qamaña through holistic development in harmony with Mother Earth, and the political and institutional mechanisms for achieving this development. The law includes, for example, achieving social justice through redistribution and holistic development; the promotion of food sovereignty through food production and distribution systems that avoid market relations and the use of genetic-modification technologies; the democratic management of water systems free of pollutants; the promotion of biodiversity; the collective ownership and management of land and territory according to traditional customs in areas and communities of the country where this is relevant; and a response to climate change (Asamblea Legislativa Plurinacional, 2012).

This conception of well-being is actively critical of capitalist development and exploitation of natural resources and considers living within nature's means fundamental (Medina, 2006). It is not specific about the nature of harmonious relations with Mother Earth and presumably accepts that technological progress may provide the means for increased material comfort within nature's limits (Corvalan, Hales, and McMichael, 2005). Equally important are participation and consensus in decision making and reciprocity in social relations.[4] It is in the interpretation of these fundamental principles and their translation into specific policies that the greatest difficulties in making sense of suma qamaña have arisen. The new constitution and its attendant policy statements represent what has been called a new social pact between humans and nature (Farah and Vasapollo, 2011). Although the importance of this step from a theoretical point of view cannot be overemphasized, the idea of living well together is extremely difficult to put into practice, not least in a country where regional rivalries and group interests divide society and the many different indigenous groups.

UNCHARTED TERRITORY: SUMA QAMAÑA AND A NEW PARADIGM BEYOND CAPITALISM

The important political changes outlined above are reflected in the presence of indigenous mass social movements in important positions in the government and in the designation of Bolivia as a plurinational, communitarian, and plurilingual state (Assies, 2011). Bolivia has set out on a path toward radical social transformation. The political process of change has suffered sharp reverses, such as when the constitutional assembly appeared to be on the verge of collapse in 2007 and after the massacre of Porvenir in September 2008. Yet the presidential elections of 2009 delivered a working majority to the MAS in both houses of the new plurinational assembly and a seemingly unassailable discursive hegemony. What is no longer in question is that the process of change on which the country embarked with the first presidential victory of Evo Morales is here to stay. Only the details of this process are open to debate.

A constitutional and legislative framework of this nature is in itself a great political achievement. The new constitution is especially important not only for its contents but also for the participatory process that produced it in spite of every attempt by a militant opposition to derail the process and return Bolivia to the status quo (Gamboa, 2009). The principles of "Bolivia democrática" were followed in the production of this constitution in spite of the procedural limitations that saw the executive redraft the constitutional text once the constitutional assembly had finished its job. In addition, its contents include recognition of the principle of plurinationality within a single state. In this way, the constitution reverses the centuries of social exclusion that made the majority indigenous population invisible. It declares equality of rights and obligations in the context of national diversity. Recognition of diversity is expressed in the creation of new institutions, powers, and administrative forms. Besides the executive, legislative, and judiciary branches, the constitution establishes in Articles 242 and 243 a fourth power that resides in the people and asserts that "organized civil society will exercise the social control of public administration at all levels of the state and of all companies and institutions that administer public resources" (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008: 29).[5] In addition, new levels of administration are created in a newly decentralized state that grants substantial autonomy to regional, municipal, and, for the first time, indigenous communities. This mixture of participatory and communitarian forms of democracy, the increased role of civil society, and the recognition of collective rights for indigenous peoples are the most important elements of a new form of democratic decision making that can contribute to making suma qamaña a reality.

Although the road ahead is long, it is possible to identify some milestones. The biggest success is without a doubt the progress in delivering a "Bolivia digna" by tackling the profound socioeconomic inequalities that exist between rural areas and cities and between indigenous peoples and other sectors of Bolivian society.[6] Whereas 64 percent of the rural population in 2007 lived in extreme poverty with less than US$1 per day (Fundación Jubileo, 2008), a notable reduction in poverty took place between 2000 (66.4 percent) and 2010 (49.6 percent), and extreme poverty was reduced from 45.2 to 25.4 percent in the same period (UDAPE, 2010). Although poverty levels continue to be much higher in the rural areas than in cities, a downward trend is apparent. The main contributor to poverty reduction has been the introduction of social cash transfers. The Bono Juancito Pinto is a cash transfer of US$45 given to primary school children provided that they attend school (Ministerio de la Presidencia, 2014). The Bono Juana Azurduy is a cash transfer to expectant mothers on the condition that they attend check-ups and give birth in a hospital, and it is expected to slash what are Latin America's second-highest maternal and infant mortality rates (Rothe, 2009). The most international attention has been attracted by the *renta dignidad*, a universal annual pension of up to US$340 to citizens over the age of 60. It constitutes a commitment of around US$190 million per year and is paid for with resources generated by new taxes levied on gas and oil companies (Ministerio de Hacienda, 2007). This cash transfer has been warmly received in a country where only about 15 percent of the economically active population have access to a private pension (Carlos Arze Vargas, interview, La Paz, August 4, 2010). Because it is paid for by taxes on natural resource

extraction, it has become key to the ideological repertoire of the MAS (Marcelo Ticona, interview, La Paz, July 28, 2010). Article 67 of the constitution includes the guarantee of a universal pension for the elderly that delivers suma qamaña in relation not to the ability to achieve high levels of consumption but to dignity and basic human security (Asamblea Constituyente, 2008: 16). In all these areas, the principle of suma qamaña through wealth redistribution and the pursuit of social justice is being implemented in a highly popular way.

The transformation of indigenous identity into a cause for celebration rather than shame is palpable, but real challenges remain. How can suma qamaña work for all in a society in which deep cleavages—political, cultural, and economic—dominate? There are even differences in the way living well together is conceptualized within the same ethnic group depending on religious affiliation (Calestani, 2009) and place of residence (Calestani, 2012a; 2012b). The challenge is to incorporate these multiple meanings into a national project that is inclusive of all forms of citizenship. For example, although 36 "nations" have been formally recognized in the constitution, this recognition is based on "diverse efforts to 'bridge' collective and individual rights for multicultural citizenship" (Albro, 2010: 74). The question is what indigenous peoples living in marginal urban environments such as Quillacollo or El Alto are meant to make of this when the constitution seems to privilege an Aymara collective indigenous subject with a rural territorial base, something that no longer reflects the lived experience of urban indigenous groups.

Part of the problem is that the idyllic communitarian forms of rural life in which the principle of suma qamaña operates are idealized constructions that do not exist in reality. The rapid social transformation that has converted 60 percent of Bolivia's population into urban dwellers has had serious implications for social and political organization, including at the level of individual social exchanges. As a result, for example, although the collective is a shared value in El Alto (Lazar, 2008), *ayni*, a traditional form of mutual help, survives in some urban and semirural areas as a ritual of gift exchange during religious celebrations only between members of the extended family. Individualized and market-driven forms of exchange have permeated it, leading to the expectation that "favors" have to be returned with interest. As a consequence, some people make strict calculations between time and resource investment and expected returns (Calestani, 2009). Thus a fundamental element of achieving harmonious social relations is disrupted and the cultural decolonization on which suma qamaña relies becomes difficult to achieve. And yet visions of life in the ayllu continue to play an important role in the way indigenous communities take part in the political process. According to Fabricant (2010: 90), many indigenous people "have never lived in an ayllu and do not understand what it represented historically, culturally, or socially. . . . Now it has become a mobile framework used by indigenous peoples, urban informal workers, and intellectuals to reclaim natural resources and promote redistributive legislation."

There is little evidence that the Bolivian government even considers these issues problematic. The problem of implementation becomes more acute in relation to the new education system that is highlighted in both the constitution and the Law of Mother Earth as a crucial medium for decolonization, rescuing indigenous knowledge and bringing the concept of suma qamaña to the

classroom (Asamblea Legislativa Plurinacional, 2010). Teachers complain about new teaching materials and curriculum, and observers lament the difficulty of creating the pedagogical materials and practices to teach these concepts and the lack of local professional expertise to meet the challenge. For Mayorga (2012: 58),[7] "the issue of living well is typical. The concept exists in very abstract terms, but when it comes to making it real in schools, it is difficult. . . . There are limitations in terms of human resources, but also, we don't have appropriate educational materials to teach a curriculum that includes the meaning of living well."

With regard to the sovereignty called for by the constitution ("Bolivia soberana"), there has been considerable progress in at least three respects. First, since 2006 Bolivia has shown independence of thought and action in the international community, especially in relation to foreign policy and in opposition to the United States—a shift that has been termed the "Bolivianization" of Bolivia–United States relations (Sivak, 2011). Second, Bolivia's policy has been to denounce coca eradication programs of the past in favor of a concerted effort to rehabilitate the image of coca, which is listed as a drug by the UN's 1961 Convention on Narcotic Drugs. Bolivian and U.S. positions have clashed on this issue, leading Bolivia to withdraw from the convention. This is problematic for relations between Bolivia and the United States but will also damage relations with the rest of Latin America given UNASUR's support for Bolivia's position (Jelsma, 2011).

Finally, perhaps most important, Bolivia has been keen to emphasize that the country's international relations embody the ideas of solidarity and reciprocity associated with suma qamaña. While Bolivia's response to the neoliberal order was spearheaded by its indigenous movements, the whole region has also been reshaped by contestation, leading to the formation of regional alliances that represent alternatives to neoliberal forms of economic integration such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The ALBA is a regional alternative to market-driven relations among nations and, at least at the level of principle and rhetoric, emphasizes participative democracy and sustainability, promoting regional integration built on the principle of collaborative advantage as opposed to the hegemonic competitive advantage (Brennan and Olivet, 2007; De la Barra and Dello Buono, 2009). In addition, the ALBA has played an important role in delivering social policy interventions such as a widely successful literacy campaign and health provision (Artaraz, 2011).

With regard to policies designed to deliver economic growth ("Bolivia productiva"), Bolivia has made very rapid progress in the past seven years. This is due to a number of factors, including the high prices of commodities in international markets. The national economic model based on the nationalization of natural resources, coupled with state-led investment in strategic sectors of the economy using the increased resources generated by nationalization, has delivered high levels of economic growth and stability (García Linera, 2008). For a country used to a perennial fiscal deficit, low levels of growth, high levels of debt, and runaway inflation, the macroeconomic results of this strategic economic direction since 2006 have been excellent. Bolivia's economy has grown between 4 and 6 percent per year in spite of the global financial crisis (IMF, 2011). And yet this is where the main critiques of the Bolivian pursuit of the good life emerge.

The Bolivian government is in the first stage of the shift to a new economic model that recognizes and supports a range of economic actors and forms of production. The most attention so far has been given to the preeminent role of the state in the economy and the nationalization of natural resources. However, institutional moves to safeguard other types of economic actors (such as the community) have been made by, for example, creating a rural development bank to make loans to community projects and small and medium-sized enterprises and recognizing collective land ownership following traditional practice in indigenous communities (Valdivia, 2010). This delivers hitherto denied cultural and legal recognition to indigenous livelihoods. In addition, it represents a direct challenge to capitalist forms of agricultural production and, in that it is associated with traditional food production and management systems, embodies the principles of food security emphasized by the Law of Mother Nature.

On the one hand, Bolivia has achieved this economic growth by means of increased state involvement in the management of natural resource exploitation but following mainstream economic thinking. Commentators have referred to the so-called nationalization of gas and oil as "neoliberal nationalization" (Kaup, 2010) and "reconstituted neoliberalism" (Webber, 2011). Besides reformism and fiscal austerity, Bolivia's economic model is argued to be based on a close partnership with transnational corporations, belying its anti-neoliberal rhetoric. On the other hand, the most fundamental contradiction between the new guiding principles and the direction of the economy is the commitment to respect for Mother Earth. Bolivia's leading international role in denouncing climate change is undermined when its economic model is based on the extraction and export of natural resources. Nowhere was this contradiction more evident than during the 2010 World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, celebrated in Cochabamba to highlight Bolivia's unique international position and to critique the failed summit in Copenhagen a few months before (Aguirre and Cooper, 2010; Artaraz, 2012). The conference was marred by the spectacle of officials unwilling to allow the debate of some of the climate-change offenses being committed by Bolivia in the name of development (Artaraz, 2012). This is perhaps, as Aguirre and Cooper (2010) argue, the price to be paid for having a government of social movements. The multiple development paradoxes have also been explored by Hindery (2013).

The contradiction between rhetoric and practice is leading some of the strongest supporters of change, such as the highland indigenous social movement Conamaq, to accuse the Morales government of employing empty rhetoric (Achtenberg, 2013). Examples abound of communities with compromised water access due to local mining concessions and the pollution they generate (see Moran, 2008).[8] Access to water was the most important demand during the Cochabamba water war of 2000 that was a prelude to the radical change represented by the MAS. In addition, the United Nations recently declared water and sanitation to be basic human rights in a resolution spearheaded by Bolivia (Goodman, 2010).

Bolivia is proud of the newfound voice and power of indigenous peoples, and it sees them as guardians of knowledge and traditions that can protect nature. In 2009 Morales himself handed over the collective title to an area of over 1 million hectares of the Isiboro-Sécure National Park and Indigenous

Territory, which is home to over 1,500 families of the Yuracaré, Chiman, and Mojeño nations. Now the government plans to build a road through the territory to create an international corridor for the transport of goods between Brazil and the Pacific Ocean (Stefanoni, 2012). Increased trade and economic activity are certainly part of the suma qamaña building project, especially when economic benefits are redistributed in the form of social policies. The problem arises when the state appears to be steamrolling its plans for "development" against the wishes and traditions of indigenous communities and violating their constitutional right to free and informed consent (also established by the International Labor Organization's Convention 169 [ILO, 1989]) by building a road that environmentalists claim could facilitate rapid deforestation through the middle of primary rainforest (Albó, 2011b).

These recent political conflicts demonstrate the difficulty of applying the concept of living well together as described in the new constitution because of the variety of meanings attached to it by different political actors. What for the government is an opportunity to increase trade and economic growth and lift indigenous communities out of poverty constitutes, for those affected, a reinforcement of exploitative capitalist relations with nature. For some indigenous groups, the proposed road will lead to illegal logging and deforestation, the destruction of biodiversity, and the expansion of illegal coca growing in the nature reserve. To add to the conflict in principles, values, and interpretations of living well together, indigenous groups representing the interests of coca growers have argued in favor of the government's proposal. In sum, the principle of suma qamaña is subscribed to by all, but in practice different indigenous groups have conflicting constructions of it.

CONCLUSION

Bolivia's current process of change brings to the forefront indigenous cultural practices and forms of knowledge, including an understanding of what constitutes living well together, that can contribute to global debates about the pursuit of the good life. Key to suma qamaña is the move away from an individualized toward a collective understanding of well-being. The concept has strong ethical implications in that this well-being cannot be achieved at the expense of others. This dominant principle of equality is relevant to social relations but also to the relation of humans with all living beings. This includes an understanding of humans in communion with nature (Huanacuni, 2010). At a time of decided global inaction on climate change, suma qamaña is reminiscent of the notion of Gaia (Lovelock, 1983).

Bolivians are attracted to suma qamaña at a theoretical level because it represents an obvious critique of the neoliberalism that was hegemonic for decades. This model resulted in limited democracy, inequality, and economic well-being limited to the few. The current government has made much of the new fundamental values that drive the process of change and bet its political future on its ability to convert them into real-world policies challenging the neoliberal state. Suma qamaña calls for sustainable development and decolonization, and the Law of Mother Nature describes it as allowing Bolivia to move beyond

capitalism. However, this is not an easy task. Right now, what Bolivian intellectuals are presenting as a challenge to capitalism (Farah and Vasapollo, 2011) is in practice far from this; the resource-dependent economy is more than "resource nationalist imaginaries" (Kohl and Farthing, 2012) can alter. It is indeed the curse of path-dependent economic models (Kaup, 2010) that prevents Bolivia from shaking off long-established practices even as it attempts to frame natural resource governance in nationalist or socialist terms.

Bolivia participates in the anticapitalist challenge of the ALBA, which advocates for social justice and human development by emphasizing collaborative relations and solidarity between the peoples of Latin America (Artaraz, 2011). From this point of view, it could be argued that suma qamaña has found expression in state policies for delivering the riches of natural resource exploitation and international collaboration to the people in the form of universal pensions and other conditional cash transfers that have increased economic security, improved access to health and education, and reduced inequality. However, tensions between growth-driven models of development—even when this growth is used to fund redistributive policies and welfare services—and sustainable natural resource exploitation remain.

The introduction of the concept of suma qamaña to the National Development Plan, the new constitution, and the Law of Mother Nature addresses a need to move from individualized understandings of well-being toward collective ones. Whereas these are currently limited to rural indigenous communities that practice traditional precapitalist forms of production, they provide useful lessons to nascent communities elsewhere. Two main issues arise in this context. The first is that the Bolivian state has not overcome the conflict between unsustainable growth-driven approaches and sustainability without growth that is inherent in all its legislation, including the Law of Mother Nature (Prada, 2012). The second is that indigenous identities and understandings of suma qamaña are constantly being renegotiated and transformed, requiring the government to engage with the complexity of the issues that emerge in thinking about well-being in order to build a more context-bound understanding of suma qamaña based on real-life case studies that are rooted in people's practices, beliefs, and culture rather than in theoretical constructions. The result is a complex picture that includes, on the one hand, working examples of postcapitalist relations that respond to the principles of suma qamaña and, on the other hand, economic relations that are part of an earlier era. Bolivia is a social experiment, a site of multiple futures with all the internal contradictions characteristic of a process of fundamental social and economic change.

NOTES

1. We could characterize the Bolivian transition as one from "revolution in democracy" (these are the words used by the MAS) to "revolutionary democracy" by virtue of the political participation that led to the change. The literature has referred to the participation of civil society in formal politics as "deep democracy" (see, e.g., Gaventa, 2006). The idea here is that, beyond taking part in regular elections, citizens need opportunities for their voices to be heard and taken into account.

2. This article is no exception, using the term as the generic amalgamation of indigenous understandings of well-being.

3. The law specifically refers to the potential of the Avelino Siñani–Elizardo Pérez education law as the site where this dialogue of cultures and mutual understanding can take place (Article 33). However, the education law has been criticized for its inability to foster this dialogue (Mayorga, 2012).

4. Gaventa (2006) also discusses collaborative, consensus-building processes. These could be seen in the constitutional assembly but are also part and parcel of indigenous social movements at the grassroots level in Bolivia (see Albó, 2008).

5. Observers have argued that the social control that the constitution confers on social movements is subordinated to agendas and institutional processes that seek to undermine their independence of action (Harten, 2011; Zuazo, 2010). There is also criticism of the MAS government's co-optation of leaders into key government positions, breaking the organic link between them and the communities they represent (Do Alto, 2011).

6. This aspect of suma qamaña has also been pursued through major changes in education and health care. Although not much attention has been given to regional approaches to social policy (Deacon et al., 2010), some have noted rapid progress in these areas thanks to the ALBA (Artaraz, 2011). Others have argued that the challenges of delivering a universal primary-care health model that incorporates indigenous understandings of health remain.

7. One aspect of education that the MAS government has prioritized is the creation of indigenous universities. Three have been created, teaching in Aymara, Quechua, and Guarani, respectively, and they are producing graduates with a range of technical qualifications. They represent a direct attempt at the decolonization of culture and education and the promotion of indigenous values (such as suma qamaña) that give indigenous forms of knowledge the same level of recognition as "Western" knowledge.

8. Other social and environmental costs have been denounced by those opposing the construction of the mega-hydroelectric project Cachuela Esperanza, whose main objective would be to sell electricity to Brazil (see also Albó, 2011b).

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