



Development for a postneoliberal era? *Sumak kawsay*, living well and the limits to decolonisation in Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

Latin American development is being rapidly transformed, with popularly elected governments embarking on reversals of neoliberalism informed by autochthonous notions of human wellbeing. Through a detailed examination of the origins and application of one development model, this article examines the constraints on and limits to postneoliberal development in terms of state-civil society relations and as a form of postcolonial governmentality. Interpreting Ecuadorian *sumak kawsay* (living well in English) in relation to embedded political cultures, specific opportunity structures, and the dynamic between contentious and electoral politics highlights the extent of room for manoeuvre in rethinking development. As a form of governmentality and pastoral power, Ecuadorian 'postneoliberalism' incorporates a constitutional commitment to social rights, collective citizens and the rights of nature. The paper also reveals the difficulty of making a definitive break from neoliberalism, which remains pervasive in practice, conceptualisations and state formations. Moreover, although various forms of anti-colonial 'border thinking' were proposed by social movement's contentious politics, the paper argues that *sumak kawsay* works to sustain postcolonial conditions of development.

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1. Introduction

Something is happening with development. Identified as postneoliberalism (Peck et al., 2009; Macdonald and Ruckert, 2009; Sader, 2009), or alternative modernisations (Escobar, 2010), a significant shift in development thinking has occurred in the policies of elected regimes that systematically confront the mantras of neoliberal privatisation, state roll-back, and selective social programmes. The debate around the nature, direction and socio-political consequences of these new policies engages a global audience. In the discipline, Latin American postneoliberalism has provided a critical foil through which to explore the imaginative and political-economic limits to neoliberalism (Peck et al., 2009), but little discussion has yet taken place about the development model to be used to replace neoliberalism.

Moreover, just as it became analytically imperative to acknowledge that neoliberalism entails a context-specific concatenation of practices, subjectivity and forms of governmentality, so too accounts of postneoliberalism need to examine the discourses, institutions, rationales and forms of rule put into motion by anti-neoliberal political and electoral power. Postneoliberalism – although primarily seen through a macroeconomic lens in the geographical literature – raises important issues about the political sphere (rights, citizenship, institutions and practices of decision-making), and geopolitics

(trade blocs, geopolitical alliances), in addition to development planning and practice. Integral to Latin American postneoliberalism has been a shift in development thinking and delivery to stress a rights-based articulation of individual capacities and wellbeing, nature, and resource distribution. Known as *Buen Vivir*, *Sumak Kawsay* (in Kichwa) or *Suma Qamaña* (Aymara), this development agenda offers the potential to radically shake up mainstream thinking in social development and welfare regimes.

This paper critically analyses the socio-political processes and political forces that led to the adoption of postneoliberal development in Ecuador (which alongside Bolivia and Venezuela is the country most consistently associated with postneoliberalism) (on Bolivia, see *Vicepresidencia de la República*, 1994), before providing insight into how marginal indigenous populations – a group with perhaps the most to gain from *Sumak Kawsay* – apprehend and critique the new development process. In this way, the paper contributes to critical development geographic analysis of the grounded articulations of citizenship, development and nationalism as sites of struggles over political economies and cultural meanings (Wainwright, 2008; McEwan, 2009; Glassman, 2010; Perreault and Valdivia, 2010; Silvey and Rankin, 2010).

In Ecuador the postneoliberal development alternative has been expressed in terms of *sumak kawsay*, hereafter SK (pronounced SOO-mack COW-sigh). The name comes from Kichwa, the major indigenous language spoken in Ecuador and the Andes. SK's rise to prominence as the new development paradigm is due to the meanings it acquired through political action, constitutional

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reform, and the search for new forms of social economy. While SK's origin lies in the political-cultural concerns of Ecuador's indigenous movements, as a development model it reflects the outcomes for grassroots 'insurgent' alternatives in the political and economic realities of postneoliberal governmentality. The paper thereby extends critical development geographies' accounts of the genealogies, meanings and contested nature of (alternatives to) development. Examining SK's discourses and material consequences permits a contextualised examination of development policy's exclusions and inclusions, and the institutional-political dynamics of implementation. The paper is structured as follows: first SK's context and genealogy are discussed as a new form of developmentalism (Section 2). The third section examines how SK has been incorporated into constitutional and institutional spaces, showing the political processes of citizens, social movements and the state that have institutionalised SK. Section four summarises critiques of SK focusing primarily on the perspectives of grassroots indigenous, who have most to gain from SK although their views are often sidelined in policy and academic debates. The fifth section draws these points together to explore the argument that SK reflects postcolonial conditions of development, even as it attempts to overcome its legacies. The paper draws upon Ecuadorian commentators' writings, government statements, constitutional-legal documents as well as face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with indigenous populations and leaders.¹ The concluding section explores the relationship between postneoliberal governmentality, postcolonial societies and development, looking to what critical development geography might learn from *sumak kawsay*.

2. Beyond neoliberalism: the *Sumak Kawsay* development paradigm

"We ... Hereby decide to build a new form of public coexistence, in diversity and in harmony with nature, to achieve the good way of living, the *sumak kawsay*" (Preamble to 2008 Ecuador Constitution)

"[*Sumak Kawsay* represents the] definitive burying of the exclusionary neoliberal system." (Indigenous leader Humberto Chango, quoted in Becker (2011), p. 60)

According to Ecuadorian policymakers, reorienting development around the concept of *sumak kawsay* represents a radical "new paradigm" of development that initiates a series of socio-economic transformations including postneoliberalism, popular capitalism and, eventually, "socialism of *sumak kawsay*" (Ramírez, 2011; SENPLADES, 2010). Mainstream development was, according to a multiethnic group of key politicians and intellectuals, characterised by a colonialist perspective and poor results, leading to an exclusionary "monoculture." To replace that with full recognition of cultural, economic and social diversity is the goal to which *sumak kawsay* (*Buen Vivir* or *Vida Plena* in Spanish; Living well or fulfilled life in English) aspires. *Sumak kawsay* has a complex genealogy that draws from politico-intellectual reflections on development by marginalized indigenous subjects, combined in selective ways with a state-based leftist programme for greater equality. SK state policymakers view wellbeing in relation to rights and state-led systems of welfare, distinct to the kinds of social policies offered by metropolitan welfare states or basic needs (Acosta, 2008b, p. 33). Hence *sumak kawsay* gains from being set in the con-

text of critical debates around how state formation and contests over citizenship are articulated via a politics of culture and development. Whereas SK is formulated in discursive opposition to 'western' and 'global neoliberal' development, its engagement with indigenous claims entails a long-term, contested and highly politicised process of conceptualising, defining, and implementing development and its subjects (Schech and Haggis 2000; Radcliffe, 2006; Kapoor, 2008; Andolina et al., 2009).

Currently Ecuadorian development is highly reliant on exports of petroleum (and to a lesser extent gas), migrants' remittances, and agricultural exports (the major ones being bananas, shrimp, and cacao). Although remittances work to underpin some of the poorest families, the other sectors are characterised by low labour requirements, and uneven regional and social impacts. Ecuador has one of Latin America's most unequal income distributions, in the worst region globally for income inequalities (Centeno and Hoffman, 2003). Moreover, as environmentalists have long pointed out, these forms of development entail enormous environmental and socio-ecological externalities that have never been systematically calculated or taken into account. The 2008 Constitution and its attendant planning process envisage the radical transformation of Ecuadorian development to address these issues and establish a more socially and ecologically sustainable development over the long-term (Ávila Santamaría et al., 2008; República del Ecuador, 2009). The first step in this process has been to argue that the extractive model is no longer appropriate, and for the need to establish a "post-petrol economy" (Acosta, 2009b, p. 19). Building on the country's high level of biodiversity and cultural diversity, the current long-term goal is to create a "biopolis" economy, generating wealth through biodiversity applications, bio- and nano-technology, and a vibrant ecological and communitarian tourism sector (Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009, p. 56; Ramírez, 2011).

According to indigenous intellectuals and their advocates, previous development paradigms have been hampered by high environmental costs, poor ethics, narrow cultural terms of reference, economic logics based on scarcity, and the colonisation of epistemologies (Dávalos, 2008a,b). *Sumak kawsay* is hence understood as a form of alterity to mainstream development, a paradigm unique to and appropriate for Ecuador in its search for alternatives to historic mal-development (Dávalos, 2008a,b; Quintero Lopez, 2009, p. 87). Echoing postdevelopment critiques of the Otherising discourses of poverty (Escobar, 1995), SK aims for the poor to speak for themselves with the terms of reference set not by metropolitan centres or national elites but within a postcolonial "ethic of care" (McEwan, 2009, p. 245; Madge et al., 2009). As SK thinking became more well-known among non-indigenous intellectuals and activists, it was viewed as a framework to realise the political spaces revealed by engaged criticisms of liberalism (following Rawls, Nussbaum, Fraser), Latin American postcolonial critics (including de Souza Santos, Mignolo), and post-development (e.g. Carpio Benálcazar, 2009). In this respect, SK "is a fundamental element in rethinking society differently, a society that draws on popular knowledge and technologies, [and] solidarity forms of organization..." (Quintero Lopez, 2008, p. 39; also Acosta and Martínez, 2009; República del Ecuador, 2009).

SK's intellectual architects conceptualise it as a form of development that re-founds development around principles of rights, and deeper and more politicised forms of participation (cf. Hickey and Mohan, 2004). The new paradigm also draws upon Amartya Sen's capabilities approach, as illustrated by the following quote from the constitution and reprinted in the national development council plan:

"In the new Constitution, *sumak kawsay* implies more than improving the population's quality of life, [it also involves] developing their capabilities and potentials, relying upon an

¹ Interviews were undertaken as part of a research project on indigenous women's contestation of development in Ecuador, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council UK (project # RES-062-23-0517), which is gratefully acknowledged.

economic system that promotes equality through social and territorial redistribution of the benefits of development, guarantees national sovereignty, promotes Latin American integration, and protects and promotes cultural diversity” (Article 276, 2008 Constitution, quoted in Consejo Nacional de Planificación (2009), p. 24)

Breaking out from the liberal conception of individual rights and responsibilities, *sumak kawsay* is conceptualised as “arising from the collective experience of the indigenous peoples and nationalities” to rely upon a complex interrelationship between state, market, citizens and associations (Acosta, 2008b, p. 33; cf. Gibson-Graham, 2006). Development in this sense is embedded relationally in the interactions between diverse people, nature and communities (including, according to some writers, ancestors) (Larrea, 2008, p. 81).

Building on a rights based approach (RBA) to development, SK goes further than the latter to encompass collective rights in addition to individual rights (cf. Cornwall and Nyamu-Musembi, 2004; see below). SK aims to overcome the liberal “false dichotomy” between individual and collective rights by interweaving different types of rights in legislative and practical ways (Walsh, 2009b, p. 180). *Sumak kawsay* can thus be understood within the frame of what Iris Marion Young has labelled differentiated citizenship, in which citizens and their claims and rights are organised around the lines of cultural and social differentiation that exist, rather than around the “requirement that all citizens be the same” (Young, 1990, p. 254). Rights are balanced too with responsibilities. A key non-indigenous politician who oversaw the constitutional process, Alberto Acosta, argues that SK “seeks a harmonious relationship (*vida*) between human beings and between the latter and nature,” based as much on responsibilities as rights (Acosta, 2008b, pp. 33, 34). The National Development Plan then becomes the basis through which the state organises resources and planning to ensure that “persons, peoples and collectivities” have their rights guaranteed and thereby achieve *sumak kawsay* (Ávila Santamaría, 2009, p. 567).

SK aims to include those historically excluded from capitalist markets and those reliant on forms of production and reproduction with different logics to the market (Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009), and thereby introduces measures to reduce economic and social exclusion (León, 2008, p. 141; Acosta and Martínez, 2009). Informed by Polanyian and feminist economics, these planning and policy goals stress the need for recognition of and support for the diversity and non-fully-capitalist forms of production and reproduction that coexist in Ecuadorian space (Acosta, 2008b, p. 34; Acosta, 2009b; León, 2008; cf. Gibson-Graham, 2006). A form of development relying just on the capitalist market is viewed as socially unjust and unsustainable, premised on scarcity and resulting in policy’s narrow focus on poverty alleviation (Dávalos, 2008b; De Souza Santos, 2010). Moreover neoliberalism is associated with the deregulation of labour relations, increasing precarious working conditions and worsening income security, causing falls in living standards for the majority as well as the over-exploitation of natural resources (Acosta, 2008b, p. 30; Ponce Jarrín, 2009). The imperative for change is thus two-fold – to diversify the market into a “social economy” and reverse what is termed the “re-primarization” of Ecuador’s economy, namely a resurgent, neoliberal drive to primary product exports (Acosta, 2008b, p. 29; León, 2010). Echoing feminist geographers’ injunction to challenge the unquestioned hegemony of capitalist economies, SK advocates argue that a market is not synonymous with capitalism, as markets existed in pre-capitalist/pre-conquest times (Acosta, 2008b, pp. 35–36; Ramírez, 2011; cf. Gibson-Graham, 1996). SK principles thereby displace the centrality of economic growth in development and question the universal pretensions of Western

teleologies of progress (Dávalos, 2008a). SK situates the need for a strong economy within a stronger regime of rights to overcome inequalities of wealth and wellbeing, and to recognise the claims of racialized, marginal subjects (Acosta, 2008b, p. 28). To the extent that “[e]quality and difference are not two opposing notions, but rather constitute two dimensions of social justice” (Larrea, 2008, p. 82), *sumak kawsay* attempts to operationalize a Fraserian politics of recognition and redistribution (Fraser, 1997).

The name *sumak kawsay* and many of its conceptual aspects derive from diverse Ecuadorian indigenous lifeways and their understandings of the relationship between individual, society and nature. “Ancestral thinking is eminently collective; the conception of Living Well necessarily relies upon the idea of ‘we’. The community encompasses, protects, demands and is the basis for the reproduction of this collective subject that we all [female], all [male] and each one are.” (CNP, 2009, p. 18). For Kichwa-speaking indigenous groups (the majority of indigenous populations which make up around 15% of Ecuador’s total), the term has a ready set of associations and meanings, which have been drawn upon in its policy elaboration. According to indigenous political leaders, living well (*sumak kawsay*) is closely interrelated with fertile lands without bad elements (*sumak allpa*) and ancestral forms of knowledge and understanding (*sacha runa yachay*), according to Marlon Santi, recent national leader of Ecuador’s National Indigenous Confederation CONAIE (Santi, 2006). An Andean indigenous woman explains, “We always talk about [SK] at a local level, at the community level. Now the government is developing it. Well, *Buen Vivir* comes out of the communities, where mother earth produces; we think about food, the environment, water, protection of land, protection of slopes. So *Buen Vivir* is integral [to all that]” (Interview, July 2009). Government plans echo these sentiments through an emphasis on food sovereignty, a focus on small and medium producers, and access to water as a human right.

Redistribution is a central plank in Ecuadorian constitutional discourse, yet its formulation differs from historic Latin American mechanisms. Direct, rather than regressive indirect, taxes have reduced income inequalities (Ramírez, 2011). Boosted by oil revenues and agricultural exports, social spending has increased dramatically 2006–2008 from 5.4% to 8.3% GDP.² High levels of urban bias are to be tackled through the reversal of rural disinvestment, thus overturning abysmal levels of service provision and citizen rights. The National Development Plan argues that rural *Buen Vivir* is a “key element of the government agenda,” encouraging the mobilisation of existing resources and the provision of key infrastructure (Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009, p. 70). Tackling historical urban bias, the Plan foresees the “democratization” of credit, technology, technical assistance and training programmes to assist rural dwellers, who frequently are small farmers, many of them indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian (Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009, p. 59). Resources will also be put directly into the hands of rural minorities through funding plans for local government, in legislation that went through the national assembly in 2010. Local governments will see considerable increases in revenue. *Juntas parroquiales* (parish councils, the lowest level of local government, located predominantly in rural areas) could see budgets rise from US\$35 m to US\$106 m according to preliminary estimates (Telégrafo 2010). These rural development objectives relate directly to the impetus to acknowledge ethnic diversity and to rectify historic disadvantage; rural population’s “ethnocultural composition” (Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009, p. 71) being a primary driver in the policy’s concept and design (also Acosta and Martínez, 2009).

² This included a doubling of the cash transfer payment to poorest households, a \$474.3 million increase in spending on housing programs, mainly for low-income families, as well as numerous new programs in areas such as education, training, and microfinance (Weisbrot and Sandoval, 2009).

Crucially, the 2008 Constitution also contains within it provision for strengthening the rights of indigenous nationalities and peoples (Articles 56–60). The Constitution recognises indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian and *montuvio*³ territories as spaces that will take on the same responsibilities as local governments (Larrea, 2008, p. 80).

With an emphasis on goal achievement and social equality, SK connects to notions of empowerment, freedom and the capacity to aspire (Sen, 1999; Appadurai, 2004) rather than hedonistic happiness. Given its concern for differentiated social inclusion, *sumak kawsay* as a policy tool links into debates about how to reconcile redistributive growth with the establishment of universal welfare systems, rather than mainstream debates about individual(istic) wellbeing.⁴ Popular anti-neoliberal movements in Ecuador and post-neoliberal states consistently highlight the lack of an equitable national welfare system. Ecuador (as well as Bolivia, Guatemala, Colombia and Peru) historically failed to provide systematic support for poor citizens, relying instead on informal-familialist systems where low levels of social spending compounded families' reliance on extended unpaid hours of household labour, informal sector work and international migration (Martínez Franzoni, 2008).⁵ Against this background of inadequate public social policies, SK implies that a distinctive welfare regime might be created, although the programmatic and institutional bases are not yet completely in place.⁶

In summary, *sumak kawsay* brings together several strands of 'alternative' development thinking in a unique and locally meaningful configuration. The development paradigm of SK illustrates border thinking outside of the routine development solutions emanating from the metropole (Mignolo, 2000, 2005), being oriented neither to the mantras of the Washington Consensus nor localist isolationism (e.g. PRATEC, 1998). Although it foresees a capitalist economy engaged in global export production, SK resituates this within a more diverse economy with import substitution mechanisms in place, redistribution and environmental sustainability (Ramírez, 2011). The next section examines the political and legal context within which *sumak kawsay* is to put into practice, evaluating it as a mode of governance.

3. *Sumak kawsay* and spaces of political possibility: Constitutional contexts

"As a solemn constitutional declaration, *Buen Vivir* is an opportunity to collectively construct a new development regime. ... *Sumak Kawsay* is related to a series of rights and social, economic and environmental guarantees, elaborated in the new constitution." (Acosta, 2009a, p. 7)

"Sustainable development and the equitable distribution of wealth and resources will be the route to *buen vivir*." (2008 Constitution, Article 3)

SK is embedded in the heart of the 2008 Constitution, which grants it an organisational and inspirational function within a framework for rights and participation. Moreover, the 2008 Consti-

tution establishes a rights regime for individuals, collectivities and nature that challenges liberal theory's presumptions of a universal model of citizenship. These features reflect a history of popular struggle and a process of establishing certain principles and practices within the state and citizen regime. To fully understand *Sumak Kawsay* development's context and meaning as a form of governmentality means examining how an antineoliberal electoral victory led to putative postneoliberal macroeconomics, as well as social movement input into constitutional change and social policy formulation, and in turn how these translated into an emergent postneoliberal governmentality. Two key findings emerge from this analysis. First, analysing SK as a form of governmentality and pastoral power reveals the difficulty of making a definitive break from neoliberalism (this section). Second, the implementation of postneoliberal measures remains strongly – perhaps irredeemably – conditioned by postcolonial exclusions (Section 4). Interpreting SK in relation to embedded political cultures, specific opportunity structures, and the dynamic between contentious and electoral politics highlights the extent of room for manoeuvre in rethinking development.

Ecuador's 1998 Constitution recognised diversity as a fundamental characteristic of the nation-state although subsequent decades were dominated by rising levels of extreme poverty and an impoverishing form of neoliberal multiculturalism (Hale, 2002; Andolina et al., 2009). The 1998 Constitution was widely perceived as a set of concessions rather than as a fundamental addressing of the rights of poor, indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian groups. Ongoing protests continued to animate Ecuadorian politics in the 2000s, coalescing around demands for citizenship and development paradigms to go "beyond multiculturalism" (Postero, 2007). Hence the 2008 Constitution raised high expectations among a majority of Ecuadorians. These groups elected President Correa and then endorsed the Constitution in a referendum. Moreover, the Correa government had key allies among major social movements (and their constituencies) for the constitutional process. The centre-left government willing to throw the World Bank out of the country appeared to be a natural ally for social movements who had long struggled against neoliberalism (on this history, see Andolina et al., 2009).

Constitutional lawyers view Ecuador's 2008 Constitution as offering a model that overturns twentieth century European social democratic states, by moving deliberately beyond liberal citizenship (Quintero Lopez, 2008). Liberal individualism meant that individual rights were established in secondary legislation and administered by groups committed to the protection of property rights above all others, which resulted in an uneven and empty category of citizenship (Palacios, 2009, pp. 42–43; Silva Portero, 2008). By contrast, the 2008 Constitution established social rights as a constitutional right. In all, the constitution recognises over 100 rights for citizens (Ávila Santamaría, 2009, p. 550). Moreover, the overhaul of the justice system aims to ensure that all new rights are protected via the courts, in contradistinction to the past when – commentators argue – only property rights were protected (Ávila Santamaría, 2009, p. 550). Furthermore, the 2008 Constitution theoretically aims to guarantee rights in an integrated way, advancing them all simultaneously without prioritizing certain rights over others, or postponing some in favour of a select few (Quintero Lopez, 2008; Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009, p. 24).

Individual social rights are protected in this way by "deepening the articulation of connectivity... [in which] the civil fabric is not individual and competitive but solidary and communitarian" (Palacios, 2009, p. 46). According to this schema, rights are those defined by international human rights conventions (e.g. United Nations; Vienna Conference on Human Rights) and political theory (e.g. Proudhon, Kropotkin), and are realised in the space between

³ The *montuvios* comprise a minority ethnic group found on the Pacific coast.

⁴ *Sumak kawsay* bears only a tangential relation to existing development studies debates around wellbeing and happiness, which address the non-monetary, relational and culturally embedded meanings of wellbeing, and draw attention to subjective feelings in shaping livelihood decisions (Wright, 2009; Copestake, 2011).

⁵ Elsewhere in Latin America, countries have a state-protectionist welfare regime (distributing resources via collectively funded social security), or a state-productivist welfare regime (targeting resources at the poorest) (Martínez Franzoni, 2008).

⁶ Venezuela has addressed social welfare through the introduction of a 'living well' card that functions as a financial instrument for poorer citizens to buy food and white goods.

state and society (Palacios, 2009, pp. 52–55). In other words, the state does not take into itself the task of defining and realising rights, due first to the very “model of the social, active, participatory and communitarian state,” and second as peripheral states such as Ecuador do not have the capacity (Palacios, 2009, pp. 46, 53). Accordingly citizens are expected to be “active,” that is involved in participatory planning (Quintero Lopez, 2008, p. 85). The constitutional guarantee of an array of rights and the means to achieve them thereby becomes “the starting point for the construction of a sustainable society in all respects” (Acosta, 2009a, p. 8). Distinctively, Ecuadorian policy aims to “incorporate a series of principles specific to Ecuadorian society” (Acosta, 2009a, p. 8) rather than simply download models from global political theory.

Ecuador's model of a plurinational and intercultural state rethinks the liberal republic in terms of differentiated citizens and the historical claims of first nations. In the 2008 Constitution, Ecuador was identified as intercultural and plurinational, shifting the meaning and dynamics of relations between citizens, citizens and territory in three core ways (Walsh, 2009b). The plurinational state establishes “the recognition of a multicultural society in the indissoluble unit of a state that recognises, respects and promotes unity, equality and solidarity among all peoples and nationalities [i.e. ethnic groups], regardless of their historical, political and cultural differences” (Walsh, 2009a, p. 176). This requires a “re-foundation and profound transformation of the state” (Walsh, 2009a, p. 167) to overcome the monocultural national identity premised upon European norms. The state recognises that plurinationalism has a direct bearing on development, in that indigenous populations “often live in conditions of poverty and social inequality, excluded from social benefits” (Ecuador, 2009, p. 25). At its broadest, plurinationalism commits the state to a broader agenda than poverty alleviation, as it encompasses the recognition of indigenous and black territories and indigenous forms of justice, treating indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorians as subjects of rights, granting citizenship to frontier populations, establishing SK as the core development objective, and amplifying collective rights, strengthening intercultural education, and recognising Spanish, Kichwa and Shuar as official languages (Larrea, 2008, pp. 79–80; Becker, 2011). Plurinationalism is also informed by antecedent political settlements in Belgium, Switzerland, New Zealand, and Spain's autonomous regions (*República del Ecuador*, 2009; Walsh, 2009a). The 2008 Constitution thereby works from notions of citizenship as heterogeneous.

Plurinationalism establishes the groundwork for the deepening of democracy, a goal that unites liberals and radicals, policymakers and grassroots populations alike in Ecuador and Latin America (Yashar, 2005; Walsh, 2009a). The plurinational state “presumes the construction of a radically democratic and postcolonial state” (Acosta, 2009a, p. 4). In this sense, democracy is to be strengthened by the inclusion of historically excluded populations, excluded not so much by restrictions on voting,⁷ as by the lack of effective political voice for poor and marginal populations. Yet just as SK reconsiders rights and development from a starting point of plurality, so too plurinationalism values various forms of existing democracy – including ancestral autochthonous forms of democracy (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1990), and urban, hybrid and diversified strands of political culture, participation and voice, and participatory democracy, which “all nourish and complement representative democracy” (Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009, p. 20; Ramírez, 2011).

Interculturalism refers to the capacity of different subjects – defined by diverse cultures, cosmovisions, and life-histories – to create and maintain meaningful, mutually-respectful dialogue. As such, interculturalism supplants an anti-racist logic and represents a

considerably greater challenge than plurinationalism. “Plurinationality and interculturalism should not be considered merely as an indigenous problem but as a problem for all of us in Ecuadorian society”.⁸ In the context of weak national identities, interculturalism requires that multiple identities be incorporated on an equal footing into a new form of national identity that rejects the boxes of neoliberal multiculturalism (Larrea, 2008, p. 84; Carpio Benálcazar, 2009, p. 142; Ramírez, 2011). In part interculturalism is implemented through cultural rights and the transformation of the state, in its “social, political, economic and judicial institutions... and public policies” (Ecuador, 2009, p. 26). For these reasons, interculturalism is to be “mainstreamed” across all sectors of the state and put into all public policy as a benchmark for attitudes and behaviour (Quintero Lopez, 2009, p. 81; Dávalos, 2008a, p. 13).

The plurinational and intercultural state (EPI in its Spanish acronym) establishes the basis for territories and political cultural autonomy for indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorians and *montuvios*. These populations, identified as nationalities and peoples, gain “rights to different forms of liberty accordant with the new political subjectivity” within culturally diverse territories (Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009, p. 104). Plurinational agendas together with ongoing processes of decentralization have brought about new administrative and political geographies, which expand the extent and nature of autonomy (Larrea, 2008). Article 257 of the 2008 Constitution permits the creation of indigenous territorial circumscriptions (*circunscripciones territoriales indígenas*, or CTIs), and indigenous authorities are to exercise judicial functions on the basis of ancestral traditions and forms of law (Article 171, quoted in Ecuador, 2009, p. 21). Indigenous justice systems (already established under the 1998 Constitution) are granted broader territorial and sovereign support by the constitution, a literal space and post-colonial political status to extend indigenous recognition (cf. Yashar, 2005). Within these spaces, state functions can be re-imagined according to local groups' cultural practices, leading to differentiated forms of governance. In the case of indigenous administrative districts, “gradual consolidation as CTIs according to the Constitution [means that] ancestral cultural practices will be respected in the context of [interculturalism]” (Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009, pp. 25, 104). CTIs hence recognise that in a culturally and ethnically diverse population the liberal model of a universal state sovereignty operating in a singular way across the entire territory is inappropriate, and would be replaced by heterogeneous spaces and subjects.

Ecuador's Constitution of 2008 is also innovative in terms of its recognition of the rights of nature (*los derechos de la naturaleza*). According to the 2008 Constitution, “Nature or *Pachamama* [Mother Earth, in Kichwa], where life is reproduced and realised, has the right to full respect for its existence and maintenance and the regeneration of its natural cycles, structure, function and evolutionary processes. Every individual, community, people or nationality can demand that the public authorities fulfill the rights of nature. . . . The state will provide incentives to [citizens] to protect nature, and will promote respect for all elements that form an ecosystem” (Article 171). The reason for granting rights to nature rests upon the understanding that the market economy “fragments and breaks humans' relations with nature” (Dávalos, 2008a, p. 12). Continuing the critique of private property, advocates of nature's rights point to how capitalist economies reduce nature to separate items of property. By contrast, notions of a living mother earth (*Pachamama*) together with principles of deep ecology are brought

⁷ Illiterates – disproportionately Indians and Blacks – were prevented from voting until 1979.

⁸ During the Constituent Assembly, differences of opinion existed between those who argued that plurinationalism and interculturalism were two sides of the same coin, and those who argued that plurinationalism would lead to the isolation of indigenous peoples (For a summary of these discussions see Larrea, 2008; Walsh, 2009a).

together in the constitution to remove nature from formal ownership and endow it with rights of its own (Burch et al., 2008). Nature's status as a bearer of rights in Ecuadorian jurisdiction shifts the debate around rights in ways that profoundly challenge liberal concepts of an individual human bearer of rights (Dávalos, 2008b, p. 21; Serrano Pérez, 2009; Mena Villamar, 2010). Nature is invested with intrinsic value and worth (Acosta, 2008b, p. 35). As a mega-diverse country, Ecuador has numerous reasons to introduce environmental protection (Acosta, 2008a). The consequences of the rights of nature are as yet sketchy, but long term plans include a ban on genetically modified crops (unlike Brazil), a 'biopolis' for natural science ventures and knowledge, and forfeiting petrol revenues in return for payment for ecosystem services and biodiversity protection (Ramírez, 2011; Rival, forthcoming). Already in place is the policy commitment to food sovereignty (*soberanía alimentaria*), whereby Ecuador reduces food imports, boosts production of nutritious local crops, maintains plant and animal genetic diversity, and reduces malnutrition rates (Alteridad, 2009).

These constitutional provisions were elaborated in the context of sustained electoral support for anti-neoliberal measures in combination with a tense relationship between the government and social movements (including indigenous, environmentalists, and women's movements) in the Constituent Assembly (see summary in Becker (2011)). Despite unprecedented involvement of civil society representatives in the constituent process, the resulting forms of postneoliberal governmentality reveal the tension between state, institutionalisation, and civil agendas. In one respect the state has signed up to a series of major commitments, yet for political and institutional reasons it treats certain rights as more significant than others.⁹ For instance, social policies' redistributive effects rely upon capitalist global oil markets while the exact framework for establishing redistributive types of economy and market remains sketchy, blocking rights to resources other than targeted social welfare. Furthermore, the constitution established a firm state presence in planning for development, under the control of a new ministry SENPLADES (Consejo Nacional de Planificación, 2009, p. 10; República del Ecuador, 2009; Quintero Lopez, 2009; for a critical perspective, see Walsh, 2010). In Postneoliberal models initiatives, social movement practices have been only partially incorporated into development practice. Whereas food sovereignty (a social movement agenda) has been institutionalised, other programmes (e.g. an income support scheme) remain highly centralised and outside a national welfare system. Postneoliberal operationalization of rights has not yet drilled down to specific programmes; social programmes (e.g. income support for mothers, credit for indigenous populations) remain set around with neoliberal conditionalities, such as individual entrepreneurialism (Radcliffe, 2011). As neoliberal governmentality placed much stress on active citizenship, it remains to be seen how much supposedly postneoliberal citizenship differs. Moreover, the constitutional commitment to take social difference (ethnicity, gender) into account raises concerns among commentators about the depoliticisation and containment of this difference, undermining groups' constitutional rights (cf. Escobar, 2010, p. 4).

In summary, the plurinational and intercultural state aims to establish the "full exercise of popular sovereignty and ... replace neoliberalism, which has weakened the state through privatisation and used it for the benefit of economically and politically powerful groups" (Larrea, 2008, pp. 80–81). In this sense, the constitutional foundation of SK raises expectations of a radical overhaul of state and society, each relying upon the conditions and guarantees embedded in each other (Dávalos, 2008b, p. 23). Yet it represents

a largely abstract and legal construct. When policies are implemented they remain entangled in entrenched ways of doing development informed by neoliberal governmentalities, political expediency, and naturalised social exclusion.

4. Pushing beyond SK as a state project: Indigenous viewpoints on development

"For us, *sumak kawsay* is different to that for an urban citizen [who wants a good house, services, a car, professional job, salary]. ... For indigenous communities, *sumak kawsay* is to have land, territory... and to have them clean, unpolluted, [and] to have unpolluted water, for kids to have good nutrition, a land that produces, that they get an education, have good health and rights. That is *sumak kawsay*." (Maria Andrade, UNIFEM programme for indigenous women's access to justice, interview July 2009)

A wide range of actors and stakeholders including leftists, academics, indigenous organisations, and politicians articulate critiques of postneoliberal development and *buen vivir*.¹⁰ After summarising these critiques, this section moves to analyse grassroots indigenous subjects' and their local leaders' views on SK development. Speaking as subalterns for whom 'development' has historically meant low pay, heavy work, racial discrimination, poverty, and inadequate health and educational infrastructure, indigenous populations speak from the margins of state and political power. Their voice is not generally recorded in relation to this debate.¹¹

Academic critics point out that Ecuador remains highly reliant upon mineral and resource extraction for development. Although resource nationalisation is rightly seen as a keystone of Latin American postneoliberalism (see Perreault and Valdivia, 2010; Rival, forthcoming for detailed discussions), its environmental and social costs have yet to be assessed in relation to SK (Escobar, 2010). The gap between SK's rhetoric and delivery is another weakness, a point echoed by indigenous subjects (see below). Arturo Escobar blames this gap on the pervasiveness of developmentalism (Escobar, 2010, p. 25). He goes on to argue that Latin American postneoliberalisms need to go further in adopting a relational, decolonising approach that de-links development from a western extractivist growth model, for a "more radical possibility, still to be named, but which combines features of post-capitalist, post-liberal, and post-statist societies that some social movements¹² ... embody and are beginning to theorize" (Escobar, 2010, p. 45). Other critics focus on the closure of political debate that occurred during the constituent assembly process (Becker, 2011).¹³ Political critics of Correa's government argue that authoritarian and populist governmentalities undermine an inclusive and progressive Constitution. Both analysts and national indigenous leaders point out that President Correa works with a fundamentally liberal model of citizenship and rights in relation to a strong state, whereas social movements have developed ways of thinking and theorising citizenship and rights in post-liberal and decolonising ways (see below). In this context, movement agendas risk becoming codified in particular ways, thereby losing their edge through co-optation by the state (Walsh,

¹⁰ Unlike Bolivia, Ecuador has not experienced cohesive elite mobilization against the postneoliberal government.

¹¹ Escobar (2010) documents indigenous intellectuals' perspectives in Bolivia and Ecuador, while Becker (2011) summarizes the Ecuadorian indigenous movements' critiques of Correa's government.

¹² Escobar focuses on Andean indigenous intellectuals, and the Zapatistas.

¹³ Criticisms of SK in the Ecuadorian media similarly focus on the (party) political nature of decision-making, and the influence of the executive over government priorities (Pozo Crespo, 2010; Anonymous, 2010).

⁹ As Escobar points out, Ecuador's SK model currently relies upon old-fashioned economic growth (2010, p. 22).

2010, p. 20). Moreover, Escobar and postcolonial critic Catherine Walsh question whether the current state's form will be able, let alone willing, to adapt to radical alterity (Escobar, 2010; Walsh, 2010, p. 20).

Indigenous leaders and intellectuals extend and deepen these criticisms, particular focusing on the failures to re-think development, state and society from a decolonising perspective. Soon after the 2008 Constitution was ratified in a referendum, CONAIE and other indigenous confederations left President Correa's coalition government, pointing to the government's retreat from key plurinational and intercultural measures in political discourse and practice.¹⁴ They fault the government with selective and limited interpretations of key concepts of plurinationalism, interculturalism and indeed *sumak kawsay*. According to the major indigenous confederation CONAIE, constructing a state that reflects diversity means taking into account the "profoundly plural character of the nation... in its great geographical differences, as well as in its ancestral differences that continue to organise ways of life..." (Walsh, 2009a,b, p. 165; also Macas, 2010). Since 1990, the CONAIE confederation has presented a series of four highly detailed proposals for a plurinational state (Walsh, 2009a, pp. 174, 176). Over the same period and in a parallel process, the national federation of blacks, peasants and indigenous peoples FENOCIN engaged in lively discussions about the principles, scope and nature of interculturalism (Larrea, 2008). In the 2008 constitution, and against indigenous models of the IPE state, indigenous representatives are not granted direct representation in all state bodies, and their rights over extractive industries established only a right to "prior, free and informed consultation" (Larrea, 2008, p. 80). In this sense, the nation-state retains for itself the ultimate sovereignty over all territory and resources, delegating indigenous groups greater control than they enjoyed previously, but not on their terms, namely as co-nationalities within autonomous territories. Although indigenous movements claim authorship of SK, they cite numerous times when government policies on mining or territorial rights have been decided in unfavourable ways (Becker, 2011, p. 58; Zorrilla, 2011). Provincial and regional indigenous leaders articulate critiques of SK not in terms of misguided principles (a critique levelled at previous development efforts [see Andolina et al., 2009]), but as a problematic breach between constitutional principles and realities on the ground.

Amongst grassroots populations and local leaders, SK has attained a widespread salience that reflects the historic importance of indigenous social movement agendas, as well as widespread political expectations. According to a collectively devised document prepared by diverse indigenous women, the plurinational state is the best context for realising effective development. The Indigenous Women's Agenda states, "the construction of a plurinational state in practice, to be truly just, democratic and equal, ... can generate the conditions so that women and men from indigenous nationalities and peoples can achieve true *sumak kawsay*... our own development with identity" (Indigenous Women's Agenda, 2010, p. 4). SK development resonates with positive connotations to the extent that it delineates a framework for justice and resource distribution, as well as fuller acknowledgement of ethnic diversity and historic dispossession. Indigenous woman Rosa Vacacela argues that the National Development Plan represents a major "conquest" of policy-making, a space in which indigenous and minority voices can be heard. "Who would have believed in

the 1980s that we would have *sumak kawsay* in each ministry?" she asks (CODENPE, 2010). According to discussions and interviews with diverse local indigenous representatives, SK remains a vital aspiration and goal; the delivery of *Buen vivir* remains a benchmark.¹⁵

Although indigenous groups understand SK as comprising autonomy from neoliberal political economies and the validation of autochthonous knowledges and social organisations, in practice they continue to be impoverished by market-based material inequalities and postcolonial racial hierarchies, regardless of the government's "postneoliberal" credentials. Local leaders express disillusionment with the government's interpretation of plurinationality and SK, as exemplified by the women's representative for a pro-CONAIE provincial federation:

"Well, I think that indigenous peoples live *sumak kawsay* when we have our rights and when what is written in the Constitution and in the laws really happens, and is really for poor people. And [SK] shouldn't just be a word, or a theory... I believe that *sumak kawsay* is when natural resources are respected or nationalised in Ecuador... Why? Because the grassroots [would benefit] when natural resources are nationalised[,] money would come back to indigenous peoples, to blacks. The money shouldn't stay in the state; that is not *sumak kawsay*. In 1998, indigenous people contributed to the Constitution and got important rights. Now *sumak kawsay* is written into the (Constitution) document but the rights of indigenous peoples are being trodden underfoot, they are being put down. So from my point of view, I say that [SK] is not being realised, that it is only being written in documents, but we are not applying it. It's not really being implemented as a real *sumak kawsay* would be carried out. It's only a theory... There's currently no secondary legislation on indigenous people being considered by Congress." (Interview, March 2010)

Indigenous commentators, especially those living in areas of extreme poverty, highlight the significant material consequences that should in theory follow from SK planning. Otherwise, indigenous women stress how their lifeways are already grounded in the principles of *Sumak kawsay*, despite being compromised by market pressures and poverty. Although indigenous communities have extremely low average levels of service provision and public goods,¹⁶ interlocutors stress the barriers of racial and gender discrimination. For these participants in a national debate about postneoliberal development, their core concern is public culture and decision-making rather than a material process of "catching up" with urban or *mestizo* areas. Women draw on their role as agriculturalists, parents and food preparers to articulate a sense of *sumak kawsay* as a question of secure, healthy, organic and locally produced foodstuffs (interviews and focus groups 2009, 2010). A sub-group identify with a spiritual dimension of SK, which would be achieved through acknowledging and interacting with an animate, sacred landscape.

For indigenous women living in poor areas, SK represents a bundle of ideas they can hardly articulate or imagine. In NA's words, "I don't know; I couldn't say. I would like to see some *sumak kawsay*; I couldn't say [what it is]. I'd like to see a better life for us, for the government to help us with some things, such as improvement of our products, improvement of our animals, of water. That's what I

¹⁴ Despite shared concerns and agendas, indigenous movements are highly varied. Diverse opinions exist within indigenous movements about the state's priorities regarding SK and plurinationalism. "In the most radical visions coming above all from Amazonia, indigenous organizations [propose to] take the place of the state in their territories, including control of strategic resources. Meanwhile in organizations such as [the Andean federation] Ecuarrunari, the strengthening of the state's role in control over strategic resources is important. [They propose] the nationalization of strategic resources..." (Larrea, 2008, pp. 77–78).

¹⁵ The 1st Continental Summit of Indigenous Women illustrates this in its title for the event held in Quito – "For life, for women's rights, for a plurinational state and *buen vivir*" (IV Cumbre, 2010). SK comprises a significant tool in indigenous women's articulation of their own agenda within broader indigenous agendas. In the words of one woman, "If *sumak kawsay* is done without women, there is no *sumak kawsay*" (CODENPE, 2010).

¹⁶ In 2001, fewer than 40% of rural indigenous houses had secure water provision, and only 7.2% had public sewerage connections (Indigenous Women's Agenda, 2010, p. 9).

would like to see in *sumak kawsay* as they call it". In this and other quotes, a material – but not acquisitive – interpretation of SK comes to the fore (Deere, 2010). In summary, indigenous and other critics of SK development highlight both the practical dimensions of implementing fair and equitable change, and a deeper epistemological critique of statecraft and development practice. We turn in the final section to examine this latter theme in light of postcolonial debates.

5. Discussion

Ecuador's postneoliberal development model aspires to a reformulated political economy and a new national community, founded on unity in diversity. Yet as the above discussion demonstrated, the ways in which SK was incorporated into constitutional and planning frameworks was a highly politicised and contested process. This section now turns to explore in greater depth the type of political subjectivities and contests that underlie competing understandings of postneoliberal development. By critically analysing the discourses of difference, claims and political citizenship in Ecuador, the section moves towards a postcolonial account of *sumak kawsay* and an interpretation of its limits.

In a number of ways, Ecuadorian constitutional and legislative frameworks represent a "postliberal" as well as postneoliberal – economic – turn. According to political scientist Deborah Yashar (2005), the heterogeneity of citizen mediation with the state is a core principle of postliberal political systems. In Ecuador, the 2008 constitution recognised the official status of two major indigenous languages (Kichwa, Shuar) in order to facilitate intercultural engagement between indigenous peoples and the state (Quintero Lopez, 2009, p. 82). Yet while seemingly opening up public life to heterogeneity, this measure did not require Spanish-speaking citizens to learn an indigenous language. The normative status of Spanish thereby remains in place, with a concession made to non-Spanish speakers in areas where indigenous languages are widely spoken. In this sense, citizenship remains within the terms set by liberal political theory and its acknowledgement of diversity. It does not fundamentally engage with the inequality and cultural difference between heterogeneous groups inhabiting the same territory (Bhabha, 1990). Language policy has done little to challenge the enduring representations that pathologize racialized Others as blocks to national modernisation and impediments to growth (Dávalos, 2008b, p. 13; Andolina et al., 2009).

The issue of land distribution further reveals underlying colonial conceptualisations of state, nation and citizens. Despite decades of (largely unsuccessful) agrarian reform, colonisation programmes, agricultural frontier expansion and land re-concentration, land distribution barely features in the constitution and the National Development Plan.¹⁷ Rather, the constitution establishes land use planning, and the special administration of Amazon lands for environmental protection. Consequently, postneoliberal development contains no explicit commitment to equitable land redistribution (2008 Constitution Article 282).¹⁸ By continuing to marginalize subaltern small farmers and landless rural dwellers, postneoliberal development in Ecuador continues to displace and deny their co-presence in the nation-state. Moreover although indigenous and black groups received rights to collective territories, these

spaces remain subordinate to other claims on land, and subject to growing levels of violence and land-grabs. Such positions elicit nation-state efforts at assimilation in the name of postneoliberal development, even as they reduce indigenous populations to marginal and circumscribed territories (cf. Wainwright, 2008).

Postneoliberalism reaches its philosophical and practical limit in relation to language and land not because it dismisses these issues *per se*, but that it unthinkingly reproduces a form of elite postcolonial modernity that continuously denigrates other ways of knowing and practicing development (Escobar, 2010). Arguably, the "profound cultural shift" (Ortiz, 2009) of SK has not been realised at a national level, as modernity and progress continue to have the same values as they did under (neoliberal) developmentalism. Nevertheless, experiments in what we might call "diverse modernities" are occurring, although they happen largely under the radar of national policy makers. The capacity for creative hybridizations of modernity and non-western modernity can be briefly illustrated. In the Amazonian province of Pastaza, a number of initiatives among diverse ethno-cultural groups recuperate ancestral knowledge in order to innovate and apply them in educational curricula and community planning (Merino, 2006; Redacción Cultura, 2010). In the northern Andes and Amazonia, local indigenous judicial systems have amended principles of justice to incorporate women's needs (Andrade, 2009; Lang and Kucia, 2009). Intercultural education at the university level has systematised and professionalized indigenous knowledges (Universidad Intercultural Amautay Wasi, 2004). These experiments work to decolonise the discourses and direction of development, unlearning the standard model and "learning to learn" from below (McEwan, 2009). Although the official SK model does not exclude developments such as these, critics point to the limited arenas within which such experiments can be discussed and learned from.

In this sense, contests over development planning and objectives represent more than (party) politics as usual. Experiments occurring inside and outside formal SK development instead represent 'border thinking,' that is thinking at the margins to – and at a distance from – core 'universal' epistemologies (Mignolo, 2000, 2005). Ongoing contests over the interpretation and implementation of the constitution represent struggles over a postcolonial legacy, in which subalterns remain subjected to the knowledge-power of Europeanized elites (Macas, 2011). According to an advocate of *sumak kawsay*, epistemic colonisation is still prevalent and comprises "an indifference towards those knowledges that do not match the theoretical frameworks given by modernity and development" (Dávalos, 2008b, p. 17). The authority of subaltern perspectives remains subject to the epistemic violence associated with colonialism. Recent events such as the unilateral closure of bilingual education, terrorism accusations against indigenous leaders, and de-legitimation of diverse voices exemplify this epistemic violence.

Decolonisation of the state and social attitudes thus remains on the agenda despite the formal political establishment of SK development principles. The decolonisation of the state continues to be urgent in order to dismantle the "coloniality that pervades Ecuadorian society and state" (Walsh, 2009a, p. 163; also Acosta, 2008a). Coloniality is the term coined by postcolonial critic Walter Mignolo to refer to how modernity (and its associated philosophies and forms of power) was forged in and through colonialism (Mignolo, 2000, 2005). Coloniality is to be tackled through forms of "border thinking" that can decolonise practice and epistemologies (Mignolo, 2000; Walsh, 2009b). In relation to SK, indigenous and other subalterns bring in other epistemologies to the task of devising a new paradigm for living well. In light of coloniality, the plurinational intercultural state has a particularly freighted responsibility to historically marginalised subjects, a commitment already recognised in theory by national planning bodies. Yet the challenge is to

¹⁷ In August 2010, press reports suggested that the National Agrarian Reform Institute (INDA) might be replaced in order to regulate landholdings and oversee any expropriation.

¹⁸ "The State shall make laws for the use and access to land that must fulfil social and environmental functions. A national land fund, established by law, shall regulate the equitable access of campesinos to land. Large estate farming and land concentration is forbidden, as is the monopolizing or privatizing of water and sources thereof" (2008 Constitution Article 282).

implement that postcolonial ethic of responsibility in the practices and everyday understandings of citizenship, difference and nationhood. Concessions of political and representational space to marginal populations go only so far; rights to reparation for (post)colonial dispossession would go much further (Walsh, 2009a, pp. 176, 180, 2009b; Wainwright, 2008).

6. Conclusions

The tension between top-down neoliberal development and insurgent alternatives so characteristic of the 1990s has now been displaced by the rise of Latin American countries that attempt to merge a strong state with grassroots development models. Ecuador's current postneoliberal development agenda aims to address the material and social exclusions associated with neoliberal, and indeed capitalist, development. Backed by a constitutional settlement, a national development plan is formulated to bring together social, political, environmental and growth agendas. Postneoliberalism encompasses a broad array of political, geopolitical, macroeconomic and development policy aspects. By focusing on the genealogy and governmentality of SK as an example of postneoliberal development thinking and policy, this paper has examined the extent and nature of shifts in development thinking occurring in this 21st century model. In certain ways, the Ecuadorian example matches postcapitalist features of economic plurality, diverse epistemologies and equity objectives, as described by Gibson-Graham (2006). However where Ecuador differs most strongly from Gibson-Graham's discussion is in the central role given to the state and a national planning process. Yet Ecuador's development model also challenges standard Marxist and modernisation narratives in that its bio-centric socialism with *sumak kawsay* rejects environmentally damaging industrialisation at all costs.

The paper highlighted additionally how developmentalism continues to pervade the legal and planning frameworks for postneoliberal development. It has also suggested that the practices, grammars and logics of neoliberal governmentality have been hard to shift, regardless of transformations in rhetoric and the constitution. In one respect, this is unsurprising: Ecuador faces the challenge of establishing a plurinational-intercultural state in which social, civil and nature's rights have precedence over the elite and private capitalist interests that have prevailed for 200 years. The challenge is all the greater as Ecuador, unlike many of its neighbours, has only a patchy and weak state which delivers low levels of social provision, leaving individuals and communities with informal welfare networks. Contentious politics between the state, governments and social movements shaped SK's institutionalisation combining grassroots elements with neoliberal forms of governmentality, and postcolonial statecraft.

An in-depth critical analysis of *sumak kawsay* reveals a further problematic aspect of postneoliberalism, and of SK development planning in particular. Contests between diverse actors over the nature, extent and speed of reform can be understood in postcolonial terms as a discursive and material struggle between a decolonising move to overcome the enduring aftermath of colonialism (McEwan, 2009), and a hegemonic conception of state, citizen and society. In social movement formulations, *sumak kawsay* represents border thinking that challenges development's colonising discourses and practices (Mignolo, 2005; Power et al., 2006; McEwan, 2009). Yet SK faced considerable hurdles to dealing effectively with the postcolonial geographies that compound racial and regional inequality. First, the state remains in practice a colonial state, unwilling to cede autonomy and territorial rights to collective citizens. Second, the government continues to interpret and prioritize certain constitutional principles over others in ways that serve to reproduce postcolonial hierarchies of poverty, difference

and exclusion. Longstanding postcolonial patterns of resource distribution, (mis)recognition, and violence (epistemic and physical in form) work to reproduce social marginalization in urban and rural areas, as well as racial hierarchies. In one sense, the language of *sumak kawsay* has been used to cloak postcolonial development as usual; it remains to be seen whether the political will and intellectual capacity required for overcoming postcolonial exclusions can be found and acted upon.

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