

Civilization in crisis and Living Well: "Vivir Bien"

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Education in the Context of Multiple Crises

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Nowadays nobody doubts that we are going through much more than a financial crisis. We are going through a financial crisis as well as an epistemological, social, political, climate and food crisis...all in all, a crisis of life, a crisis of the structural, civilizatory, Western and of course modern model.

Rafael Correa, President of Ecuador, affirms we are not living in times of change, but we are living a change of times. Without knowing if we are thinking along the same paradigm, it is true that the depth of this structural crisis we are living in makes us look towards new (although old-time) paradigms of life.

And there, the idea transmitted by the indigenous peoples of Abya Yala emerges powerfully: the idea of the culture of life, of nurturing life, the communitarian vision... this new paradigm we call Living Well.

Living Well has not been born just now, it is a product of the millenary cosmivision of the indigenous peoples of the continent; in fact, not even as a concept is it new, although in these times it becomes more powerful than ever.

When NGOs started to wonder how to translate the term *development* into quechua, they realized there was no translation for it, and the same happened in aymara, guarani ...none of those eastern indigenous languages had a word to express our concept of western development. This apparent contradiction reflects clearly the division between two civilization matrixes, between east and west. For that reason, terms which were closer to the Living Well concept started to be coined: Suma Qamaña in aymara, Sumaj Kausay in quechua, Ñande Reko (Harmonious life) in guarani, Teko Kavi (new life) Ivi Maraëi (earth without evil) or Qhapaj Ñan (path or noble life).

These concepts were taken by the new Political Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia (approved by referendum in January 2009) as fundamental bases to speak of Principles, Values and Aims of the State. Moreover, the concept of Living Well has been included in the Political Constitution of Ecuador, in October 2008.

Also, an important step has been taken with the consecration of the Rights of Nature, because Living Well means also to move away from the dichotomy between human being and nature; it is to awaken our conscience to the fact that we are part of Pachamama, of Mother Earth and that she completes us.

Very interesting are - and we have to keep developing them in depth – the hybrid forms that are emerging from concepts from different origins, as in this case, between a western and modern concept such as *rights*, joined to an eastern and millenary concept such as Pachamama, Mother Earth.

Living Well gets us closer and teaches concepts such as complementarity, reciprocity, communitarianism (even if community cannot be understood as a group of individuals) that clash with our established concepts. The culture of life is communitarian; it cannot be anything else, facing an individualist, depredatory capitalism or even socialism, which though concerned about improving society's living conditions, only understands it as the group of persons who live therein without considering Mother Earth as a living thing whatsoever; a socialism that can be as industrial and depredatory as capitalism (although this is another debate, perhaps a communitarian socialism is today the best option for the West).

We have been taught and educated to live better, but not to Live Well. And in order to address this concept, we have to deconstruct ourselves by going through a complex process. The I (the first pronoun in the Western languages) should not take precedence over the WE (first pronoun in quechua or aymara, for instance); time should not be seen as linear, where individuals who come from the past, position themselves in the present and go to the future.

Instead, time should be seen as circular where the present is continuous and where the past and the future constitute only one thing, where the past is ahead and the future is about to come and is situated behind. However, in the American continent, after 517 years of colonialism, we cannot conceive of Living Well without linking it with a true decolonization process; likewise, we cannot conceive of this decolonization without shifting the education paradigm.

An individualist education based on a competitive system where individuals are measured and judged on the basis of the marks they get. Even in the most humanist education forms, we follow the western outline imposed by colonizers. We form good students with good ethics and morals who follow western, Christian patterns instead of persons who live in harmony with themselves, with their fellow beings and with Mother Earth.

Living well, Decolonization... broad concepts that deserve to be debated more in depth; we have to look at ourselves from within, utilize nature without damaging it, rationalize and redistribute consumption to avoid overexploiting the natural resources Mother Earth gives us, thus securing the future for all who will come after us, living in harmony among peoples, complementing each other, practicing forms of communitarian democracy.

Evo Morales Ayma, President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, told us the other day that in the past European intellectuals used to think and theorize and afterwards, in Latin America, those theories were put into practice.

Today, by contrast, here in Bolivia and in the entire Latin American continent, processes of change are taking place and intellectuals have to come here to try to theorize what is happening. It is totally true that nowadays our north is the South, the praxis of Peoples in the search for new paradigms to overcome the civilization crisis that led us to new forms of doing politics, of rethinking the State and the interrelations among individuals, and which raised awareness on the climate catastrophe we are bringing about.

There is still much interaction to do between theory and practice in order to reach a daily political praxis with the horizon of new paradigms where Living Well is an element for getting closer, for learning everything that indigenous peoples have to teach us.

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