

TERRITORY AND ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIES<sup>1</sup>

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### Territory, society and community

Two important approaches to territory should be highlighted: one that perceives territory as a complex-natural whole that includes the human population with their settlements as a particular species of life, and another one that incorporates the concepts of community and society as components of the territory, thus becoming an encompassing category, where natural and social processes are interpenetrated. It could be argued that all Earth ecosystems are a result of human society and that every society is determined by the conditions of its natural environment. On the other hand, given that the human does not exist outside of the natural, that without life as a whole there is no society, and that human action has demonstrated that it can end life on the planet, the reproduction of life is ultimately a determinant of the social. Human beings are thus regarded as beings having needs, subject (with their communities and societies) to the material conditions required to meet them (Dussel, 1998; Hinkelammert & Mora, 2009). This is what is postulated by the substantive Economy for Life or by the Social and Solidarity Economy which we will discuss later.

Our empirical starting point is the *glocalized* world-system, where the local worlds experience the effects of a political strategy of globalization that excludes and annihilates the lives of millions of human beings and that causes ecological disasters. The full reversal of this process is already impossible. The necessary affirmation of Life as a condition for any other action makes this, and not the profit motive, the ultimate value of the economy. This means giving priority to the victims of this globalization strategy, rejecting all arguments these disasters were/are inevitable and therefore the inevitability of such disasters produced as inevitable results of processes for which no one takes responsibility.

This latter position seems to be the one adopted in the proposals of the communitarian economists to achieve “Living-Well or Good-Living” (“*vivir bien o buen vivir*”) advocated by the indigenous peoples of Latin America. While the *community* can be seen as an inseparable dimension of the human species, intrinsic to its nature (there never were, there are not, there cannot be individuals outside communities), the concept

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of *society* necessarily incorporates other dimensions and complexities of human aggregates, even appearing as an alternative to the community (when people accomplish their individuation-separation from the community, they cannot live outside of the larger society). Society is the community; moreover, it is a political community. Today, in a time of transition, society and community must not be seen as mutually exclusive. Their articulation and co-dependence is vital to the reproduction of life.

We could propose that, while modern societies have separated - in reality and in conceptual analyses - the economic, political and cultural spheres, and all these from the ecological one, in indigenous communities they are practically and symbolically united. Accordingly, the territory, as a concept and as a reality, has been differentiated and fragmented as a result of capitalism and the modernity project. Because the persistence of community has resisted this tendency in some regions, totally or in part, the question of regionalization cannot have a unique universal meaning, neither as an interpretation of the current situation nor as a project. It would be better to find a synthesis between the different methods of analysis and the holistic visions of each, than the narrow-minded option between one approach and the other.

If society and community only exist when there is life, and life depends on meeting the needs of the human population, which in turn requires economic processes, the relationship among economy, region, and territory becomes a key question. In this paper we will attempt to conceptualize that relationship from the point of view of the necessary clarification of what we understand as economy. But we attempt a conceptualization useful *for action*. In other words, we assume that the question of regionalization in Bolivia does not merely mean the spatial reorganization of the same (more efficiently, more conducive to growth), but that it requires “profound and historic economic, political, and social transformations oriented towards *Sumak Kausay*” (“harmonious life” in Quetchua) as stated in the “National Plan for Development. Planning for Integrated Regional Development”. In particular we will examine the possible convergence between the proposals advanced by the *popular and solidarity economy* and the *communitarian economy*, as they have been proposed by the new Constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia respectively, and their repercussions on the regional planning proposals.

### **The concepts of economy**

The dominant paradigm as expressed in economic manuals and texts reiterates that the key problem to be solved by the economy is the optimal allocation of scarce resources to meet unlimited ends. It proposes a universal answer to the question of which is the best system to optimize the use of the scarce resources, a problem that is seen as affecting all human activities. That solution is the market, which, when considered as an exclusive rational institution, results in the “total market” or market society. And it pretends to logically justify the substitution of knowledge about the complexities of human behaviour with an ideal type of rationality represented by the individual: the *homo economicus*, egocentric, utilitarian, indifferent to others, and ruthlessly competitive individual. This behaviour is, in fact, a pre-condition, for an economy reduced to a market system with its limited concept of well being

In contrast to this hypothesis about human behaviour, we acknowledge that human behaviour is explained by non-universal combinations of self-interest, obligation, calculation, spontaneity, solidarity, and other motives that are not intrinsic but are culturally situated. We define **economy** as *a system of norms, values, institutions, and practices historically given in a community or society to organize the human-beings/nature symbiosis through production, distribution, circulation and consumption of goods suitable to meet the legitimate needs and desires of all, defining and mobilizing resources and capabilities in order to achieve their insertion in the global division of labour, all in order to increase the well-being of future generations (good living) as well as their territory*. In this definition, the economy is part of culture in the broad sense.

The **market economy** is the neoliberal answer (economistic) to the question of which is the proper economic system. The set of institutions and norms typical of this economy include:

- the free market and its rules for exchange: goods of equivalent value are exchanged, based on their prices, including the labour force, that is determined by aggregate supply and demand, without expectations for justice;
- the existence of a universal equivalent, money with its multiple functions, as a condition for unlimited accumulation;
- private property of commodities;
- the definition of land, water, labour force, and knowledge as fictitious commodities privately owned;
- material goods or services produced for sale in the market;
- economic actors are persons (individuals) or legal entities (businesses) with the same legal rights, guided to act rationally according to utilitarian norms (each seeks his individual maximum utility);<sup>2</sup>
- the legitimacy of their needs and desires is established at the individual level by the capacity to express them as individual demands met in the market and not in relation to the whole set of needs and capabilities or, in short, to the culture of the community or society.

Since its recent origin, the market system was imposed and built by the actions of national States and imperial centers, using violence to “liberate” people and resources and to facilitate their transfer between modes of production. A central process for the construction of the Western market economy was the colonization (“primitive” accumulation) in America and Africa and centrally administered trade. This process continued well after the wars of independence. Managing external debt, unequal exchange, and the Washington consensus, are recent evidence of this process.

However, since the beginning of the twentieth century Karl Polanyi warned of the danger, even for European societies, of a self-regulated market economy, as proposed by neoliberals. The “reintegration of the economy in society” (Polanyi, 2007), however, becomes primarily a political question, requiring progressive political action (the market

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<sup>2</sup> The weight of institutions guiding behaviours is evident when we see that public programs are materialistic in the narrow sense, and are based on incentives and penalties, anticipating that the voluntary response is based on the calculation of advantages and disadvantages... If there are dispositions to be opportunistic, the programs reinforce this. The same occurs when we anticipate the response from the actors to the proposal to ascribe to one or another region.

economy never functioned nor could function without the State). State socialism and the social state (Keynesian / developmentalist) were two answers to this question, which were overthrown because of their contradictions and the neo-conservative onslaught, unleashing a globalization strategy that has intensified ecological disasters and is increasing social exclusion to previously unknown levels. This strategy points to the commoditization not only of reproduction but of all human relations. Since its intrinsic driving force is not the reproduction of life but the accumulation of capital, it massively excludes the sectors that are not successful in their commercial competitiveness; it irrationally utilizes that which is defined as natural “resources”, generating at the same time a new social question and the question about the sustainability of life on the planet. While it reduces all that can be organized to private enterprise, it transfers the reproduction of workers to the private sphere, as an individual responsibility. Thus, a never ending process of original accumulation, using violence, the methods of hegemony, and the separation between production and reproduction brought about by the market is intensified, as the feminist economists have clearly demonstrated. Capitalism as a fetish system of “production of commodities by means of commodities”, does not account for the subjectivity of the quasi-commodity labour force and its particular process of production/reproduction.

The **social and solidarity economy** is a pragmatic response to the affirmation of the World Social Forum that another world and another economy are possible. It has emerged from the acknowledgement of the practices of self-managed mercantile work and the labour of reproduction of households and communities through the production of use values (in the limit- survival practices) and the admission that inclusion via employment in the capitalist sector is no longer a feasible option for the majority. It proposes that every economy is a social and political construction (there are no “natural” economies) and that the one we will adopt cannot be left at the mercy of prevailing asymmetrical forces (see Coraggio, 2007). Its description as “social” economy means that all economic events are social events, in which the multidimensionality of the human society is played out: the economic cannot exist outside of nature, without the material, but neither can it exist outside of the symbolic, cultural, and political; to assume the contrary is to favour, like neo-liberalism, automatisms that have shown to be destructive to life.<sup>3</sup> Economic acts, which include multiple institutions that cannot be reduced to an economic dimension, constitute society. As such, acting rationally excludes those actions that destroy life in society.

On this subject, Ecuador’s new Constitution stipulates that the whole of the economic system is (ought to be) social and based on solidarity. This is a definition that leaves ample space for interpretation and for democratic discourse about the good life (or projects for the good life that do not threaten the material foundation of life and are the basis for dialogue within a plural economy) and the role of solidarity in achieving it. Given the historical context in which this is proposed, we can understand that the

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<sup>3</sup> The claim that a self-coherent discipline can be established to explain the economic by the economic (closely defined as that relative to the market, its equilibrium, its claim for self-regulation, and the practices that constituted it) has produced that scientific mystification that calls itself economic science, with an underlying anthropology that reduces the motivations of the human being to the *homo economicus*. The new theories of the complex, for their part, are an important heuristic resource but do not constitute by themselves a substantive theory of the social.

economic system must be reconstructed so as to avoid the autonomization of utilitarian and competitive mechanisms, since it has been demonstrated that they inevitably produce a fragmented society leading to the success of a few and the ruin of the majority, as well as the destructive imbalance of the natural basis of the intergenerational reproduction of life. We can also deduce that values and practices of economic solidarity must be fostered: (a) care of the satisfaction of the needs of all members of the primary domestic groups to which one belongs (*oikos*), (b) extension of this care to other individuals or communities through collective forms of social, environmental, cooperative, reciprocal, and distributive co-responsibility, with altruism and because without this favorable environment. The reproduction of these primary groups is impossible.

In our opinion, the Ecuadorian Constitution acknowledges that the current economic system is mixed. In fact, it recognizes three sectors: the public economy, the private, and the popular and solidarity economy (that unequivocally includes cooperatives, associations and communities), and that in these, particularly in the popular economy, solidarity practices must expand to secure the well being of all. By recognizing and valuing the **popular and solidarity economy**, we are admitting both the historic relevance of the economic practices guided by the reproduction of life of individuals, groups, and communities, organized primarily at the level of the family, the household and the community as well as the central role played by the development of their associative forms that are self-managed and strengthened by the capacity of the workers from different cultures to cooperate, organize and autonomously manage economic activities essential for the functioning of any society. This is based on solidarity and concern for well being of others. It rejects the individualistic indifference that is fostered by possessive individualism as well as the tendency towards a destructive differentiation of the other, which is in the end, self-destructive.

But we are far from having a Solidarity Economy. The transformations that are required to get us closer to it imply the reversal of the neoliberal institutionalization of the economy that attempted to extend the principle of the free market to the whole of human life. After thirty years of the inculcation of the worst capitalist values, we must not be defensive in our proposals for institutional transformations. In the face of a hegemonic discourse, this may lead to the unintentional reproduction of the categories of the market economy. And this can happen particularly at the time when regionalization or territorialization of the country is being considered and there is the risk of either inadvertently succumbing to uncritical scientist formalism or rejecting it like a plague in the name of a concrete reality or of an imagined utopia. Instead we should be seeking an approach that would give a transformative meaning and efficacy to regionalization for *Sumak Kausay*.

With regard to the **communitarian economy**, in the Ecuadorian Constitution it is recognized as one of eight forms of organizations of production (communitarian, cooperatives, public or private enterprises, associative, family, domestic, and autonomous – and forms part of the popular and solidarity economy (along with the associative and cooperative economy, which ensures solidarity among members and domestic units of the collectivity they belong to). For the Bolivian Constitution, the communitarian economy is one of the four principal organizations of the **plural economy** (communitarian, state-owned, private, and social cooperatives), and it defines



it as “the systems of production and reproduction of social life, based on the principles and vision of nations and indigenous people and peasants”.

According to Felix Patzi (2004: 172-3), the communitarian economy cannot be seen as an economic sphere separated from the political and cultural spheres but as part of the communal system. Furthermore, such a communal system is not proposed as a particular cultural form that can exist within the mixed economy, but rather as a practice that can be applied to the economy as a whole for all societies, in opposition to the liberal approach. In contrast to private property and alienating work, it raises the possibility of the collective ownership of resources and private usufruct, with the appropriation of goods produced by the work of the family/individual. The collective decides who can access the conditions for life and can also select representatives with delegated authority who, on a rotational basis, must fulfill the mandate they receive from the community. This system produces public goods, which are not enjoyed as rights for merely existing but in compensation for reciprocal participation in the collective and in the fulfillment of the functions assigned by the collective. This culture of this economy, in some ways, goes beyond the objectives of the popular and solidarity economy, in particular its holistic vision, which includes the inseparability between society and nature as well as the centrality of work.<sup>4</sup> Within our conceptual framework, the communitarian forms of economic organization are part of the popular solidarity economy, which is plural as it includes various forms, and articulates the various principles mentioned with the predominance of domestic reproduction, reciprocity, and (progressive) redistribution. Within this perspective, trade (the fourth principle) is not an end in itself, but an expansion of domestic production based on the association of members.

The challenge of the popular and solidarity economy is to contribute to the plurality of the economy with its own plurality, integrating both the communitarian economy as well as the modern associations of free individuals (associations, cooperatives) and hybridizing cultural values within a framework for the reproduction of life for all, thus overcoming particularisms without suppressing diversity.

### **Territory and regionalization: starting from scientific analysis...?**

According to the first approach mentioned earlier, a **territory** is constituted by a segment (arbitrary) of the earth's crust and its natural elements, its forms of life and in particular its human population and its externalities (permanent constructions). In spite of its apparent naturalism and its alleged independence of all types of society or specific community, that would “establish” themselves in the base-territory, this definition is, as all are, inevitably anthropocentric.<sup>5</sup> Its significance is constructed by human communities or societies that experience it as *their* environment, although they assign

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<sup>4</sup> “(...) work is considered good, positive and integrating (not as punitive as in a capitalist society), and part of the worldview of life itself of the members of the community in a given territory. It is the energy of human beings – a community that makes possible the transformation of nature and its relationship with it, to create life in the world, as biological, human and spiritual life. In the communitarian production and distribution, priority is given to use value by the diverse principles and institutions that organize the system of reciprocity, redistribution, and complementarity (...)” (Solano & Mutuberria Lazarini, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Is it really possible for the human condition that subjects decenter themselves adopting a biocentrist vision? We do not believe so.

its significance and value the respect for nature and its own logic (e.g. life cycles, ecosystems).

According to the second approach, an established population with its own forms of sociability, its “living space”, its historic environment – natural and constructed –, and the development of human life (always in community or society) are all included in that unit that we call territory. This is a plausible criterion, which reduces the arbitrariness of the first definition, and suggests a definition based on social relations, and human cultures. “Territories” would be then socio-historic regions resulting from the development of the symbiosis and the spiritual world of communities or societies. These regions-territories can be adjacent (a national territory integrates different territories but at the same level) or overlapping and hierarchically dependent on the type and level of social organization in question (nation, province, municipality, or a market system hierarchically organized from the local to the global, or diverse etiologic zones within the same ecosystem, or cultures and subcultures with a territorial base). They can also be continuous or fragmented (economic organization at different ecological levels, populations that experience migration processes without losing community ties) and do not correspond to natural territories or ecosystems. Although one can logically think that a region-territory according to the first definition can exist (an ecosystem) without human society living in it somewhere on the planet, human societies cannot be thought of as concrete without their natural base.

Analysis according to the scientific method, which separates aspects or variables from real processes, can discover or invent other spatial organizations (latent or observable) in the system of socio-territorial institutions, as there are variables in social and natural processes that would have some discernible spatiality derived from their content (see Coraggio, 1979). Regions are spatial forms produced by a society, which are the result of the processes of which they are a part. Many processes – economic, political, social, and cultural – generate material and symbolic configurations (e.g. frequency of interpersonal communications) that are organized as regions or other recognizable spatial forms, but not all processes have a spatiality thus discernible.

Territory, as we noted, is processual in form and content. The socio-natural processes are projected/embodied in (and are inseparable from) their territorial spheres through a combination of correlated principles and variables that we can consider when searching for a new order.<sup>6</sup> In all cases, like cultural forms, all real regions have a social history, and in the majority of cases are a construction (conscious or unconscious) that takes place in interaction with nature and in historical time. They are a product of collective human behaviour guided by principles that are embodied in institutions, on occasion

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<sup>6</sup> The aim of the definition of regions to be constructed or consolidated could be a regulated order that would make collective action socially efficient. Or it can be (may be contradictory) to favor people's emancipation. The criteria and hierarchy of the principles cannot be the same in one case or the other. Since here we are going to agree on terms, about what to do about regional planning, and it has been affirmed that in Bolivia the democratic State will be a protagonist, there is no need to speculate about another important perspective, about knowledge as emancipation and the distribution of power. But this debate should not be avoided when one considers the classic differentiation between reform and revolution irrelevant and the values of emancipation carry great weight within the solidarity economy perspective. It implies, of course, a debate previous to the questions discussed in this text (see de Souza Santos, 2005: 37; Zibechi, 2006).

interwoven with other institutionalizations (such as politico-administrative divisions, national markets, or planning regions).

Politically, the **State** has a hierarchical principle embedded in its territorial organization. Its authority, its jurisdiction over administrative control, its police force, and its responsibility are territorially organized, in political-administrative regions that are networked according to their levels with institutionalized populations and/or individuals as political communities (*constituencies*) in an organic system.<sup>7</sup> This regionalization is not merely political (distribution of territory among authorities, distribution of duties among levels) but the result of ecological, political, social, economic, and cultural processes which are inert and resistant to change.

**Capital**, in turn, has a physically ubiquitous organizational principle, although clearly centralizing with regards to economic power. Its relation to territory is measured by the flow of profit, information, and products. Capital fetishizes territory, as a *use value-means of production* or as a *use value-deposit* from which it extracts the means of production or work, or in which it invests its surplus, or in which its demand niches are located. Its intrinsic tendency is to overcome all territorial barriers, to homogenize territories, making consumption and cultural patterns uniform and simplifying the biodiversity of the ecosystems, thus becoming even more ubiquitous. This flow dynamic exceeds the politico-administrative limits of the State, transforms ecosystems and societies and generates other regionalizations, less and less permanent due to the rapid technological and organizational transformation of capital at the global scale.<sup>8</sup>

The **popular sectors** have their own territoriality, strongly marked by the search for conditions that permit the reproduction of life in society, which is, however, subordinated to the reproduction of the wage-earning work force and state power, asymmetrically exercised over persons and communities; subordinated, therefore, to the range of forces that make up the territorialities of State and Capital. The world of the reproduction of everyday life has more local spheres, but the relation with centers of supply and demand, with places of work, travel to go to school or to a health center, is guided by the regulatory logic of public administrations and their policies, and the requirements of gaining returns on capital. However, phenomena such as self-built popular housing developments that challenge urban codes, small scale smuggling in border areas in accordance with changes in exchange rates, supply and demand, seasonal migration, the mass of seasonal workers (harvesters), internal migrations, or international migrations in search for income and remittances, regional groupings (by affinity or for rejection) of ethnic groups, etc., show that the strategies for reproduction of the popular domestic units are located in a playing field shared with the interstate system and global capital, that they can have spheres that are broader than the local, and

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<sup>7</sup> For example: each citizen shares with others from the municipality, province or department, of his nation and in some cases supranational entities, the decision to elect authorities; in another sense, a citizen has all those state levels with assigned attributes as providers, guarantors of rights or guardians of obligations.

<sup>8</sup> This does not prevent capitalists, as members of the dominant class from having territorial behaviours that imply the direct political social control (clientelism) or indirect (influence on governments). This is even more so in the case of landowners, rentiers, who do not follow the logic of capital like the modern bourgeoisie.



that their territory is not completely determined by the conjugation of the logic of State and Capital.

External processes can fragment communities and popular associations without necessarily breaking up the system that characterized them (e.g. communal system transferred and adjusted from the rural to the urban). Examples are the already-mentioned reasons for emigrating to earn a living and to be able to send remittances to the family, or displacements due to wars, social or natural catastrophes.<sup>9</sup> In the process of organization in El Ato, or in the process of municipalization in the Aymara territory, there seems to be a tendency to adjust the organization of territories to the number of people who can actually participate in the administration of the immediate common good. In this case, the base criterion would be politico-economic.

Can we assume from all the above that it is right to separate political regions-territories, economic regions-territories, and social regional-territories? We do not believe so, but the political moment for these processes has a lot of weight. The analysis of the sub-processes assists in the understanding of the concrete. When the state is a protagonist and plans interventions in large territories – heterogeneous or not - it resorts to the institutionalization of its policies through regional plans, hoping for a political will to construct a self-coherent system of regions-territories that today does not exist. For example, the predominant rule may be to favour the competitive integration into the market, or to assert the right to security and economic sovereignty of workers, with degrees of autarchy and protection that the popular economy has been attempting to preserve in spite of its opening to the global market. And this implies a confrontation between rational and antagonistic projects. Eventually, the tense coexistence is not only between State and Capital, but between populations with different values, worldviews or inclusion in the Capitalist system. In regard to the strictly political, the possibility of re-territorialization can be enhanced using vertically delegated power (more characteristic of the process in Bolivarian Venezuela), or in an allegedly participatory manner (as postulated in Bolivia and Ecuador), contributing to the construction of a social and political will among actors in the potential region.

We must not forget that during the two decades of planning in Latin America, drastically interrupted by the neo-liberal project, the regionalization brought about by a State which “governed by commanding” was justified by the principles that the scientific analytical method was allegedly advocating. As such, it led to the differentiation among political, economic, and natural regions, using a State and market economy paradigm particular to capitalism, and a vision of nature as a complex of localized resources or source of profitability for capital, as if this conceptualization were universal or would express the necessary or desired destiny of all societies.<sup>10</sup> The alienating States have tended to view cultures as raw material or as an obstacle,

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<sup>9</sup> Migration to El Ato of thousands of people in three decades was caused by the expulsion of peasants and miners because of neoliberal reforms.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to acknowledge that recent theories of regional development introduce localized institutional or cultural conditions (environments for innovations, zones with lower costs for business) but are still within the paradigm that identifies economic rationality as profitable for capital. They readjust the theory of localization and local development according to the new territorial logic of capital. They recognize the cultural differences important to capital. The ones that are of no interest to capital, or block accumulation are ignored or seen as backwards. As it is, as long as competitiveness is the criteria for regional or local development, capital efficiency is still present, as it imposes its criteria to legitimize its own activities through the market.

something that the new constitutional mandates are expecting to modify. When today we propose a State as a protagonist of a revolution and promoter of another economy and another territorialization, it must be on the assumption that the State itself has changed its political context, that it "governs by obeying", following the Zapatista slogan.

While the regions (in particular the politico-administrative) followed a hierarchical principle, with the neoliberal proposal for reform of the State, there came proposals for deconcentration or decentralization of regulatory capacities or public responsibilities but within the same spatial model of state control and territorial organization.<sup>11</sup> In any case, with its hidden agenda to weaken "the social aspect" of the State, decentralization generally failed with regard to the stated objectives, as it could succeed in its own terms only while affirming a center at the time that it rejects it (decentralizing the education system without a strong strategic national institution that regulates practices and redistributes resources can be detrimental to many regions and for the country itself). Decentralization does not imply the disappearance of the centre and, as such, of the peripheries). Decentralization *per se* does not erode the existing hegemonies; it can accentuate them. The modern State tends to institutionalize, standardize, simplify in order to govern and control. A struggle for another economy, that is socially responsible and solidarity-based, leads to a struggle for another democracy, the reinvention of the State (de Souza Santos, 2005) and of the public and this has its spatial aspect.

### **The transformative regionalization and the alternative economy: ...are we heading towards cultural holism?**

The transformative regionalizations must be based on history and a concrete point of departure, but at the same time they should be derived from the strategic project of construction of the other economy, other society, and other State. And given that society and territory are not separable, this construction cannot precede or follow the new regionalization, but must be part of the same process, unless we deny the proposed definitions and the principles of transformation. Thus, transformations in the economy of a society require and are accompanied by transformations in its natural base, linked as they are by a socio-natural symbiosis, which influence the economy and territorial regionalizations.

It is not a question of using regional differences or similarities, to legitimize particular interests ("regional", generally associated with fractions of the bourgeoisie), but rather, the issue is whether the new territorialization contributes, in its own process to a society where everyone has a place and where responsibility and solidarity are institutionalized. This requires large public participation and a democratic process, because without the will of the people, the region would become a technocratic project marked by instrumental rationality (the best regionalization to achieve something external to the subjects themselves). On the other hand, in as much as there are no isolated individuals, neither are there isolated communities (ethnic or geographic). Territorial transformations within the social and solidarity economy paradigm are based on the desired and democratically conceived principles of institutionalization embodied in the

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<sup>11</sup> Neoliberalism has raised the convergence of political-administrative decentralization/deconcentration of the State with the economic decentralization but via privatization.

new territorial-regional spaces. Thus, for example, an increased food autarchy can be a step towards exchange and interregional cooperation without relations of asymmetric dependency.

The mandates of the Bolivian and Ecuadorian constitutions pose challenges outside the theoretical-practical manuals of the regionalists. How to represent the rights of the Pachamama in a process of regionalization, and in addition make their compliance a condition for all the other rights? Does this imply matching regions with the territorial areas of each ecosystem, creating a space for decision making for actors associated with that territory who can consider restoring the lost balance due to the devastation of societies? We believe that it is rather about regionalizations being within a framework (or composed) of territories, so as to allow for a responsible administration of the relationship between economy and nature (ecosystems). The subjects that are summoned by the new regionalization could be partially derived from other sub-regionalizations, in this case internal to the ecological regions, which respond to the special relations among communities, complementary or competitive productive activities, to the connection between capabilities and needs and/or the political-administrative organizational criteria of the State.

Being a plural national State, there is no doubt that there is no single criterion or system of categories (such as the nation, province, municipality, locality, or district), or one form of self-government (as executive and legislative representatives elected by secret ballots), but there could be a “variable geometry”, where in some regions forms of government suitable for indigenous communities are recognized, with or without correlations with the forms of the state system inherited from the conquest. Something similar can exist within the metropolitan regions with respect to communes or districts.

The social revolution also requires a cultural transformation that recognizes a plural territoriality, combining diverse forms of organizing and evaluating the territory, as implied by the concept of plural economy. Domination and resistance under colonialism, its State and its market, have produced fragmented communities and localized cultures.

“The construction of interculturality originates with the reconstitution of sociocultural units and social actors to address a model of statehood alternative to the homogenizing logic of the ‘National Colonial State’, and the market so that interculturality develops in all spatial and sectoral spheres and that it aims to construct permanent symmetries in power relations”.<sup>12</sup>

According to this, it is not about gathering several ghettos within a made-up intercultural region that at most maintain external relations among themselves, but that interculturality is present in each segment of the territory (modifying the spatiality of the cultures). However, the point of departure could be based on different current territorial preferences while the desired process of reconstitution of individuals and territories proves its feasibility.

The “permanent construction of symmetries in power” implies that it is not the State that manages but social movements that harmoniously share various life projects. The

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<sup>12</sup> See call for papers for the International Seminar at which this paper was originally presented.

communal system put limits (as pointed out by the practice of rotating delegated authority as an obligation which is integrated in the weaving of reciprocities that constitute the community) both by distinguishing itself from a professional governing elite who represents by leading the represented (and enriching a few at the expense of the many) and by, for example, establishing limits to the size of land for private use and to the rights that this type of property confers, redistribution to avoid the enrichment of a few and the poverty of others, etc. Far from promoting a standardized equality, equity in diversity is upheld, blocking the colonial mechanisms of control of the uniformed mass under the category of workers or citizens.

This should be reflected on the territoriality. For example, if there were no separation between the class of representatives and those whom they represent, or if more importance were given to the immediate communication with the bases, then the government and the entire central administrative system agglomerated in the political centers would lose their significance. The rotation of representatives who do not leave their neighbourhoods to “go govern” should produce a territorial decentering and another spatial form for the contact between representatives and represented something that, for example, is manifested through the travelling caucus, which governs in contact with the people.<sup>13</sup>

An important aspect of the transformation is whether the State, now democratized, is still the sphere where authority to manage the process of transformation and development guided by the *Sumak Kausay* is allocated. A document by the Ministry of Planning in Bolivia states that the State will be a promoter and a protagonist, distributor of wealth and the driving force for the coexistence among organizations with diverse purposes in the economy. But at the same time, it states that this requires the transformation of the State, which is defined as its decolonization. This seems to mean a shift in the paradigm of modern democracy, based on the constitution of a mass of individuals-citizens, to a network of communities, a proposal that should be reflected in the processes of regionalization of the country.

As we saw above, this proposal faces two challenges (at least): if it does not mean to define a new cultural hegemony, but a shift to a plural system where diverse forms of being, knowing, and doing coexist, it may not be possible to construct a new society composed of communities that reintegrate their own members, but these forms and their regionalizations must coexist with others (predominantly in cities) which is closer to the definition of plural and solidarity economy that we have proposed than to the communitarian economy.

The other challenge concerns the regionalizations themselves: there cannot be a unique regionalization of social relations. On the one hand, after centuries of peripheral capitalism and colonialism, regionalization based on the rights of the Pachamama does not apply to primary communities. As such, rather than search for “the” true

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<sup>13</sup> With regards to this, the document states: “The dismantling of colonialism includes the institutionalization, for its excluding tendency and its differentiating and colonizing institutional normativity; the discipline, that generates subjugation habits that reproduce knowledge, attitudes, and hierarchical colonial practices; and the civilizing logic, that determines social relations among persons and the relation with nature.” We understand that it is about dismantling the colonial institutions, not all the institutional system.

regionalization, we must define or identify a set of regionalizations articulated by the logic of the *Sumak Kausay*. On the other hand, more than five hundred years of colonialism and peripheral capitalism have reorganized the territories and unleashed new popular cultures that, although hybrid, are not the mere subordinated face of colonial control (see Martín-Barbero, 2003). In this sense, the popular and solidarity economy originates from the existing diverse forms of popular culture that does not seek reconstitution as the aim, but is committed to a democratic construction that hybridizes the popular, rural or urban communitarian, formal or informal associative ways under new political conditions.

The document reveals that the determinism between territory and social forms and vice versa is not unilineal. In fact, it promotes “the constitution of regions, with the will of the people and communities, with ecological and sociocultural affinity based on the formulation of the Plan for Regional Development” with defines the character of the regions”. At the same time, the inseparability of communities from their territories characterizes a determinism based on a socio-natural symbiosis, both in the material as well as in the symbolic. As already noted, such regionalization reflects the will and self-determination of the existing communities to “**reconstruct** socio-cultural units”. If this means recuperating the lost unity between society/community, territory and economy, and between production and reproduction, such an objective can be achieved without necessarily relying upon the long term memory of pre-existent communities and territories that capitalism materially and symbolically dislocated with its entropic tendencies. Along this argument, the proposal to construct a social and solidarity economic system in Ecuador logically acknowledges the combination of possible reconstructions with the development of forms not yet known to achieve such unity.<sup>14</sup>

It seems that the issue is not only about the reconstruction of socio-cultural units, but also the need to acknowledge that there have been irreversible separations of a mass of individuals from their original communities, and that nature in its current state requires definite actions within these regions-communities and urban societies in order to better achieve reproductive rationality.<sup>15</sup> This does not suggest that in all regions “the Community is the base for regional organization and that its traditional local authorities will assume a predominant role, since they will be provided with public responsibilities and powers for their legal and legitimate participation in the so called Committees for Regional Development”. To this we must add the existence of a large sector (depending on the region) of citizen associations without strong community ties.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Ecuadorian Constitution (art. 283) establishes that “The economic system is social and solidarity based; it acknowledges the human as a subject and an end; fosters a dynamic and well-balanced relationship among society, State, and market, in harmony with nature; and it has for objective to guarantee the production and reproduction of material and immaterial conditions that facilitate the **good life**.” The economic system will be integrated by the organizational forms of public economy, private, mixed, **popular and solidarity**, and other that the Constitution determines. **The popular and solidarity economy** will be regulated according to the law and will include the cooperative, associative, and community sectors”.

<sup>15</sup> The cited document states the multiplicity of objectives: “full development of the ecological and physiographic diversity; and the generation of *new* territorialities based on the *new* economic, social, cultural, and political dynamics”.

<sup>16</sup> The cited document recognizes the necessity for diverse regional types. They are: a) Macro regions that articulate regions ecologically and culturally similar, and that in political administrative terms represent various departments; b) Metropolitan regions with high demographic density, with economic and cultural predominance and an urban pluricultural population, within a reduced territory; c) Indigenous/native regions or peasants with disperse



On the other hand, it is not only about recognizing the irreversible impact that the “social contract” common to modernity has had over societies and communities, but to overcome it at least in four directions:

- to shift from a paradigm of a political system based exclusively on individuals and their associations to one that also includes communities and nature as subjects with rights;
- to shift from a definition of “included citizens” that has excluded large sectors of entire societies and communities based on their occupational status, age, residence, gender, ethnicity, to a definition that includes them all as well as nature;
- to broaden solidarity, from the predominance of the solidarity among equals to the solidarity among differences, and in particular to acknowledge the multiplicity of forms of life in the popular world and in the projects for a good life;
- to break away from the patriarchal system and the public/private division that, among others, recognizes as economic and productive only those activities that produce exchange values while it transfers substantive forms of work for social reproduction to the private sphere.

The communitarian system and the popular and solidarity economy are two proposals with different content and capacity, although both have the means for a universalizing claim, are engaged in dialogue and can enrich each other in the process of constructing other territories and other economies in this region. A long and challenging road is ahead of us.

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population, with low geographic density and generally with large territorial extension, with an agricultural, livestock, or forest economy; d) Regions constituted around intermediary cities, with balanced demographics, in the process of growth, with a combined economy. However, it does not refer to the modern solidarity organization: voluntary associations run by individuals that indeed constitute an important component of the Ecuadorian proposal for a popular and solidarity economy.

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