

*MASTER OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS:
GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY*



**SUMAK KAWSAY: AN ORIGINAL
PATHWAY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF AN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

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Abstract:

For decades now, the earth's climate has been tampered with as greenhouse gases have been pumped into the atmosphere without any constraints. On top of that, the world is still troubled by immense social inequalities, putting the feasibility of realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nation in 2015 in question. The last decade has been a period overshadowed by a variety of crises, from immigration crises to financial crises. This has raised criticism, demanding to reconsider the current development paradigm. The rational of development through economic growth cannot be maintained, particularly due to our planets' boundaries. We have exhausted our planets limits and are steering towards its tipping point. This paper will look at the Ecuadorian case of Sumak Kawsay, a variant of Buen Vivir which, has been an increasingly popular worldview in the Andean and Amazon region of Latin America. This paper will explore Buen Vivir as an alternative development strategy and critically assess its viability to achieve a set of three distinct UN sustainable development goals. Additionally, the current global political economy will be critically discussed. Thus, this paper can be placed within the wider debate of development studies, seeking alternatives to the current development paradigm.

“We Hereby Decide To Build A New Form Of Public Co-Existence, In Diversity And Harmony With Nature, To Achieve The Good Way Of Living, The Sumak Kawsay”

Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008

Master of International Relations: Master Thesis

Supervisor: Prof. E. Amann

¹ Cover Picture taken from Salvini

Table of Content

1. Introduction	1
2. Research Design	3
Research Questions	3
Research Goal	5
3. Literature Review	6
The Question of Development and the Environment	6
Historical Background	9
Conclusion	12
4. Theoretical Framework	13
Capitalist Development theory	13
Critical Perspective	15
The Philosophy of Buen Vivir	16
The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals	17
5. Analysis	20
Case Study 1: Yasuni-ITT Initiative	21
The Failure of Yasuni-ITT	26
Conclusion: Lessons learned from Yasuni-ITT	27
Case Study 2: The Management of the Galapagos Islands	28
Conclusion: A model for the future	33
Beyond Yasuni and the Galapagos	33
6. Final Conclusion	38
Results	38
Limitations	40
Final Remarks	41
7. Appendices	42
8. Bibliography	46

1. Introduction

For decades now, the Earth's heat level has been tempered with by allowing uncontrolled amounts of emissions to be pumped into the atmosphere. The dangers of climate change are starting to become present and worldwide, bio-systems have begun to react. The changes thus far may still seem faint from a human perspective. Yet, on a planetary timescale the changes implicated by melting glaciers or ocean acidification are disastrous and irrevocable (Flavin and Engelman 2009, 5). Currently, the biggest per capita emitters are highly developed and industrialized countries like the United States which, accounts for 20 percent of the world's fossil-fuel CO₂ emissions while only accounting for 4,6 percent of the world's population. Likewise, there has been a sharp increase in emissions coming from emerging economies such as China. The Asian country has increased its emissions from 1990 to 2008 by a striking 150 percent (2009, 7). Nevertheless, countries like China or the US alone cannot be held liable for the emergence of climate change rather, it is the consequence of the contemporary paradigm of accumulation and development through economic growth that demands joint responses, even from the smallest countries. Therefore, change is eminent if our planet is to be saved and, it must be achieved cooperatively by all nations around the world.

Discontent with development has significantly increased in the recent decade. It is not just climate change that exposes a threat to our current system, the turn of the century has been marked by crises of various nature. Financial crises, migrant crises, food crises or energy crises have become all too familiar and problems of worldwide poverty and inequality have not been resolved (Villalba 2013, 1428). Cracks in the current world order have begun to show and new strategies are necessary that call for a post-neoliberal period of sustainable development that is capable of resolving our current day issues.

Buen Vivir (BV) is an alternative strategy that proposes alternative priorities for society, other than the mere greed for more economic growth (Vanhuylst and Beling 2014, 57). BV, or Sumak Kawsay as it is originally known from the Quechua language, represents the hope of alternatives to development focused on the good life (Arsel

2012, 154). Initially, it was a term made popular through social movements but, it has soon become a prevalent term in government programs of Bolivia and Ecuador (Gudynas 2011, 441). And eventually, BV was integrated into the Ecuadorian constitution in 2008 (Acosta 2017, 2606). Additionally, BV can be regarded as a critical reaction to the western idea of development. It refers to a development strategy that takes its roots in the indigenous traditions and therefore takes distance from the dominating Eurocentric traditions of our modern times.

Simply translating *Buen Vivir* into English as *well-being* or *good life* would not do justice to the actual complexity of the term. Rather, it refers to a much larger philosophy of quality of life within a community, a community that includes nature. In short, it embraces the well-being in coexistence and cohabitation with others and nature (Gudynas 2011, 411). However, it is important to mention that BV as it is applied in the Ecuadorian case is not applicable as an identical concept to other regions. Rather, BV needs to be understood as an umbrella term that requires each region to explore and build its own good life (Gudynas 2011, 444). Accordingly, BV also has a universal dimension as other societies around the world have similar cultural references. For example, the Greek philosopher Socrates described good life as the importance of inner reflection and the individual contributing to the well-being of a community as a whole.

2. Research Design

In this section, the structure of the paper will be outlined, and justifications will be given for the case selection. Furthermore, it will be defined how this research aims to answer the guiding question that will be stated below. This will be complemented by framing the research goal of this paper which will further underline the ambitions of this research and place it into a broader perspective.

Research Questions

Development is often understood in economic or technological terms. For example, a country is considered developed when it has achieved great technological innovation or a high GDP per capita. In other words, money is a measure of value and the drive of a business and the economy is to increase returns, accumulation and consumption. Furthermore, nature as well as people are being commodified. Nature is seen as a source of revenue and an exploitable resource while people are potential investors, consumers and labour. This paper has the ambition to undergo the task of challenging the current idea of what is understood as development by taking an in-depth look at a sustainable development strategy of Ecuador, namely BV. Furthermore, BV will be analysed as a potential strategy to achieve three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), established by the United Nations in 2015. Such qualitative analysis will aim to provide valuable insights on the feasibility of the SDGs as well as the feasibility of BV itself, as an independent project and a path towards realizing a set of SDGs. The guiding question that will be posed in this paper is;

How does Buen Vivir present a path for Ecuador towards achieving the three United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of Sustainable Cities and Communities, Climate Action and Life on Land?

The UN defined SDGs are sought to be the blueprint for a better and more sustainable future for all (United Nations 2015). However, due to the scope of this paper, only a selected few of the 17 SDG will be looked at. The three selected SDGs that will be looked at in this paper are; *Sustainable Cities and Communities* (11), *Climate Action* (13) and *Life on Land* (15). These goals have been chosen as they correlate with the goals and values of BV. Furthermore, Climate Action, Sustainable communities and Life on Land are issues of great importance to Ecuador, its

Amazonian region, the Galapagos islands and the inhabitants of these areas. However, throughout the essay also other SDGs will be briefly touched upon.

The Ecuadorian case of Buen Vivir has been chosen instead of other regional examples because the Ecuadorian constitution establishes a framework which offers a set of rights established under BV, including the rights of nature as well as means to implement those rights (Merino 2016, 274). Furthermore, the Ecuadorian example offers the possibility to analyse already well-established cases along with an international dimension which is lacking in other regional examples, such as Bolivia. In order to sufficiently address the research question, two case studies have been carefully selected to showcase and assess the implications of BV and its potential of achieving the three SDGs.

The first project, which will be discussed is called Yasuni-ITT and concerns the Yasuni national park, located in the Amazonian region of Ecuador. The Yasuni-ITT initiative is a discontinued project. However, it embodies all essential elements of BV and it is a perfect case for seeking to understand the challenges of new development paradigms. Firstly, the functioning, implementation and goals of the Yasuni-ITT project will be looked at. Then, its achievements in terms of environmental and social impact will be deliberated. During this analysis, parallels will be drawn to the SDG goals 11,13 and 15 and it will be examined to what extent the project worked towards achieving these. This will be done by evaluating taken policy measures, consulting data and weighing the preservation of the rainforest and its inhabitants.

The second case study falling under the umbrella of BV is the management of the Galapagos Archipelago. The vision of such management plan is to achieve good living for the human community while ensuring the preservation of terrestrial and marine ecosystems and biodiversity (Calvopiña, et al. 2015, 13). Thus, similarly to the Yasuni-ITT project, the success and feasibility of the Galapagos management plan will be looked at in terms of its social and environmental impact, assessing its contribution towards achieving the set SDGs. This will again be done by assessing policy measures and consulting datasets such as park visitors, alien species and population growth. Both case studies will make use of secondary as well as primary sources. And, the time frame of the collected data is from 2000 onwards as this allows

a clear picture and comparison of the changes since the implementation of the new constitution in 2008.

Research Goal

The aim of this paper is to consider BV as a philosophy that has the power to represent an alternative path of development. In this light it will be looked at to what extent BV can achieve sustainable life in cities, within communities, climate action and sustainable life on land. Such analysis will challenge the contemporary idea of economic development which has dominated development theories over the past decades. Furthermore, such analysis of alternative development strategies is of utmost importance in the context of today's global crises, varying from environmental to financial. After all, the question of sustainability is a vital topic and solutions on how to achieve it are fiercely debated. This paper will undergo the ambitious task of contributing to this debate and to provoke a critical perspective.

In the subsequent section of the Literature Review, previous research and scholarly debates on the topic at hand will be outlined in addition to providing the vital historical background. Then, the theoretical bases of this paper will be established in the Theoretical Framework by looking at the critical political economy theory, the Sustainable Development Goals and Buen Vivir. This will be followed by the Analysis section including the case studies on Yasuni and the Galapagos Islands. Lastly, in the conclusion a concise summary of the arguments will be made, followed by closing remarks and a future outlook.

3. Literature Review

The following chapter will be a thorough analysis of the existing academic literature. This will be done by critically reviewing articles, reports and books written by several scholars from various different perspectives, comprehensively laying out their main arguments. This will help to put Buen Vivir into the broader context of development. Correspondingly, the literature review is structured to go from the broad to the narrow. Therefore, this will be complemented with a section covering the historical background of Buen Vivir.

The Question of Development and the Environment

In a recent report to the Club of Rome, Randers et al. (2018), address the feasibility of achieving the 17 SDGs. The SDGs envision a world in which development and the use of technology are climate sensitive and respectful to biodiversity. This will be achieved through accelerated growth of renewable energies, enhanced productivity of food chains, new development models, inequality reduction, investment in education and gender equality. In order to test the feasibility of the 17 SDGs within planetary boundaries, Randers et al. simulate four distinct scenarios, each running until 2050. The four scenarios are; Business as usual, accelerated economic growth, harsher policies towards SDGs and transformational actions (2018, 12-13). Scenarios one and two showed the least success in achieving the SDGs while also greatly risking the safety of the planetary boundaries. The two latter scenarios showed more promising results. However, the unfortunate reality is that none of the four scenarios achieved all of the SDGs by 2050. However, what is particularly important is the finding that business as usual nor accelerated economic growth provide feasible scenarios if we ought to accomplish the SDGs without risking our planets safety. Thus, alternatives must be found, for Randers et al. this alternative presents itself in transformational actions. Transformational actions refer to the idea of smarter progress by focusing on the human wellbeing (2018, 30). Meaning, governments must realize that maximising GDP is not the priority, instead focus must be shifted to maximizing human wellbeing and freedom. This is achieved through public services, equity and good environmental quality while acknowledging that conventional market-based growth has weak sustainable development incentives (2018, 31).

However, there are several other perspectives on the issues of development and its alternatives out there. Another stance which has recently picked up popularity is the idea of sustainable development and environmental protection through market-based mechanisms. Already on Earth Day 1992, president Clinton in his speech suggested that environmental protection does not need to be at the expense of the economy but instead, it is possible to add a green thumb to Adam Smith's invisible hand (Steinberg 2010, 7). The core foundation of market-based mechanisms is the belief that it addresses the issues of climate change while only subtly modifying the markets. Steinberg refers to this as Green-Liberalism. Green-Liberalism according to Steinberg is the idea that market forces in combination with individuals can save the planet (2010, 8). Two prominent examples of market-based mechanisms are; carbon trading and carbon taxes. The former is as the name suggests a platform that works with trading carbon emissions, usually in the form of carbon credits or units. An example of such carbon trading according to Godoy and Saes is the European Union Emission Trade Scheme (2015, 135). The second market-based mechanism is carbon taxes. An advocate of this particular mechanisms is William Nordhaus, who has recently won the Nobel Prize for Economic Science because of his integration of climate change into macroeconomic analysis (Cummings 2018). Nordhaus argues that people must have economic incentives to engage in emission reduction, the best way to do that is by putting a price on carbon (2013, 221). Yet, neither of the two mechanisms are without controversy. The carbon trading scheme has shown little results in reducing the emissions. This has mainly to do with a free permit distribution which has led to high fluctuations of the carbon price.

Contrary to the previously discussed scholars, there are also scholars such as Harvey who argue that the idea that capitalism is approaching a fatal contraction in the form of an environmental crisis is controversial (2014, 140). He justifies his doubt on the harmful impact of economic growth on the environment by four claims. Firstly, he makes the point that throughout history too many doomsayers have forecasted catastrophes, such as famine, disease or war. Harvey provides the example of Paul Ehrlich who in 1970 argued that starvation was imminent by the end of the century. Yet, this starvation did not occur (2014, 140). Secondly, Harvey argues that nature is actually internalised within the circulation and accumulation of capital. He provides

the example of an agricultural business which reinvests its profits into re-growing the harvested plants for the next year. Thirdly, humans have already modified and reconstructed the environment in ways which made it more hospitable and profitable for humans. This has been done through genetic engineering, the creation of new chemicals or large-scale environmental modifications (2014, 140-41). Lastly, Harvey is arguing that wrongfully the “domination of nature” thesis is still applied which regards nature and capital as two separate entities, where one dominates over the other and nature could potentially take its revenge. Alternatively, Harvey suggests that capitalism is a working and ever evolving ecosystem which constantly produces and reproduces capital and nature (2014, 141).

Magdoff and Foster share the believe that capitalism at its core is about maximization and wealth accumulation (2011, 38). They describe capitalism as; its main driver is the infinite quest for profits and accumulation and because of the constant competition, companies are pressed to increase sales and gain a higher market share (2011, 41). Furthermore, what the two scholars find is that during recessions, environmental quality improves. This is mainly because there are fewer emissions, discharges into the water, less miles driven and less resource mining activities (2011, 60). What this implies is that less economic activity is good for the environment. However, Magdoff and Foster also find that in order to revitalize the economy, governments remove environmental protections as it is considered an unaffordable luxury in times of crisis (2011, 60). This has far-reaching implications for the environment. However, economic crises are not just harmful for the environment, they also indicate cracks in the current system.

The great recession of 2008 has temporarily marked the end of one of the longest economic booms in the history of capitalism (Arsel 2012, 150). This, according to Arsel has challenged the hegemonic power of neoliberalism, that has controlled development strategies around the world for decades. Thus, it has become of great importance to look for alternative paradigms. Arsel argues that Latin America is a place well suited for such a paradigm shift as it was once on the forefront of the global free-market revolution whereas now it has experienced several left-wing governments, mostly elected due to their anti-neoliberal stance (2012, 150). Neoliberalism in most developing countries has meant privatization, the retreat of the

state from the markets, tax cuts as well as opening up borders among others. This was done under the dominant neoclassical belief that markets are self-regulating and the most efficient way to allocate resources (2012, 152). Acosta and Gudynas et al. agree with the notion that the financial crisis of 2008 has highlighted the need to seek a new path (2009, 1). They argue that BV and one of its policy projects, Yasuni-ITT represent such an alternative path (2009, 12).

Previously, most scholars were reflecting on the implementation of BV in Ecuador and Bolivia. However, as Merino points out the discourse on BV has also reached Peru (2016, 271). He states that the term has begun to be used by the indigenous population of Peru as a political project to express their territorial right, their culture and their right for self-determination. This, they deem as necessary due to limitations of the current development theory. Thus, what can be observed according to Merino is that BV is becoming a platform for articulation of various social movements throughout Latin America (2016, 272).

Yet other scholars warn of the unresolved contradictions that BV still presents. Some concepts of BV are still ambiguous as they are being transformed, partially due to political discourse and differing theoretical perspectives. In general, three main perspectives on BV can be identified, indigenous, ecologist or post-developmental and socialist-statist or eco-Marxist (Villalba-Eguiluz and Etxano 2017, 2). What all three perspectives share is the relations between society and nature and the need to establish measures for sustainability.

Historical Background

During the 1980s Latin America went through a debt crisis, also known as the “lost decade”. In order to find its way out of the crisis, Latin American countries adopted neoliberal economic policies prescribed by institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. These policies brought stability and condemned hyperinflation, it also had significant side-effects. The promised increase in foreign investment, growth of local businesses and increased employment did not occur. Instead, it can be argued that the privatization of the economy led to more corruption and increased poverty, giving Latin America the reputation of the most unequal region in the World (O'Connell 2016,

37-38). The arrival of neoliberalism in Latin America also had consequences for the society. Many poor in urban and rural areas as well as indigenous people felt economically and politically excluded. This dissatisfaction was articulated through social and indigenous movements amongst others.

Ecuador has been a poor country for most of its independent history. It has suffered under political instability, periods of military rule and economic crises. In the decade prior to 2007, Ecuador was ruled by five different governments which all followed a similar neoliberal economic strategy. This has turned its economy into one that is being controlled by multinational companies and local elites and made it dependent on primary goods such as oil and bananas (Ghosh 2012, 37). In 2000 things got worse and the country went through a hyperinflation. As a countermeasure, Ecuador dollarized its economy and replaced the Sucre with Dollars (2012, 38). It showed some success yet, this did not address the core issue and the economy continued to struggle.

However, the economic and political turmoil came to an end in 2006, when Correa became president who won the election against Ecuador's richest man, Alvaro Noboa (2012, 38). Correa's election was supported by indigenous and social movements and can be described as being part of a wider regional left-wing movement in Latin America called the pink tide. Soon after he took office, he called for a referendum to accommodate the people's desire for a new constitution. This new constitution was based on the philosophy of BV, to build a new form of co-existence and a society that respects the dignity of all individuals and communities (2012, 38). The following development objectives aligned with BV were defined in the constitution;

- ❖ Improving quality of life and life expectancy while enhancing people's potential and capabilities.
- ❖ Create a fair, democratic, productive, supportive and sustainable economic structure.
- ❖ Acknowledging diverse identities and their equal representation.
- ❖ Preserve and restore nature as well as maintaining a sustainable environment to ensure people and communities access to water, land and air.

- ❖ Preserve and promote cultural heritage and diversity and its spaces of reproduction

Buen Vivir as a discourse emerged during the 1990s, mostly pushed by three vital factors; firstly, by Latin American Social movements of the time such as indigenous movements against neoliberalism. Secondly, by the convergence of such movements and global movements of anti-globalization and environmental movements. Lastly, because of a then widespread dissatisfaction with the idea of development (Vanhulst and Beling 2014, 56).

In several Latin American countries, neoliberalism started to face strong opposition during the 1990s (Vanhulst and Beling 2014, 56). Many indigenous groups self-organized on a national level and formed groups such as the “Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador (CONAIE)” or the “Confederación de Pueblos Indígenas de Bolivia (CIDOB)”. Later in 2006, they moved to the regional level through organizations such as Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas (CAOI). This led to the empowerment of indigenous voices which fitted into the contemporary context of human rights and environmentalist as well as anti-globalization movements. This resulted in the recognition of indigenous struggles in the global debate on sustainability and development. In such fashion, the Buen Vivir discourse consequently enjoyed increased importance in countries such as Bolivia and Ecuador.

However, not just favourable discourse played a role for Buen Vivir’s emergence according to Merino (2016, 272). The scholar argues that countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru and most other Latin American countries suffered from a colonial legacy of indigenous struggle which has led to the dispossession of territories and overwhelming natural resource exploitation. Still today, these countries heavily depend on resources extraction, in particular mining or oil and gas extraction. This has established a fragile economic dependency on the extraction of such goods. Now, the dilemma these countries are facing is that traditionally their social policies are financed through such primary resource extractions which leads to social-environmental conflicts. Meaning, natural resource extraction is the basis for development policies in these countries which presents a dilemma. According to

Merino (2016, 272), Buen Vivir is a response to this dilemma. Hence, Merino's argument is that Buen Vivir can be interpreted as a reaction to countries dependency on natural resource extraction to fund welfare programs.

Conclusion

As it has been discussed in this section, the question of what development is and what is good development is still fiercely debated. It has been showcased by Randers et al. that in order to achieve some of the 17 SDGs change is eminent. However, it has also been shown that scholars like Harvey do not necessarily believe in the negative impacts the economy can have on the environment. Thus, from such a perspective capitalism is an evolving system that require transformational actions such as Randers et al. propose. This paper shares the position that business as usual or the pursued of accelerated growth is not sustainable in a finite world.

In the Historical Background, a short summary on how BV came about was presented. What can be seen is that BV mainly emerged because of anti-neoliberal sentiments which have been fuelled by economic crises. Furthermore, BV as a movement emerged from marginalized groups who often felt excluded and voiceless during the neoliberal period. This anti-neoliberal sentiment was then taken advantage of by Correa who made BV an integral part of Ecuador's Constitution and Politics. BV has since become a fundamental part of the Ecuadorian identity.

4. Theoretical Framework

As it has been discussed in the previous section, there are contrasting views on the potentially negative impacts of the economy, capitalism, globalization, neoliberalism etc. In this paper, a critical perspective on the global economy will be taken which is generally in line with the discussed scholars like Magdoff and Foster, Randers et al, Steinberg and Arsel. Therefore, this section builds upon the previous one and expands on this debate by defining development as it is understood from a neoliberal view. This will be followed by further outlining the critical perspective on such a development paradigm that has already been debated in the literature review. Lastly, the philosophy of BV will be demarcated and modelled drawing parallels to the critical view of the capitalist development paradigm.

Capitalist Development theory

The fundamental question that requires answering is; what can be understood as development? According to different perspectives, development can mean various things. It could either be regarded as the reduction of poverty or the ability of economic growth. Furthermore, it can refer to countries playing catch-up and eventually being wealthy and having a spot alongside other leading capitalist states. Or, is it the end of exploitation of nature and labour and the creation of human freedom. These concepts of development can be traced back as far as to Aristotle's Eudaimonia² or Adam Smith's stages of human development. However, the field of development studies especially gained traction after the introduction of the Bretton Woods System which sought to stimulate economic growth in "third world" countries (Selwyn 2014, 7). Thus, development then was very much related to economic growth. Eventually, development studies expanded from its economic focus towards issues such as environmental destruction, anti-corruption and state-reformation (2014, 10).

² Greek word describing happiness and wellbeing, literally translated as good spirit. It is a central part of Aristotle's ethics and political philosophy and refers to the idea of developing the most human capability, reason.

However, generally development thinking is still referred to as the idea of uplifting the world's poor. Capital accumulation is therefore viewed as being good for the development of the poor while the elites are seen as the drivers for the capital accumulation (Selwyn 2017, 77). In the work; *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, Rostow describes 5 stages of economic growth through which all countries could pass, considering they would deploy the right policies (1991, 4). It can be considered as one of the clearest definitions of the Capital-Centred development theory as it attempts to facilitate capital accumulation while disregarding any alternative ways of human-development (2017, 78). Additionally, development is still considered as a Eurocentric field which is poised by orientalist beliefs and a colonial or neo-colonial mechanism opposed upon other cultures (Durand and Légé 2012, 112). Neoliberalism is closely related to Latin America. Latin America has been swayed into the adoption of neoliberal policies which saw the creation of a capitalist world-economy. Furthermore, it saw the reduction of the state and the rise of the markets, leading to the reality of economic growth and income per capita outweighing the importance of human development, environmental preservation or societal and cultural rights and heritage (Williford 2018, 99). On top of that, according to Roccu (2016, 187), neoliberalism is also closely linked to inequality. Inequality has increased in countries that have experienced more neoliberalism than others. This argument can be supported by the fact that inequalities have decreased in Latin American counties that have distanced themselves from neoliberalism, like Ecuador from 2000 onwards and particularly under Correa in 2007 (see appendix 3).

To conclude this section, development is still very much understood from a capitalistic perspective by means of accumulation of capital. And, this understanding of development and the adaptation of a capitalist system has led to exponential economic growth over the past decades. However, this system is not free of flaws and as Roccu (2016, 187) has stated, might even have led to a widening gap between the rich and the poor. In the next section, the perspective critical political economy will be explored further.

Critical Perspective

As Marx or Polanyi would argue, economic growth is not the indicator of societal development. Instead, emphasis must be put on human freedom which Polanyi argues is undermined by the market economy (Selwyn 2014, 136). Personal wealth is therefore not regarded as the precondition for well-being as low incomes have not prohibited people from living satisfying lives (Sandbrook 2016, 423). Thus, the market must be subordinated to norms such as ecological protection, shared prosperity, solidarity, mutuality and trust (2014, 136).

Globalization, a revolution that can be compared to the industrial revolution, opened up the possibility of economic, political, cultural and social interconnectivity which fast-tracked the spread of capitalism (Munck 2016, 194). While this rise of globalization and capitalism since the end of the cold war has challenged Marxism, it is also an opportunity for this theoretical perspective to re-establish itself as the most fundamental critique of the capitalist order. Indeed, capitalism and globalization today are distinct from the capitalism of the Industrial Revolution which Marx talked about. However, this does not mean that Marxism cannot be useful when explaining and understanding contemporary capitalist dynamics. This perspective is also referred to as critical political economy.

Thus, critical political economy looks at the economy from the outside, while acknowledging societies different classes and social relations and how this shapes the market. It looks at how it came about and is questioning the established power relations. However, it does not entirely reject the use of an economy, it warns about the pitfalls of our current economic system as it does not put the needs of people first. So, what this approach then proposes is the revision of established economic concepts as these have not adequately dealt nor erased essential flaws such as inequality (Browning and Kilmister 2006, 2). Hence, it is like providing a guide to an alternative system. One of such potential alternative systems with corresponding views to the critical perspective will be further explored in the following segment.

The Philosophy of Buen Vivir

Firstly, BV is a philosophy which is focused on living within a community. This contrasts the Western form of development which takes the individual as a basic social unit (Williford 2018, 102). Therefore, BV recognizes how the context of the community can shape and influence the well-being of everyone. This can also be described as equity. Equity refers to the wellbeing and quality of life achieved through harmony, the recognition of the communitarian and individual, the spiritual and the subjective, not just the material (Villalba-Eguiluz and Etxano 2017, 2). In this regard, it takes a similar position as the critical perspective which also emphasises the need of human freedom and wellbeing above material needs.

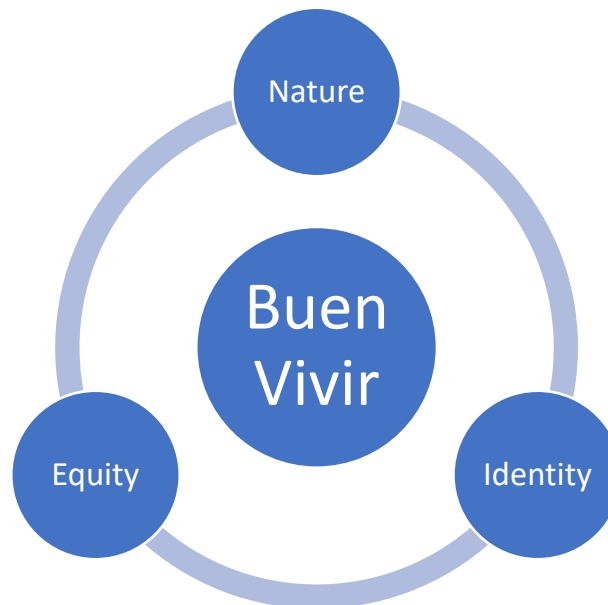
Secondly, nature and humans cannot be separated, both are elements within the biosphere with responsibilities towards the vitality of “Pacha Mama” (Mother Earth) (Williford 2018, 102). Therefore, it can also include the concept of biocentrism and establish a break with the dichotomy of society and nature. Thus, BV acknowledges the rights of nature and promotes harmonic and sustainable living alongside nature. Again, parallels can be drawn to the critical perspective which argues for the need of markets being subordinated to ecological protection.

The final part to the philosophy of BV is identity. BV is not associated with economic growth, consumption or material enlargement. Thus, contrary to the conventional capitalistic idea of development, BV is not a linear process which is defined as moving from under or limited developed to more compound systems that prioritize economic growth (Williford 2018, 103). Instead, it focuses on other principles such as; knowledge, ethical codes, spiritual behaviour, social and cultural value. Accordingly, BV is not just finding an identity through a critique of western history and development, it is a “cosmovision” of cooperation, solidarity, reciprocity and harmony. In Figure 1, a model of the philosophy of BV as it is defined in this paper can be observed.

To sum up, BV offers a critical approach to the ideology of progress through economic growth, exploitation of nature and the societal importance of materialism. Additionally, it offers a new opportunity to break with previous forms of development and to construct an alternative development regime (Sankey and Munck 2016, 351).

Likewise, it also shares common belief with the critical theory such as putting the needs of the people first, solidarity and shared prosperity.

Figure 1 The Triangle of Good Life



The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

The SDGs are 17 global goals including 169 targets covering contemporary issues such as hunger, poverty, social justice and climate change. These targets and goals are set to be achieved by 2030 and aspire to “leave no one behind” (Indigenous Peoples Major Group 2015). The in 2017 implemented SDG are an extension of the previously established Millennium Development Goals which were resolved in 2015 (DeLuca 2017, 1). As most of the Millennium Goals have not been achieved by the time of its deadline in 2015, the SDG aim to avert and improve upon the failures of its predecessor. The SDG mark a new era of involvement in the wellbeing the planet and everyone on it. The three SDG that will be discussed in this paper will be outlined below.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

This Goal has the general ambition to make human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and most of all sustainable. On top of that, the aim of this goal is to protect

the vulnerable and poor, creating settlement, communities and cities that are sustainable both in an environmental and societal sense. In order to achieve this, Goal 11 has the following subordinated targets;

11.1. Enhance sustainable urbanization by incorporating sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries.

11.2. Enhance efforts to strengthen the worlds cultural and natural heritage.

11.3 Significantly reduce the number of deaths caused by disasters by 2030. This particularly focuses on the most vulnerable.

11.4 Encourage links between economy, society and the environment while supporting national and regional development planning. Furthermore, mitigation and adaption to climate change will be taken into consideration.

Goal 13: Climate Action

Climate Change is affecting everyone, it is disrupting economies and endangering lives. Sea levels are uncontrollably rising, extreme weather conditions are becoming more frequent and emissions are now higher than they have ever been in history. If no actions are being taken, a 3 degrees temperature increase will not be prevented in this century (United Nations 2015). Climate change is a global challenge that does not know borders. It requires a global solution and every country needs to play its part. In order to achieve this goal, the following steps need to be taken according to the United Nations;

13.1. Resilience towards climate hazards and natural disasters needs to be strengthened.

13.2. Climate change measures must be adopted into national policies and strategies.

13.3. Commitment from developed countries to mobilise a global fund of \$100 billion annually by 2020 to address climate action needs of developing countries

13.4. Promote mechanisms for effective climate change related planning and management for developing countries as well as local and marginalized communities.

Goal 15: Life on Land

Forests cover up to 30 percent of the planet's surface. They provide food, shelter and are the key to fighting climate change. Additionally, they are protecting biodiversity and are home to indigenous populations. Human activities pose a major challenge to the sustainability of earth's forests and affect the livelihoods of millions of people (United Nations 2015). This goal includes a variety of targets, below the most relevant have been listed;

15.1 Ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable management of all types of forests.

15.2 Act to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, prevent the loss of biodiversity and threatened species.

15.3 Prevent the introduction of invasive alien species and their impact on land and water ecosystems.

15.4 Integrate ecosystem and biodiversity norms into national and local planning and development strategies.

15.5 Encourage global support to protect species and increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable living

5. Analysis

How the three previously stated goals and its targets align with BV and the two selected case studies will be discussed in this chapter. Moreover, it will be discussed to what extent these two projects under the umbrella of BV can achieve the three SDGs. Furthermore, parallels will be drawn to the literature review. Firstly, the Yasuni-ITT project will be discussed, followed by the management of the Galapagos islands.

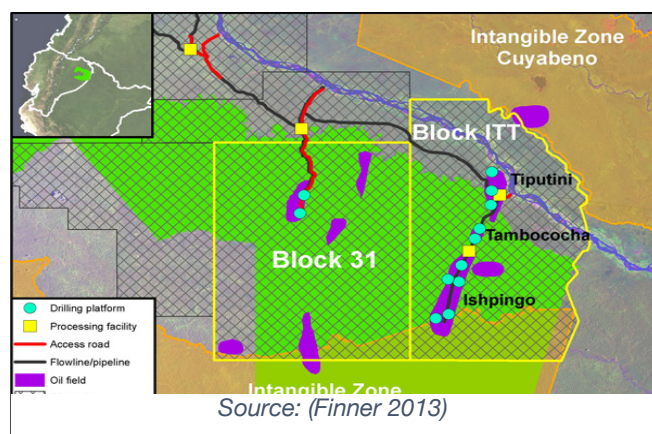
As it has already been discussed by Randers et al. (2018), the path that shows to be most promising in achieving all of the 17 SDG by 2050 is the fourth one, transformational action. Transformational action refers to the idea of focusing on the human wellbeing. Human wellbeing is mainly achieved through equity and improving environmental quality, things which corollate strongly with the BV philosophy. Furthermore, the 17 SDGs itself demand the pursuit of new development models, as it states in the agenda accompanying the SDGs; *We recognize that there are different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country, in accordance with its national circumstances and priorities, to achieve sustainable development; and we reaffirm that planet Earth and its ecosystems are our common home and that “Mother Earth” is a common expression in a number of countries and regions (United Nations 2015, 17)*. This means that there is not one linear path prescribed by the UN on how to achieve the 17 SDGs. To the contrary, this suggests that the UN is encouraging each nation to implement its own model while respecting “Pacha Mama” as a common home to obtain sustainable development. In fact, throughout the entire agenda of the UN concerning the SDG, several parallels to what the UN envisions as sustainable development and BV can be found, such as; *We envision a world in which humanity lived in harmony with nature and in which wildlife and other living species are protected (2015, 7)*. Thus, it can be argued that what the SDG envision is embodied in the philosophy of BV. In the following section, two cases under the umbrella of BV will be closely looked at to verify this point.

Case Study 1: Yasuni-ITT Initiative

Most indigenous communities do not share the modern western world concept of development that we have become familiar with. Furthermore, they do not share the same concepts of life such as being underdeveloped, developed nor being wealthy or being poor, which are all based on material goods or the absence of such goods (Acosta 2017, 1). BV challenges this anthropocentric and capitalist view. However, it does not reject the concept of an economy in general, it merely proposes alternatives on how to use the economy as a tool to benefit all communities, like critical political economy does. Yasuni-ITT is such an example that suggests an alternative with the ambition to benefit local as well as global communities. Whether it has succeeded in doing so will be discussed in this section.

The Yasuni National Park is a reserve within the Amazon region, situated at the border to Peru. In 1989, the national park was declared a UNESCO World Biosphere reserve as it is home to over 160 types of mammals and more than 2000 species of trees, making it one of the most biodiverse places on earth (Larrea and Warnars 2009, 220)³. Though, the Yasuni-ITT project has consequences for the entire Yasuni National Park, it actually only directly concerns the Ishpingo-Tambococha-Tiputini (ITT) sector of the national park. The ITT is a block is located deep within the Ecuadorian jungle, along the river Napo, see figure 2. The ITT-Block covers the largest oil fields of the Ecuadorian rainforest.

Figure 2: ITT Development Plan Map



The Yasuni-ITT project turned the Yasuni national park into a global example of environmental preservation and conservation. The main goal of the Yasuni-ITT project was to leave roughly 850 million barrels of crude oil untouched underneath the

³ See Appendix 4 for Latin American Globes of Species Density

Amazon rainforest in order to maintain the jungle in an untouched and unexploited condition (Proaño 2019). This was to be achieved with the help of the international community.

In 2007, former president Correa stood in front of the UN and offered to leave the oil in the Yasuni National Park untouched in return for \$3.6 billion from the international community. The money requested from the international community would then be reinvested into renewable energy, the protection of biodiversity and conservation of the jungle. This was an unprecedented move and sparked controversy. On one hand, nations did not understand or see an incentive to donate money to Ecuador without getting any returns, solely to protect its nature. On the other hand, people saw this as an opportunity to approach climate action and environmental awareness as a global effort.

Correa framed the Yasuni-ITT initiative as an issue of climate justice, embarking on a grand project of global responsibility towards our planet. Public figures such as Muhammad Yunus⁴, Rigoberta Menchú⁵ and Prince Charles pledged their endorsement for the project. And, in 2008 the German government decided to donate \$50 million annually to the Yasuni-ITT project. On top of that, Yasuni Guarantee Certificates (YGCs) were created for every donation. These YGC included the value of the donation and the prevented metric tons of CO₂ emissions through the donation. The price of the avoided CO₂ was linked to the European Union Allowance Carbon Market and effectively makes use of market forces as described in the literature review.

Yasuni-ITT had four major goals;

1. The protection of the lands and lives of the indigenous populations
2. The preservation of the Amazon's biodiversity
3. The protection of the global climate and mother earth
4. To path the way to a post-fossil fuel era in Ecuador

⁴ Holder of the Nobel Peace Prize for founding the Grameen Bank.

⁵ Guatemalan Human Rights activist received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992

Ecuador hoped to achieve these goals with the help of international financial contribution, particularly from the wealthier economies who want to take up responsibility for their share of environmental destruction (Acosta 2017, 1). Taking up responsibility was not meant as a compensation or excuse to continue exploiting and polluting nature. Instead it was meant as a starting point to think about strategies that would reverse the damage done to our planet by extractivism and unchained economic growth.

In this light, particularly goals 2 and 3 of the Yasuni-ITT initiative are of importance to the international community. The impact humankind has on our planet was first discovered by Stopani in 1873 (Crutzen 2002, 23). Since then, populations have dramatically expanded, and exploitation of nature has reached new heights. This endangers earth's planetary boundaries, its biodiversity and consequently humankind itself. This development demands to be halted and even reversed if possible. However, change needs to start somewhere and the Yasuni rainforest offered such an opportunity.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned goals of the Yasuni-ITT project, roughly 20 percent of Ecuador's total oil reserves were to be untouched. In return, Ecuador demanded 50 percent of the oil's revenue from the international community, had it been sold on the market. The collected money was then going into a trust which was managed by a board made up of two representatives of the UN Program for development, two representatives of the largest donors, three Ecuadorian government representatives and one representative of society. Around this board, additional bodies such as a technical body and a committee were formed to supervise investments and ventures within Yasuni-ITT (Quang 2015, 189). Thus, a sufficient structure was put in place to oversee the project.

Furthermore, this ties in with SDG *Life on Land* (15) which states the importance of encouraging global support to protect biodiversity and local communities. In fact, Goal 15, life on land shows many similarities to Yasuni-ITT's ambitions, such as the conservation and sustainable management of forests like the amazon. On top of that, the degradation of the natural habitat, such as through

deforestation or environmental destruction caused by oil extraction is sought to be prevented. All of these are also integral parts of Buen Vivir.

Leaving 846 barrels of oil underground in Yasuni would prevent four negative impacts directly associated with the extraction of oil. Firstly, the threat to biodiversity due to oil spillages and leaks. Secondly, deforestation. Thirdly, the resulting noise pollution due to machinery. And lastly, the consequential air pollution leading to a large degree of CO₂ emissions (Vallejo, et al. 2015, 179). All four of these impacts have negative effects on the environment and its inhabitants and would lead to irreversible damages. Accordingly, the Yasuni-ITT is part of BV as it seamlessly ties in with its philosophy of harmonic coexistence and the rights of “Pacha Mama” that is also expressed in Ecuador’s constitution.

Particularly avoiding any further CO₂ emissions would be beneficial for the international community in light of the SDG 13; Climate Action. The avoided emissions would roughly accumulate to 410 million tonnes of CO₂. However, on a larger scale, the prevented emissions do not seem significant and would only be equivalent to Spain’s yearly CO₂ production. Meaning, that it would have little impact on a global CO₂ level (2015, 180). Nonetheless, any positive impact is a move in the right direction and a step closer to achieving a 45% CO₂ emission drop between 2010 and 2030 and zero emissions by 2050, as described in SDG 13 (UNDP 2019). Therefore, the Yasuni-ITT project must be seen as a long-term investment that can contribute to the larger global goal of emission reduction and potentially act as a model for other nations.

In fact, the Yasuni-ITT covers all of the previously mentioned targets of SDG 13. It promotes the prevention of natural disasters by avoiding further emissions and by averting possible oil spillages which could endanger the surrounding environment and biodiversity, as target 13.1 describes. Additionally, Yasuni-ITT also makes use of the idea of an international fund which is used to mobilise developing countries for climate action, as in target 13.3. Furthermore, Yasuni-ITT is a national strategy that includes climate change measures and promotes climate change related planning for marginalized communities such as the indigenous tribes found in the Yasuni National Park such as target 13.4 demands.

Not just SDG 13 and 15 are being addressed by this project. Goal 11, sustainable cities and communities is an inherent part of Yasuni-ITT through the preservation of indigenous communities, their culture and their way of life. Furthermore, it is establishing a link between the economy, society and environment whilst encouraging regional development. Like in many other parts of the Amazon rainforest, the Yasuni National Park is home to indigenous communities like the Kichwa, Huaorani, Tagaeri and the Taromenane. The Taromenane is the only community that is still living in voluntary isolation, having resisted efforts of evangelization by the conquistadors and rejecting the contemporary way of life (Espinosa 2013, 30). The Yasuni-ITT project is of particular importance for the indigenous tribes as it would ensure the continued preservation of their territories. Without the project, there would be nothing to prevent the extraction of oil within indigenous territories which would also force the Taromenane out of their voluntary isolation. Forcing an indigenous community out of its voluntary isolation or contacting them can have far reaching implications. Previously, when Kichwa and Huaorani had been contacted, the two communities experienced a severe culture shock. Things such as alcoholism which was previously unknown to the tribes became an issue in addition to people leaving the communities to live in cities to become part of a capitalist society (2013, 31). The contact with modernity and the capitalist system has severely threatened the existence and the way of life of the indigenous communities.

Furthermore, occasionally there are violent interactions between the indigenous communities and oil company workers when entering the indigenous territories. Because of such violent altercations, the tribes have been described as primitive. However, the real issue is that indigenous territories are not sufficiently protected by the government which further encourages land disputes with oil and logging companies (Larrea and Warnars, 221). The Yasuni-ITT project would lead to the protection and recognition of roughly 5 million hectares of indigenous territories which would settle any further territorial disputes while preventing contact with tribes still living in isolation.

Unfortunately, indigenous populations are not well represented in the SDGs. In fact, only 4 times indigenous communities are specifically mentioned (DeLuca 2017, 1). Furthermore, it can be argued that many of the points when indigenous people are

mentioned, they do not represent the indigenous definitions of well-being. This argument is backed by the fact that indigenous populations often do not have a monetary measure of well-being such as \$1.25 a day representing extreme poverty. Instead, indigenous populations value their territories, rights to land and nature and its resources. Thus, land and the right to land is essential for indigenous populations which particularly makes *SDG Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions* (16) relevant. Predominantly because indigenous rights and territorial protection would have been strengthened by the Yasuni-ITT initiative.

The Failure of Yasuni-ITT

Besides having received praises for being a novel alternative to sustainable development, Yasuni-ITT has also faced severe challenges and criticism. In 2013 former president Correa announced that the Yasuni-ITT project had failed, mainly because of a lack of international funding (Fela 2106, 348). Without the financial support of the international community Yasuni-ITT was not realisable. Thus, the at the time rather novel idea of making the global community responsible for the preservation of the Yasuni National Park via financial support turned out to be a weak link which led to the entire projects collapse. It can be argued that the main cause for the lack of financial support is due to the limited commercial returns investors would have received. Meaning, that investing nations would have not gotten any financial returns on their investments besides the certainty that the Yasuni National Park was protected, and that oil extraction was prevented.

Indeed, the Yasuni-ITT project was announced and declared a failure before the *SDG* by the United Nations were revealed. The sentiment towards environmental protection was different in 2007 and it is possible that such a project under the framework of the *SDG* would receive more financial support today than it did in 2007. But, even though the Yasuni-ITT was a failure, it is still an important case to look at in order to understand the application of *Buen Vivir* as it shows what possibilities and implications this philosophy can have. Furthermore, it shows that the Ecuadorian government is willing to follow this alternative path of development.

Though *BV* has become a vital part of Ecuadorian politics, particularly under former president Correa, just like many other Latin American nations, the Ecuadorian

government is highly dependent on the extraction of oil, making up more than 50 percent of the country's total exports. Thus, in the case of Yasuni-ITT it can clearly be seen that Ecuador is still suffering under a colonial legacy as it has been described by Merino (2016, 272) in the literature review. Natural resource extraction is the basis of development. The Andean nation has been extracting oil for decades which has allowed it to pay for welfare programs and lift citizens out of poverty. This has permitted social spending to increase from 5 percent in 2006 to almost 10 percent in 2011 (Eisenstein and West 2017, 232). The Andean nation first started to export oil in 1972, when a pipeline between the Amazon and the Pacific Ocean was built (Espinosa 2013, 27). Since then, Ecuador has significantly increased its wealth besides remaining a developing nation. And, stopping the export of oil without any other source of revenue, such as from the international community would have devastating consequences for its economy. In fact, shortly after Correa announced the failure of the Yasuni-ITT project in 2013, drilling in the national park began which also reflected on Ecuador's overall crude oil production, see Figure 2. Furthermore, drilling sites have emerged in the heart of the jungle and the rivers are being used for transportation causing air as well as noise pollution, see appendix 2.

Figure 3 Ecuador Crude Oil Production 2009-2019



Source: (tradeeconomics.com 2019) | Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries

Conclusion: Lessons learned from Yasuni-ITT

In this section, it has been demonstrated what BV looks like when it is applied as a project for the protection of the amazon rainforest and its inhabitants. However, it has

also been shown what limits and challenges such project faces. The conclusion that can be drawn from the Yasuni-ITT project is that it had good intentions and that it was an at that time innovative idea. It had many promising components and shows a remarkable parallel in its goals and ambitions to the SDG. Furthermore, its core idea of making the international community responsible and engaged in a foreign nations environmental protection was alien then. Nowadays, the UN expects and encourages highly developed nations to support less developed ones on their path to sustainable development. If a similar project could succeed under today's framework of the SDG is difficult to say but, it seems plausible. What can be said however is that for the time the project was working it showed promising results and managed to push Ecuador closer to achieving today's SDG.

Case Study 2: The Management of the Galapagos Islands

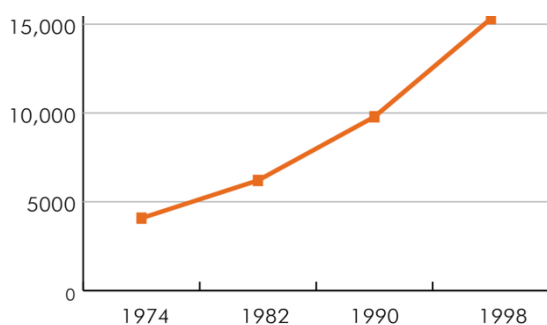
Located six hundred miles off the coast of Ecuador are the Galapagos Islands. The archipelago consists of 21 islands which are globally known for their natural beauty, unique biodiversity and scientific importance. Over the years, the islands have developed into Ecuador's most profitable ecotourism destination, producing a revenue of approximately \$100 million each year (Lu, Valdivia and Wolford 2013, 83). However, the Galapagos Islands are becoming victims of their own success as the islands population and visitors have notably increased over the years, increasing from 5000 citizens in 1950 to 30000 in 2010. Today, the Galapagos are facing a variety of challenges such as illegal fishing, the introduction of alien species, pollution, biodiversity loss, growing population, increasing tourism and so on.

The Galapagos is one of 24 municipalities of Ecuador. The islands are managed according to the *Organic Law for the Special Regimen for the Conservation and Sustainable Development of Galapagos (LOREG)*. This law was already incorporated into the 1998 constitution. It lays out a framework for the management of all aspects of life on the island, concerning fishery management, residency, migration, quarantine measures, tourism, agriculture etc. In 2008, the LOREG was revised in the context of the new constitution to further adapt LOREG to the philosophy of BV (Galapagos Conservancy 2019). With this, also a variety of

institutions and governing bodies were established. One of the most relevant ones is the *Consejo de Gobierno de Galapagos* (Governing Council of Galapagos). This council is in charge of the management of the inhabited areas of the Galapagos Islands and is led by the governor who is directly appointed by the Ecuadorian president. Furthermore, the council is responsible for the planning and managing of the conservation and observance of Buen Vivir on the Galapagos (Gobierno Galapagos 2017). Essentially, making it responsible for achieving a harmonious relationship between humans and the environment.

Already in 1959, the Ecuadorian government formed the Galapagos National Park which effectively put 97% of the Galapagos under protection. The 3% not covered under the protection are for people living on the islands. Meaning, the 97% under protection are uninhabited. Even though the islands have been a National Park for fifty years, it is facing a number of challenges. Over the years, roughly 900 alien species of plants have been introduced which threatens the native ecosystem. Additionally, the increasing demand for sea food has put great pressures on the marine livestock. Hence, in 2007 Correa called for action and declared the islands at risk, making its conservation a national priority. On top of that, the Galapagos Islands have been added to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites at danger shortly after (2013, 84). Making its endangerment a global concern with the need of immediate solutions.

Figure 4 Galapagos Islands Population Growth 1974-1998



Source: Epler 2007, Charles Darwin Foundation

In figure 4, the population growth on the Galapagos from 1974 until 1998 is illustrated. What can be seen is that the population on the islands has been increasing almost exponentially, this is mainly attributed to immigration. The population growth on the islands started in 1970 and was primarily driven by the growth of the tourism industry. The growing

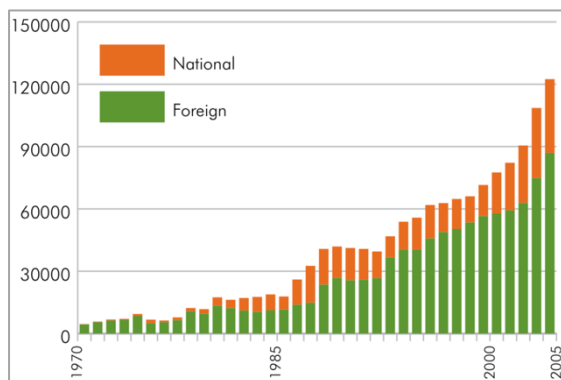
attraction of tourists to the island also brought many migrants from the Ecuadorian mainland who were hoping to make money and fortune. Furthermore, population growth continued to rise in the 1980s and 1990s due to the political and economic turmoil on the Ecuadorian mainland. Like many other Latin American countries also

Ecuador went through the lost decade. The economy collapsed in the 1980s when world oil prices declined, leading to the local currency the Sucre losing up to 98% of its value (Epler 2007, 6). This was followed by a short war against Peru in 1995 and issues with leftist guerrilla groups such as FARC or ELN (2007, 6). These events caused many Ecuadorians to either flee the country or to migrate to the Galapagos Islands. The Galapagos Islands were a popular refuge as the tourism industry ensured that there was a steady stream of income and demand for labour. Thus, the troubles of the mainland did not reach the islands.

Yet, the increasing number of residents puts the islands infrastructure under immense pressures. More people mean more pollution which therefore also impacts the environment. In response to the wave of migration from the Ecuadorian mainland, the “Special Law” was introduced in 1998 that aimed to limit migration to the islands, putting in place a variety of protocols (Galapagos Conservancy 2019). However, the enforcement of the law was sluggish which led to loopholes, inconsistent implementation and consequently rising numbers of illegal immigration. In 2007, the Ecuadorian government addressed this sluggishness by creating the “*Zero people on irregular status in Galapagos*” policy. This policy introduced transit control cards for all visitors. These cards are like a visa with validity of 60 days. In addition to that the government decided that these cards are only issued if a return ticket has been bought. This allows the monitoring of visitors and ensures that visitors will leave the island again (Strahm and Patry 2010, 26). If visitors are found to stay longer than allowed, they will be banned from the islands. In 2009, 293 illegal inhabitants were sent back to the mainland and over 250 visitors were banned from the Galapagos (2010, 27). These efforts of population control and urban planning are in accord with SDGs 11 and particularly target 11.1 which emphasise the importance of sustainable urban planning in a social and environmental sense. While population and migration control are now being in place, pressures of illegal immigration will continue to grow in light of the growing tourism industry.

In correlation to the vast population growth, also the number of park visitors greatly

Figure 5 Annual Park Visitors 1970-2005



Source: Epler 2007, Charles Darwin Foundation

increased over the years, see figure 5. The number went up from roughly 18000 visitors in 1980 to over 120000 by 2005 and the trend is indicating that this number will just continue to grow. As a response to the increasing number of tourists, services, infrastructure, hotels and vessels were upgraded to demand higher fees and yield higher returns resulting in the revenue to

grow faster than the number of visitors. What is important to note is that not just the number of foreign tourists has increased but, also the number of national tourists increased which speaks for an increase in national wealth levels. However, more tourists and an increasing population is having constraints on the infrastructure and environment of the islands. This exposes a threat to the conservation of the island and damages its reputation as an ecotourist destination. Further, it increases the likelihood of introducing alien species. Therefore, strict management and regulations are required in order to enjoy the economic benefits of tourism while ensuring the preservation of islands nature. In fact, the previously mentioned control cards also apply to visitors, enabling the government to have a clear overview of who entered the Galapagos when.

Along with the introduction of visitor cards, there are a number of other restrictions that need to be followed on the Islands in order to conserve the environment, these can be seen in appendix 6. Further restrictions concern the limitation on fishing activities. This limitation is set by a junta that decides on fishing quotas depending on the health of the fish stock. Also, all of the 16 uninhabited islands are only accessible through a park authorized vessel with a park certified naturalist. Moreover, one naturalist is only allowed to guide 16 visitors at a time. On top of that, access to the uninhabited islands is limited to 100 per day and the capacity of cruise ships is also limited to 100. All this shows that there are restrictions and guidelines in place for tourists. Nonetheless, there are demands to restrict

tourism further and to introduce a set tourist limit. This is mainly because besides these restrictions, tourism is still putting nature at risk.

As already briefly touched upon previously, introducing alien species into a new environment can have devastating consequences. These alien species can compromise the natural territory of local habitants and create an imbalance in the ecosystem. For example, the introduced alien specimen might not have any natural adversaries, making it spread unhindered and preventing local species to flourish. This might even lead to the extinction of local species and trigger a chain reaction which manipulates and changes the entire ecosystem of the islands. This is a particularly important topic as the islands have evolved in isolation for most of history. That's why the uncontrolled introduction of new species presents a challenge must be avoided if the natural condition is to be preserved. The most common way of introducing new species to the Galapagos is via tourists who are arriving by boat or by plane. It is therefore no surprise that the number of alien species has grown in correlation to the increase in tourists. However, parallel to the restriction to Vessels, the government has started to implement harsher security checks at all airports and entrance points to the Islands. SDG target 15.3 very much encourages such harsher checks and restrictions as it stresses the importance of preventing the introduction of alien species. Besides the efforts by the government, up until 2017, 1579 alien species have been introduced to the islands since its discovery in 1535 (Toral-Granda, et al. 2017, 9). However, tourism does not just put the Galapagos in danger, it also represents its lifeline.

Up to 60% of the Galapagos population is working in the tourism industry. Additionally, tourism accounts for 80% of its economy, making tourism an integral part of the Galapagos economy and society. SDGs 11 encourages links between the economy, society and the environment that support regional development. Tourism, or specifically ecotourism in the case of the Galapagos, is such a link as described by SDGs 11. However, ecotourism on the Galapagos does not come without challenges as discussed previously. Yet, it represents a compromise between environmental protection and economic growth. While ecotourism is still a form of exploiting nature by exhibiting it, it is not causing its destruction through resource extraction. Therefore, ecotourism very much embodies what BV is all about, the

emphasise on co-existence and wellbeing with nature. It is the aim to introduce respect for the environment, to give it rights and to create a sustainable society and economy.

Conclusion: A model for the future

In this section, the management of the Galapagos Islands has been analysed. What stands out is that the islands, even though located relatively remotely, are facing issues of contemporary relevance. The issues of overpopulation, pollution and environmental protection are common to most regions. Though these issues present challenges to the local and national government, Ecuador seems to have found solutions to condemn them. Indeed, these challenges are still very much present today but, the implementation of a set of restrictions under BV has managed to prevent negative impacts caused by migration and tourism.

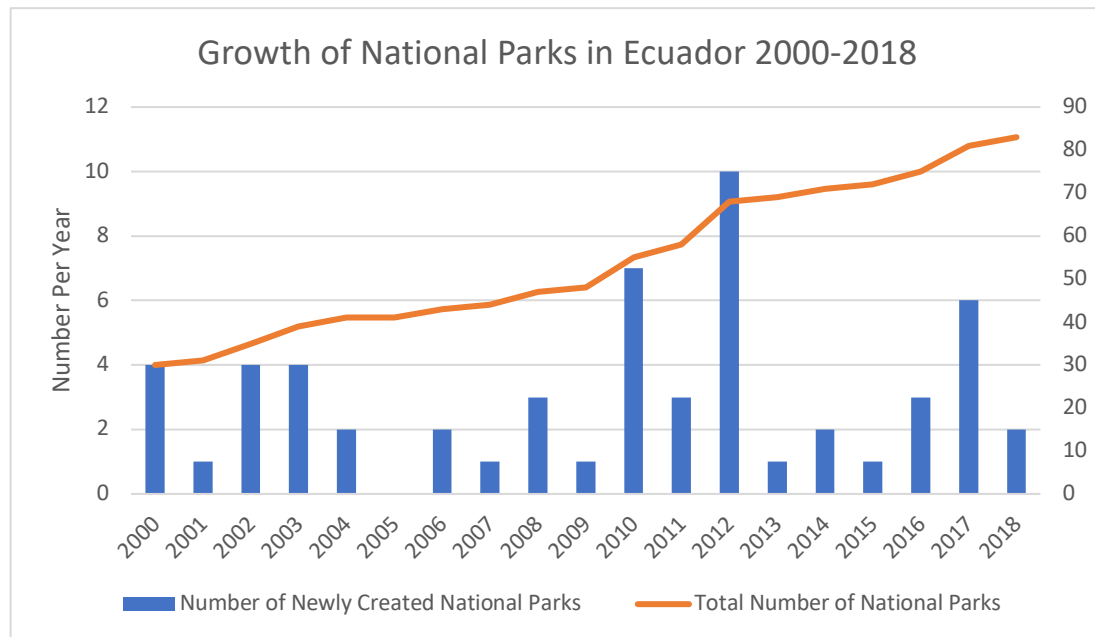
Ultimately, ecotourism is key for the Galapagos Islands when it comes to keeping environmental protection and development in balance. Nonetheless, also ecotourism requires restrictions in order to prevent potentially damaging impacts. Uncontrolled and unrestricted tourism would simply present an unmaintainable approach, going entirely against the philosophy of BV. This is exactly what the Ecuadorian government realised as well. Thus, the introduction of visitor cards, limits to visitors per island and per cruise ship.

Beyond Yasuni and the Galapagos

The two case studies, their methodology of Buen Vivir and their potential meaning for the SDG have been discussed in detail. However, there are also other aspects of BV that show its potential to achieve the SDG. Yasuni and the Galapagos are not the only national parks in Ecuador. As it can be seen in figure 6, the number of national parks has steadily increased since 2000. The year prior to Correa's election not a single protected area was established. In contrast to that, in 2012 the highest number yet of protected areas was created. Thus, there has been a general increase in the creation of national parks under Buen Vivir. This development is in line with SDG 15 and its targets such as ensuring the conservation of natural habitats. In 2000, the total number of national parks was 30, today this number has more than doubled. By 2018, the number of national parks already rose to 83. Of course, the size of each national

park varies, and some national parks might be more significant in terms of environmental protection and preservation of biodiversity. However, what figure 7 shows is that the Ecuadorian government is increasing the number of national parks throughout the country and that there is a willingness to conserve nature.

Figure 6 National Parks in Ecuador 2000-2018



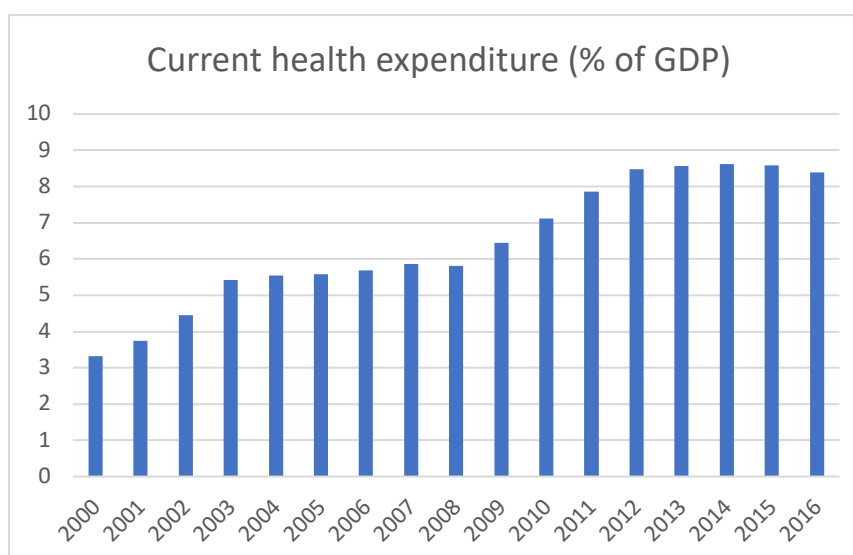
Source: (UNEP-WGMC 2019)

In this paper, two cases of particular importance to the environment have been discussed. However, BV does not just concern rural areas or regions of especially high natural value, to the contrary. BV is also heavily transforming the lives of Ecuador's urbanized metropolitan areas such as Quito. The Ecuadorian constitution, which is based on BV, stresses the right of specific marginalized groups, such as indigenous people or women. Furthermore, it promises the right to education, healthcare, sports and free time (Horn 2019, 30). In other words, it is a proponent of the right to the city⁶, resembling the theory of Lefebvre (1968). This further emphasises the point that BV is working towards achieving SDG 15.

⁶ Reclaiming the city as a place of coexistence and co-creation while promoting inclusiveness and rejecting segregation and exclusion created through market-centric cities. This is an idea that has recently become popular again through social movements.

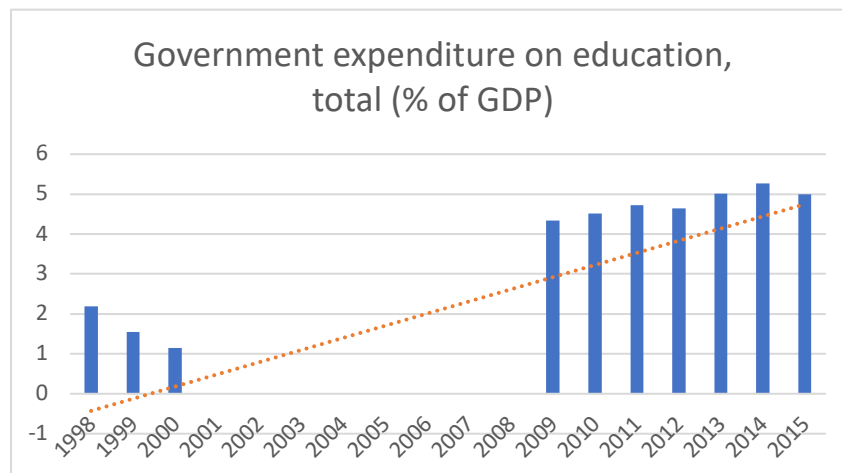
In figure 7, the development of the health care expenditure measured against the GDP can be seen. What this graph indicates is that from the year 2006 onwards, the government invested a higher percentage of its GDP into the health care system. This development is in line with BV. Similarly, the government expenditure on education has been increasing since 2000. Unfortunately, there is no data available for the years between 2000 and 2009. However, the graph still provides an indication as to how expenditure on education has grown compared to the turn of the century. Also, it is known that Ecuador on average roughly invested \$230 million on education between 2003 and 2006. This amount was tripled to \$941 million between 2007 and 2010 (Ghosh 2012, 41). What these numbers and two graphs then indicate is that the government has increased its financial efforts when it comes to boosting the healthcare and educational system. Thus, the government is taking significant steps towards achieving its goal of free education and free health care for all its citizens. What this indicates is that Ecuador is also working towards SDGs *Good Health and Well Being* (3) as well as *Quality Education* (4). Overall, social spending has doubled since 2006 to over 10% in Ecuador.

Figure 7 Health Care Expenditure Ecuador 2000-2016



Source: (World Bank 2019)

Figure 8 Education Expenditure Ecuador 2000-2015

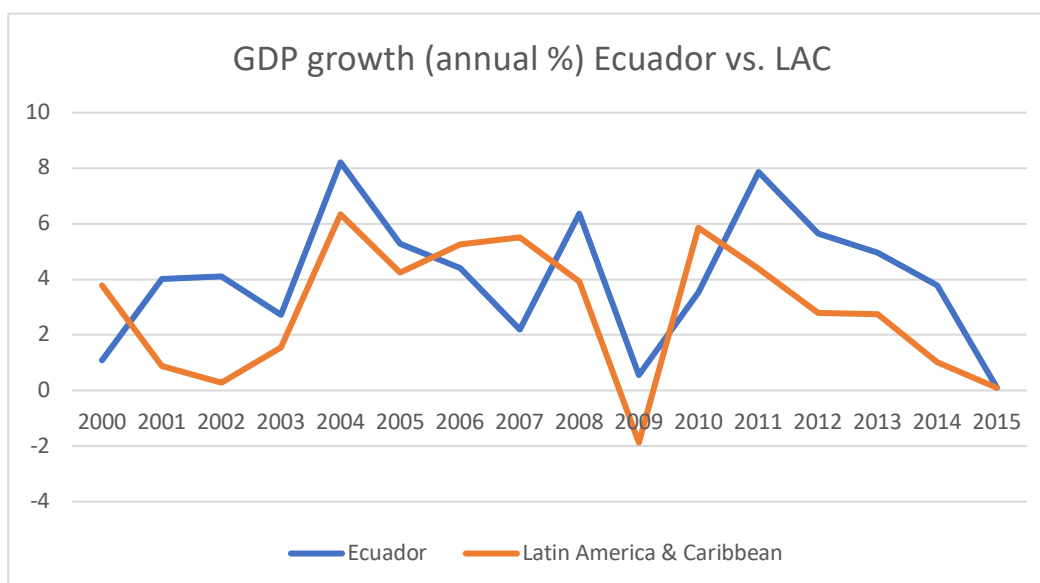


Source: (World Bank 2019)

Besides aiming for free education and healthcare, the 2008 approved constitution also had the goal to build a new form of coexistence. The constitution recognized the rights of elderly, indigenous, children, people with disabilities, young people and nature. This presented an enormous challenge and put the state under pressure to create a plurinational⁷ state (Ghosh 2012, 38). Furthermore, the adoption of the new constitutions put the government under the obligation to follow through and make good on the promises. One major aim of the government was to move the country away from being a primary resource producer. This was to be achieved by diversifying the economy through heavily emphasizing ecotourism, focusing on clean energy and bioenergy production and lastly creating knowledge intensive products like bio-services (2012, 39). When looking at Figure 9, this strategy seems to have shown results in terms of GDP growth. Ecuador, when compared to the regional average of LAC countries, has performed better. The country marked a strong recovery from the 2008 financial crises and has managed to generate positive growth since 2000.

⁷ The coexistence of preserved national groups within one community or polity. The recognition of diverse cultures and worldviews within a larger state.

Figure 9 GDP Growth 2000-2015



Source: (World Bank 2019)

Another indicator that Ecuador's new approach to development under BV is showing to be fruitful is when looking at the recent inequality levels of Ecuador. Historically, Ecuador, like most Latin American countries has always been a highly unequal country. Moreover, Latin America is often referred to as the most unequal region in the world. Often, inequality is measured by the GINI coefficient, an indicator for wealth distribution amongst a nation's residents, which can be seen in appendix 3. Ecuador experienced its all-time high in 1999, when the country was going through an economic crisis which resulted in the dollarization of the country. Since then, the Gini has been steadily decreasing with an accelerated decrease since Rafael Correa took office in 2007. This development is in line with the previous findings of increased social spending on health care and education which has positively impacted the Gini coefficient and consequently led to reduced inequalities. Thus, it can be argued that the decreasing Gini is also an indication that Ecuador is on the right path towards achieving *SDG Reduced Inequalities* (10) along with *SDGs No Poverty* (1), *Good Health and Well-Being* (3) and *Quality Education* (4).

6. Final Conclusion

This paper has explored to what extent Buen Vivir presents a path for Ecuador towards achieving three SDGs. This was done by firstly setting the scene and stressing the relevance of this topic based on the global context of increasing crises and dissatisfaction of development. After BV was put into context, the literature review framed the academic debate and was concerned with topics such as, development, capitalism, neoliberalism and the environment. This was complemented by the historic background that mainly covered the emergence of Buen Vivir followed by what this paper defines as Buen Vivir, Critical perspective and the Sustainable Development Goals. In the qualitative analysis, the two cases in addition to a broader perspective on Ecuador's recent economic performance were covered. In this final chapter, the results of this research will be summarized, and the main arguments recollected. This will be followed with two short sections highlighting limitations and final remarks.

Results

Throughout this paper, it has become clear that Buen Vivir is not a linear approach. Rather, it is a complex philosophy that is undergoing constant reproduction and process. It keeps evolving and can become a central part of a society like Ecuador's or Bolivia's, taking different shapes in each. Therefore, the argument can be made that BV has global potential besides its emergence from a marginalised past (Acosta 2017, 1). Moreover, because emerged from the bottom it is such a powerful philosophy as it has the support from the masses, giving the marginalized a voice.

The two discussed case studies discussed in this paper, each emphasised different aspects of BV. Even though the Yasuni-ITT initiative was a failure, it showed to be a perfect case study for seeking to understand the challenges new development models face. This challenge is not unique to Ecuador and Yasuni-ITT. Rather, it is representative of common global challenge such new development models of face. Change and rethinking what we understand as development is difficult and achieving it will be the biggest of challenges. However, Yasuni was a courageous project and the first of its kind. It was presenting a promising path for Ecuador to achieve SDG 13 and 15. It ensured the protection of biodiversity and conservation nature.

Therefore, the importance of preventing oil drilling in the world's largest forest and what this means for climate action and life on land does not require further explanation.

The Yasuni project showed promising success for a while but, ultimately failed because of the still firm constructs of the capitalist system, including Ecuador's legacy of being an oil extracting country. Making the global community responsible for environmental protection was an alien approach then. Today, the United Nations is well aware that less developed nations need the support of developed ones which, is also something that is emphasised in the SDGs. In this light, Yasuni-ITT might show greater success nowadays. But, that is beyond the scope of this paper. What has been learned from this case is that BV presents a bold path towards sustainable development that is willing to explore alternative approaches, such as Yasuni-ITT proposed. And, it showcased the capabilities and shapes which BV can take.

The case study on the Galapagos Islands has shown that there are solutions to the curse of extractivism which can work. Perhaps, it is the almost perfect example on how to co-exist with nature. The Galapagos Islands were facing severe pressures due to the increase in tourists and the influx of national migrants. Yet, the Galapagos Islands throughout the years have managed to control the negative impacts tourism and population growth can have. This has been done by creating an ecotourism industry that is following set of policies and restrictions in accordance to BV. But, not just tourism is affected by BV, the entire management of the islands is based on the principles of BV. Just like the Yasuni-ITT initiative, it has been shown that BV as it is applied in the case of the Galapagos islands is showing to be a capable path towards achieving *Sustainable Cities and Communities, Climate Action and Life on Land*. Particularly, Goal 11 and 13 are accentuated by the Management of the Galapagos Islands. This has been achieved by linking society, economy and environment, creating sustainable regional development.

Besides exploring the two cases, this paper also investigated how BV has shaped Ecuador in general. What has been found is that investments in areas such as education and health care have been increased. In line with this, the country's GDP has been performing comparatively well to other Latin American countries.

Furthermore, the government has actively increased the number of protected areas throughout the country. Additionally, when looking at the Gini coefficient, a decrease by almost 10 points since BV was introduced in Ecuador's constitution can be observed. Overall, all these are valid indications that BV is actually making a difference in Ecuador. Moreover, it is also proof that BV is presenting a path towards achieving SDGs 11, 13 and 15. In addition to that, it is also showing to take steps towards achieving SDGs 1, 3, 4, 10 and 16. This assessment is based on the current experiences and results BV is showing in Ecuador. This does not mean that Ecuador has already achieved these goals. Ecuador is on the right path but, the country needs to remain bold and further promote projects such as Yasuni-ITT. Areas of improvement definitely remain however, Ecuador is already ahead of other nations in this regard. To conclude, this paper has shown that BV presents a path towards achieving sustainable cities and communities, climate action and sustainable life on land in Ecuador. This point has been proven through the qualitative analysis of the two case studies as well as a general analysis.

Limitations

In this paper, only one of the few countries that experienced a growing popularity of BV has been thoroughly analysed. This provides a limited view on how BV looks like in other countries, especially because BV is such a dynamic philosophy. Therefore, it leaves it up to debate on how the Ecuadorian application of BV contrast to other countries like Peru or Bolivia and what shape it would take there. As this paper has stated previously, BV needs to be understood as an umbrella term that requires each region and country to explore and build its own good life. Thus, this close analysis of Ecuador provided a deep understanding of how BV is applied in the Andean country and helped to recognise its shortcomings and impacts.

Evidently, due to the SDGs being set to be achieved by 2050 no determination can be made at this time whether Ecuador will actually achieve these. However, this paper undertook the task to explore if BV presents a path towards achieving three of these goals. The paper concluded that it does present a promising path as it is already showing hopeful results. Along with that, arguments and data were presented to

support this conclusion. Yet, a limitation of this research is also that certain data is not available, such as seen in figure 8.

Final Remarks

The importance of finding solutions to global warming and the increasing threat to our planet's safety cannot be stressed enough. Awareness of what enormous challenge we are facing is not growing fast enough. In fact, it can even be argued that in certain countries we are taking steps backwards and politics is openly denying the existence of climate change. Recent elections of Trump or Bolsonaro are examples of how unconscious we still are about our planet's boundaries. Both of these presidents are periodically revoking their countries commitments to climate agreements such as the Paris Agreement. These actions present substantial risks to our planet, with the US being the second largest polluter and Brazil being home to the Amazon rainforest, also known as the world's lungs. Moreover, if these countries will achieve any of the 17 SDGs under their current approach is highly questionable.

2050 seems to be in the distant future but, in reality it is just around the corner. The Millennium Development Goals have already failed, and another failure is unaffordable. Furthermore, there are already many scholars who argue that climate change is irreversible, all we can do is mitigate its impact. And, the devastating truth could be; the longer we wait on mitigating climate change, the more drastic and desperate our solutions will become. Today, we can still with relative comfort adjust to become more environmental conscious but if we fail to do so, the consequences are unknown.

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: 17 Sustainable Development Goals



Source: (United Nations 2015)

Appendix 2: Photographs Yasuni National Park

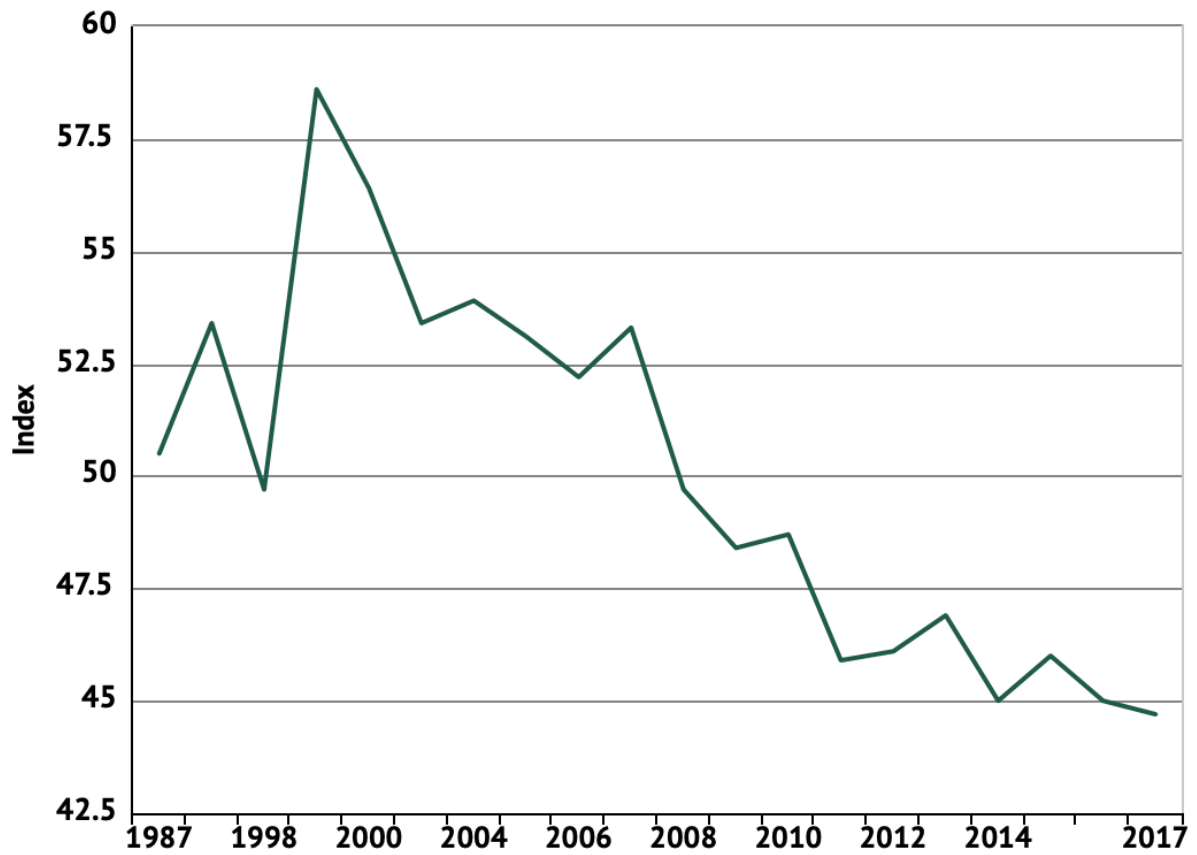


Source: Personal Photographs by Lucas Seewald, 16th of July 2017, River Napo - Yasuni, Ecuador



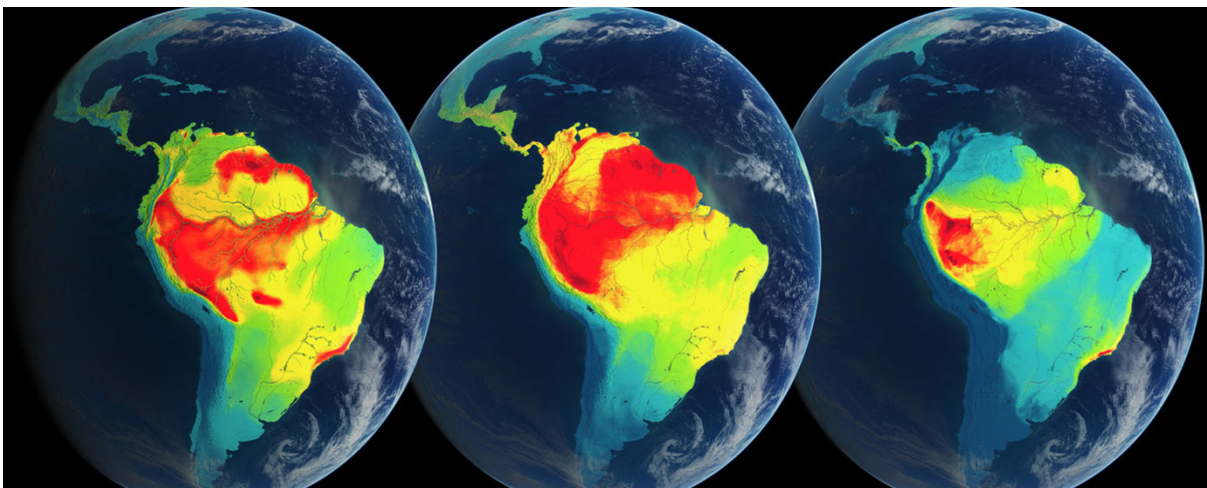
Source: Personal Photographs by Lucas Seewald, 16th of July 2017, River Napo - Yasuni, Ecuador

Appendix 3: Gini Coefficient Ecuador 1960-2018 (Lower = Better)



Source: (knoema 2018)

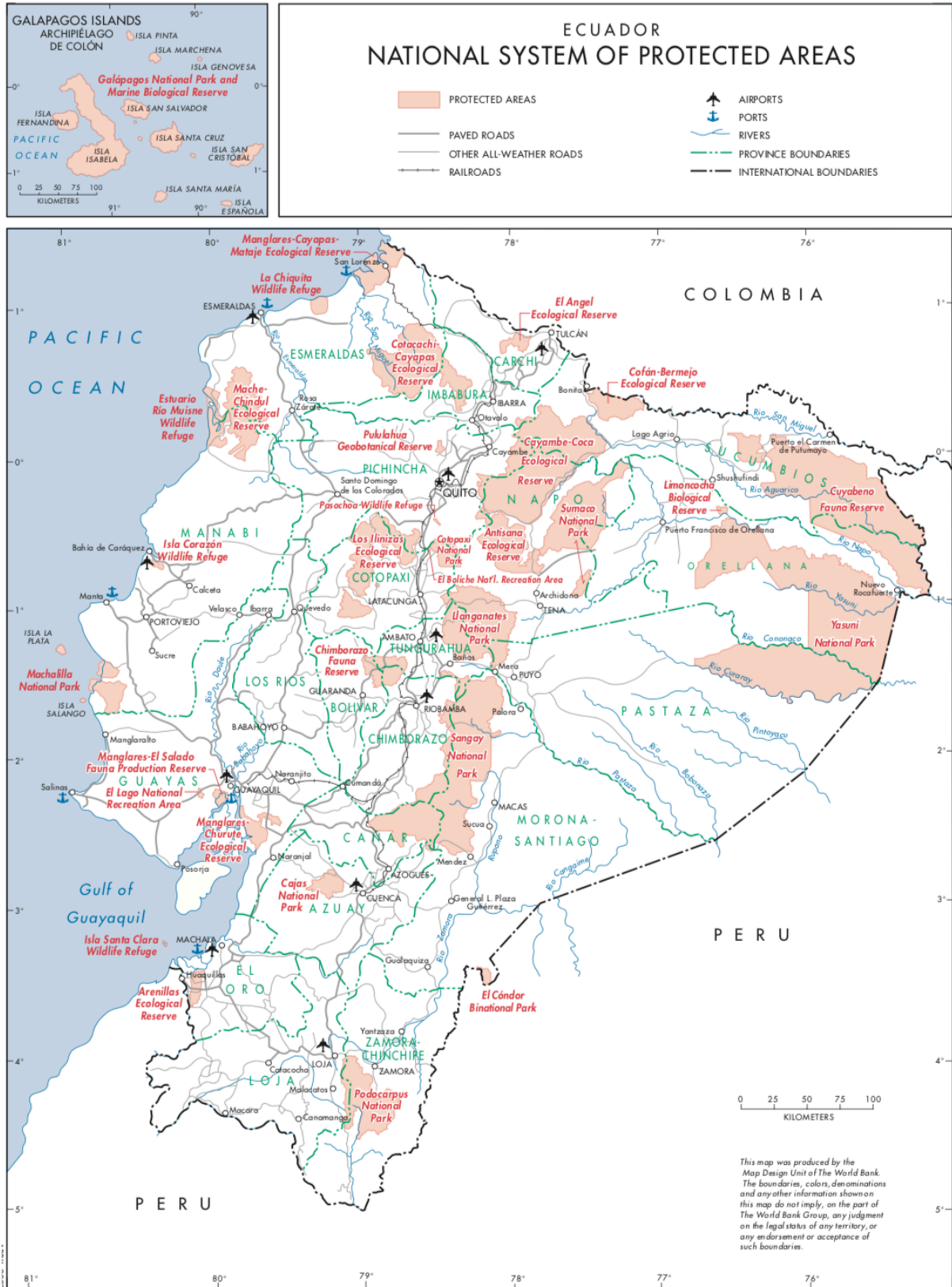
Appendix 4: Density of Biodiversity in Latin America



Description: Colour Coded Density of Species. Birds Left, Mammals Centre and Amphibians Right

Source: (Jenkins 2012)

Appendix 5: National System of Protected Areas of Ecuador 2011



Source: (World Bank 2011)

Appendix 6: Regulations on the Galapagos Islands



GALAPAGOS

NATIONAL PARK & MARINE RESERVE

VISITING RULES

Reglas de visita




1. Drones and flash photography are not allowed.
Está prohibido el uso de flash y drones.



2. Use only authorized tour operators and/or boats.
Use solo los operadores turísticos autorizados por el Parque Nacional.




3. Do not vandalize and/or introduce any foreign elements into the ecosystem.
No vandalice o introduzca elementos ajenos al ecosistema.



4. Visitors must explore the National Park with an authorized Naturalist Guide.
Es obligatorio visitar el Parque Nacional acompañado de un guía especializado.




5. Do not feed the wildlife
No alimente la vida silvestre.



6. Dispose of all trash and/or recyclable waste in designated containers.
Deje la basura clasificada en su lugar.



7. Do not purchase products or souvenirs made from banned flora and/or fauna.
No adquiera productos o souvenirs realizados con flora y fauna prohibida.



8. Fishing is only allowed on boats authorized by the National Park.
Use embarcaciones de pesca vivencial autorizadas.




9. Do not remove any elements from the ecosystem.
No retire elementos del ecosistema.




10. Camping is only allowed in designated areas with prior authorization.
Acampe en los sitios designados, previa autorización.



11. Smoking, drinking and fires are strictly prohibited.
No fume, beba alcohol, ni haga fogatas.



12. Keep a distance of at least 6 feet (2 m) from wildlife.
Mantenga una distancia de 2 metros de la fauna, incluidas cámaras.



13. Motorized, aquatic recreational vehicles are not permitted.
Está prohibido el uso de vehículos acuáticos recreacionales.



14. Stay within the marked trails at all times.
Manténgase dentro de los senderos.

Failure to comply with these rules will result in sanctions / El no cumplimiento de estas reglas esta sujeto a sanciones

Designed by



Celebrating
65
years

Source: (Espinoza 2018)

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