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## **Ecuador and the Discursive Struggle Over Buen Vivir: Limits to an Emancipatory Project**

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**Ecuador and the Discursive Struggle Over *Buen Vivir*:  
Limits to an Emancipatory Project**

Bachelor Thesis submitted for the Bachelor of Science in International Relations and  
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### Abstract

Ecuador's constitution of 2008 has gathered worldwide attention for its progressive outlook. The constitution adopted *Buen Vivir* (good living), a concept rooted in the Andean indigenous social movements, as the leading principle of the state. Scholars have called *Buen Vivir* a potential 'alternative to development': it redefines the objective of national planning as achieving harmony between nature, society and individuals, as opposed to narrowly-defined improved material wellbeing. Nonetheless, critics claim that the term has turned into a guise for new developmentalist state practices. This thesis assesses how a radical new discourse such as *Buen Vivir* evolves once confronted with the structures of the state and the constraints of society and economy. Drawing on Critical Discourse Analysis, it analyses how the framing of *Buen Vivir* in the speeches of Ecuador's presidents has limited its transformative potential. Furthermore, it illustrates how gaps between discourse, state practices and constitutional values have rendered the emancipatory meaning of *Buen Vivir* ambiguous.

*Keywords:* *Buen Vivir*, Post-development, Discourse, Social Transformation, Ecuador

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## **Ecuador and the Discursive Struggle Over *Buen Vivir*: Limits to an Emancipatory Project**

*"The crucial question is whether buen vivir is becoming another discursive tool and co-opted term, functional to the State and its structures and with little significance for real intercultural, interepistemic, and plurinational transformation."* (Walsh, 2010, p. 20)

Arturo Escobar's *Encountering Development* (1995/2011a) and Wolfgang Sachs' *The Development Dictionary* (1992/1997) changed the study of development by uncovering the ideological dimensions embedded in the field. They showed how particular language constructed the Global South as backward, non-industrialised and thereby in need of 'development' (Ziai, 2017, p. 2548; Halperin & Heath; 2017). Consequently, the new discipline of post-development emerged; scholars started to question the modernist conception of 'progress' and demanded a search for 'alternatives to development', based on "non-Eurocentric and more power-sensitive theory of positive social change" (Ziai, 2017, p. 2550; Escobar, 1998; Unceta, 2014).

Within the post-development field, researchers employed the method of Discourse Analysis to deconstruct dominant discourses, such as neoliberalism, and reveal the power-relations behind them (Van Teijlingen & Hogenboom, 2016, p. 387). Additionally, they investigated the process by which anti-systemic, non-western and transformative 'alternatives to development' enter the state and challenge the dominant development paradigm in practice.

One of such emancipatory projects is *Buen Vivir* (BV), a discourse and political agenda that appeared in Bolivia and Ecuador in the mid-2000s (Gerlach, 2017). It emerged out of indigenous social movements that pressured their governments to "attend to the wellbeing of their members and the conservation of their ecosystems" (Barkin & Sanchez, 2019, p. 13). More

specifically, BV's origin lies in the Kichwa expression of 'Sumak Kawsay' that roughly translates into 'good living' (Gerlach, 2017). In 2008, Ecuadorian president Rafael Correa (2007-2017) included the term into the state's policy framework responding to the pressure of the social movements (Gudynas, 2011a). Above all, BV became the guiding principle of the Ecuadorian constitution, defined "as a way of living in harmony with oneself (identity), with society (equity) and with nature (sustainability)" (Cubillo-Guevara & Hidalgo-Capitan, 2017, p. 24).

Escobar (2011b) and Gudynas (2017) have classified BV as a post-capitalist paradigm and potential 'alternative to development'. In addition, the constitution was called one of the most progressive in the world (Lalander & Merimaa, 2018). However, authors highlighted that once confronted with the state's apparatus under Correa, the government accepted extractivism as a mean to advance towards a post-capitalist future and prioritised the immediate financing of social services over the socioeconomic transformations outlined in the constitution (Campodónico et al., 2017). Consequently, according to some critics, BV turned into the guise of a new developmental state (Svampa, 2011).

The thesis assesses how a transformative discourse, such as BV, changes once it turns into the guiding idea of the state. Furthermore, it investigates how enduring contradictions between state practices, political discourse and constitutional principles in the Ecuadorian context have undermined the meaning of BV. The following question addresses that research interest: *Why and how has the Ecuadorian government's framing of Buen Vivir (BV) in public discourse undermined its transformative potential?* To answer the question, political speeches of the last two Ecuadorian presidents Rafael Correa and Lenín Moreno were analysed and related to the policies and practices of the Ecuadorian state between 2008 and 2020. Previous literature has

not systematically examined BV in the rhetoric of the presidents. The speeches are studied using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) based on Fairclough's (1992) approach.

The main findings reveal that the transformative potential of BV was ultimately limited through its framing: Correa's speeches show that the concept lost its initial meaning as it turned into an 'empty-signifier' used to legitimise government actions and mobilise support. On the other hand, under Moreno, the concept virtually disappeared from public discourse and was replaced by conventional development language, despite remaining the guiding principle of the constitution. Moreover, a persisting discrepancy between the core tenets of BV and the government's actions in key policy fields reduced the term's credibility.

The thesis has the following outline: firstly, I introduce theory and concepts of discourse, hegemony and social transformation. Secondly, the CDA is outlined, and a blueprint of the analysis is provided. Thirdly, the case context of Ecuador is discussed. Fourthly, I present the findings from the study: the first half of the analysis focuses on how BV changed in the speeches of Correa and Moreno. In contrast, the second half analyses the gaps between the discourse of BV and the actual practices and policies of the government. Lastly, the research question is answered and limitations, as well as avenues for future research, are discussed.

### **Theoretical Framework: Discourse and social transformation**

This chapter aims to introduce discourse, discursive change and hegemony and provides the conceptual framework for the analysis. Firstly, however, it justifies why the thesis assesses BV not only in regards to the implementation of policies and practices but also on a discursive/textual level.

Discourse determines what is considered legitimate/illegitimate and therefore provides the conceptual premise for actions and policies (Motion & Leitch, 2009, p. 1047). At the same

time, the actors tweak their discourses according to the structural conditions of the state, society and economy that they are confronted with (Brand, 2013; Lander, 2013). Thus, the thesis adopts the 'moderate constructivist' (Sayer, 2000) stance of critical realism: objects, subjects and practices are affected and socially constructed by discourses (Lewis, 2018, p. 1164).

Simultaneously, however, these objects and social practices materially exist regardless of the knowledge that humans hold on them and structures shape and constrain discourse (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64). Therefore, when studying socioeconomic transformation from a critical realist perspective, it is necessary to combine the analysis of semiosis, or the process of meaning-making through language, with an assessment of the social and economic structures (Jessop, 2004, p. 162).

### **Defining discourse**

The term discourse can have multiple meanings: it describes an extended stretch of words, a debate or language exchange, or a particular set of rules about what can and cannot be said (Apthorpe & Gasper, 2014, pp. 3-4). While acknowledging its broader meanings, this paper defines discourse as "a particular way of constructing a subject-matter" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 128). Discourse socially constitutes concepts, theoretical options, and operations that inform behaviour (Motion & Leitch, 2009, p. 1047). These concepts and theories can have direct effects since they are the premises of actor's actions. In consequence, relying on a particular discourse makes the actor choose one course of action over another (Fairclough, 2013, p. 192). Moreover, discourses are engrained into institutions and organisations, such as the state, and influence their decision-making and shape their organisational identities (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001 as cited by Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 254; Motion & Leitch; 2009, p. 1046).



Discourse is never static (Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 254). Instead, it can be resisted or changed through anti-hegemonic struggles, when groups use other discourses "to shape the political situations in and through which they can act and perform" (Clegg et al., 2006, p. 17). Discursive struggle is the process of gaining legitimacy for a specific discourse and to fix its meaning in place and time (Hardy & Phillips, 2004 as cited by Motion & Leitch, 2009, p. 1047). Hegemony is when a discourse, and its particular way of understanding the world, becomes naturalised as truth or 'common sense' (Motion & Leitch, 2009, p. 1047; Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 255). By turning into a new 'common sense', it can radically transform previous routines and practices of actors and institutions (Jessop, 2004, p. 164). Thus, discursive change can play an essential role in the socioeconomic transformation of the state. Nonetheless, a transformative discourse often loses its emancipatory potential when turning into a new hegemony, as it mixes with other discourses and societal demands, and becomes constrained by structural conditions (Jessop, 2004). Therefore, the following section will present Laclau's (2005; 1996) theory on hegemony, and Brand (2013) and Lander's (2013) framework on the role of the state in transformation processes, to explain why a new radical discourse such as BV might lose its transformative potential as a result of these constraints.

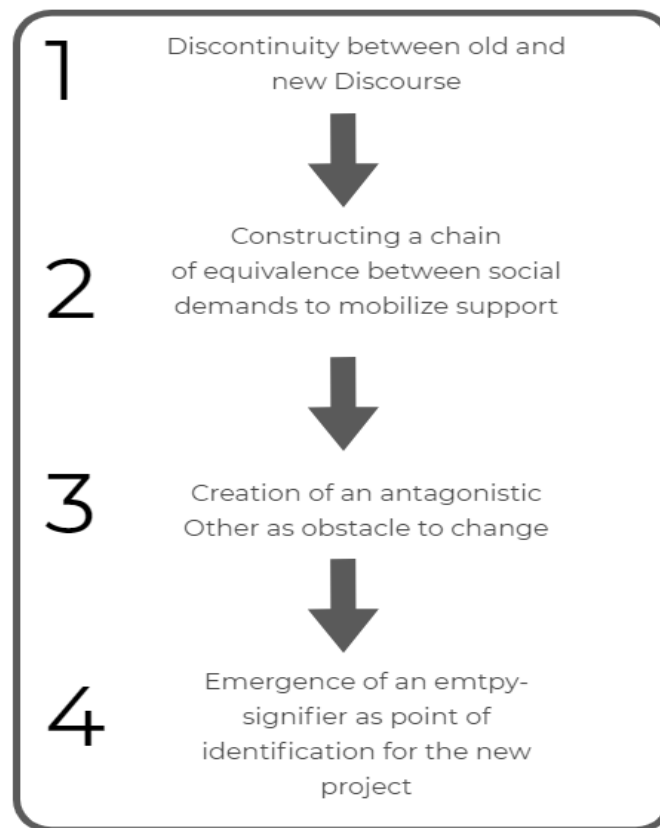
### **Hegemony and discursive change**

Laclau identifies several steps that illustrate how a particular discourse changes when becoming hegemonic (Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 250; see Figure 1). Firstly, the hegemonic discourse is framed as a total discontinuity to previous discourses (Laclau, 1996). Second, the proponent of the discourse insists that a wide range of subjective demands, which were previously considered contradictory, can be combined under the new discourse. That entails that society's groups should work together for a common interest (Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 257).

This is called the logic of equivalence (Laclau, 2005): the proponent fosters broad support for the new project by combining all demands under one discourse (Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 257). However, given the "complex historical-structural heterogeneity of societies" (Lander, 2013), many of the demands are mutually exclusive, competing or contradictory. Consequently, the discourse has to change and surrender some of its particularity. Thirdly, the process of hegemonization is entangled with the creation of an antagonistic Self and Other-relationship in which the "Other is blamed for (1) the fact that certain demands (...) remain unfulfilled, and (2) for the incompleteness of the Self's identity" (Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 257). In other words, the proponent asserts full interpretative authority on the discourse and silences competing conceptualisations.

**Figure 1:**

*Steps of Hegemonization and discursive change (based on Stengel & Nabers, 2019)*



*Note.* Graph elaborated by the author.

Fourthly, all the demands previously framed as equivalent, are represented by one empty signifier or symbol that serves as a point of identification (Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 258). A term that turns into an empty signifier loses its previously held content so that it can contain all the contradictory demands (Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 258).

### **Structural obstacles to transformation processes**

According to Lander (2013), a project of social change needs the material, institutional and symbolic support of the state (p. 87). Nevertheless, the state is not a unitary. It has internal historical struggles, decision-making processes, rules, practices, bureaucracies and actors with own interests, logics and incentives (Brand, 2013, pp. 107-108). These state institutions often reproduce existing social and economic structures and consolidate the status-quo to ensure their continuity (Brand, 2013, p. 107; Lander, 2013, p. 87). Brand (2013) argues that these historical and practical constraints within the state apparatus affect an emancipatory project, since the state "claims exclusive competence over many social problems and hinders alternative ways of addressing and processing them" (p. 108). Additionally, the international dimension of the state also hinders social transformation (p. 113). The wider international geopolitical and economic conditions, such as the demand of the world market for commodities, limit the room for manoeuvre of the state and therefore need to be considered when investigating discourse and social change (p. 113). Lastly, in a complex heterogeneous society, there is not just one project of social change, but many competing transformative logics proposed by different groups (Lander, 2013, p. 91). The failure to reach a consensus among these groups can prevent a particular discourse from fulfilling its potential.

To sum up, this framework provides theoretical insights on whether a transformative discourse can sustain its radical potential once turned into the state project. The process of

discourse hegemonization (Laclau, 2005; 1996), the complex internal structures of state and society (Brand, 2013), as well as the broad geopolitical/economic environment can all be limiting factors on an emancipatory project such as BV.

### **Methodology: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and political speeches**

The objective of this section is to provide the methodological blueprint of the CDA and justify this particular research design. CDA examines how meaning is created through written, oral or sign language (Cummings et al., 2018). As CDA is a loose collection of interdisciplinary methods, there is a risk that researchers only test hypotheses by providing confirming instances without sufficient tools and system (Apthorpe & Gasper, 2014, pp. 5-6; Davies & Rea, 2019). Thus, the investigator must be particularly transparent about steps and sources of the individual research endeavour (Davies & Rea, 2019).

Fairclough's (1992; 2003) textually-based CDA is a good fit for this research, given its focus on how semiosis creates, reproduces and transforms social relations and practices and "how dominant logics are challenged and disrupted" (Lewis, 2018, p. 1164).

The first step of CDA is to identify the relevant data, set the time-frame and establish the context (Schneider, 2013b). For the time-frame, 2008 is the starting point since the Ecuadorian government ratified the constitution that introduced BV. As the thesis aims to analyse the long-term discursive change of BV, both presidents Correa and Moreno need to be included at an early and late stage of their presidency. Consequentially, the analysis extends until 2020.

The research takes presidential speeches as a unit of study for several reasons: firstly, the president has the most authoritative position in the state, and thus his discourses can influence what people think and do. Secondly, presidential speeches are often a response to significant events or moments of crisis. According to Fairclough (1992), "such moments of crisis make

visible aspects of practices which might normally be naturalised, and therefore difficult to notice" (p. 230). Wodak and Meyer (2009) agree with Fairclough (1992) that critical discursive events, the presence of relevant discourses and the focus on one political unit (e.g. political speech) are essential data collection criteria (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p. 98). Based on these criteria, I collected a sample of nine presidential speeches for the analysis.

In a first stage, I investigated word frequencies and distributions across the whole text corpus using the software *NVivo*, to find broad patterns across the speeches (Motion & Leitch, 2009, p. 1049). The keyword search included terms such as 'BV/Sumak Kawsay', 'Development', 'Revolution', 'Nature', 'Change' or 'Extractivism'. Based on the criteria by Wodak and Meyer (2009), I then selected three speeches (Moreno: 1; Correa; 2) for a more detailed analysis. In the second stage, I applied Davies and Rea's (2019) approach of reading the entire speeches while letting codes and broad themes emerge from the text (Appendix B). I used evolutionary coding rather than a predefined framework given that a "[t]oo rigid an analytical framework can lead one to lose sight of the complexities of discourse" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 125). Thirdly, I conducted a more detailed analysis of the three speeches with focus on interdiscursivity, "or the way in which discourses drew upon, interrelated, competed and struggled with other discourses" (Motion & Leitch, 2009, p. 1049). The main objective was to highlight the relationship between the way discourse is framed, and its wider local, global, social or political context (Dijk, 1990). Additionally, I applied Fairclough's (2003) checklist on textual analysis paying attention to context, genre, intertextuality, the notion of difference, assumptions, semantic/grammatical mood, speech function, linguistic mechanism, style, discourse and evaluation (Appendix C).

All speeches have been analysed in textual form rather than verbally, limiting the possibility of taking tone, pauses and other non-verbal communication into account. Moreover,

all the speeches were read, interpreted and translated in Spanish. While being fluent, as Spanish is not my first language, some linguistic nuances and meanings might have been missed.

Lastly, CDA is an interpretivist epistemology. This means that the researcher cannot be a neutral observer but is a participant in the construction of knowledge himself (Davies & Rea, 2019). I addressed the issue of reflexivity by noting personal reflections and theoretical presupposition during the investigation (see Appendix B; C).

### ***Buen Vivir and the Ecuadorian state***

#### **From neoliberalism to a new constitution**

The following chapter introduces the case context, outlining how BV became a guiding principle of the Ecuadorian state. Furthermore, it illustrates how the conceptual struggle over BV created internal contradictions in constitution and policy papers.

Ecuador was governed by centre to centre-right parties throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2019). These governments relied heavily on loans from international financial institutions and implemented neoliberal policies partly as an outcome of the conditions linked to those loans (Williford, 2018). The population's disillusionment with the policies resulted in an uprising of social movements firmly based in the indigenous population and the rural-landless (Veltmeyer & Petras, 2019). In consequence, Ecuador experienced a period of instability with seven presidents between 1996-2006 (Williford, 2018, p. 101). Furthermore, it suffered a financial crisis that resulted in the dollarisation of the economy and emigration to Western Europe and the United States in the early 2000s (Caria & Domínguez, 2016, p. 18). Eventually, the wave of social movements swept Rafael Correa and his party *Alianza País* into office in 2007. Correa promised to "re-orient state policy to address the demands of Ecuadorian citizens rather than submit to international pressure" (Williford, 2018, p. 103). He had managed

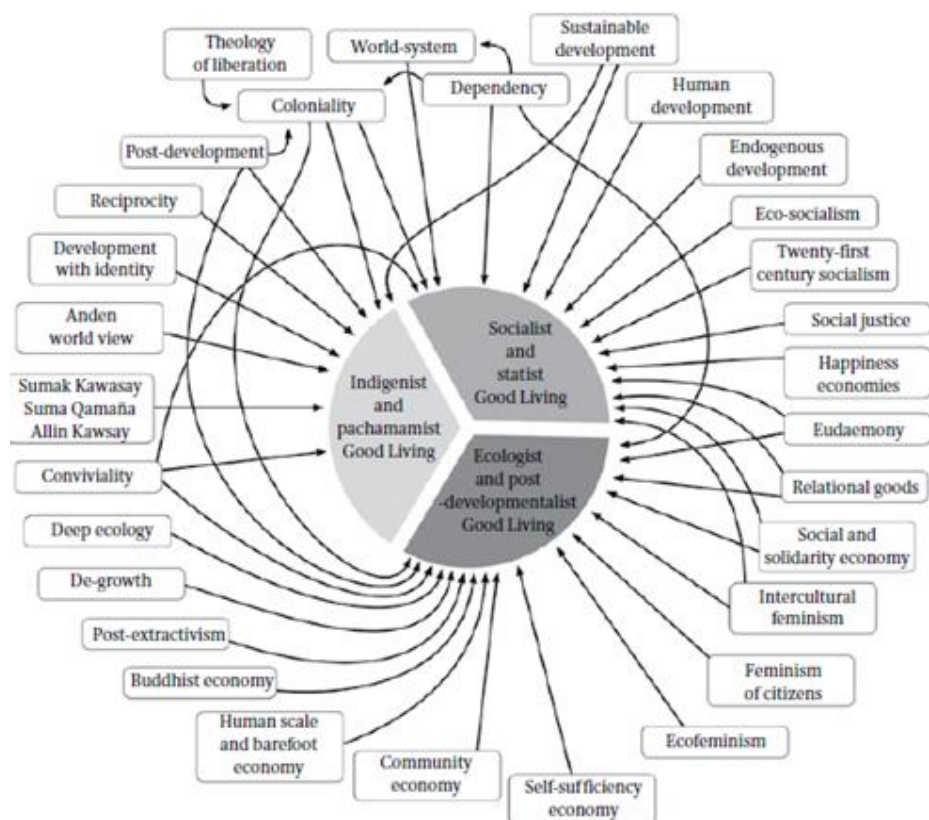
to unite a left-wing alliance of academics, middle-class supporters and the indigenous population by offering the draft of a new constitution based on social justice, plurinationality and the rights of nature (Caria & Dominguez, 2016; Vanhulst & Beling, 2014). In April 2007, 80% of the Ecuadorian population voted for the creation of the Constitutional Assembly (Williford, 2018).

Consequently, a wide range of actors, including environmentalist groups, indigenous representatives, trade unionists and panels of scholars started to fiercely debate the constitution's content (Baez & Sacher, 2014, p. 243). The debate centred around the idea to set BV as a guiding principle for the constitution. BV had previously been presented to the assembly through the *Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador* (Cortez, 2011, p. 11). Despite its origins among the indigenous population, it had gained broad recognition among post-development scholars, environmentalist movements and the party alliance of Correa. Yet, there was no clear consensus over the meaning of BV (Villalba-Eguiluz & Extano, 2017, p. 2). Initially, the groups shared several ideas. According to Villalba-Eguiluz and Extano (2017), BV should be a "reconceptualisation of wellbeing and the quality of life, linked to concepts of harmony and equity, recognising the value of what is communitarian and collective facing what is individual, and including the subjective and spiritual, not only the material" (p. 2). Furthermore, it would entail a critique of the linear Western understanding of modernity and development. The country should rediscover the knowledge of indigenous cultures and demand national and regional sovereignty. Thirdly, it should lead to radical democratisation and direct participation. Most importantly, it would grant rights to nature and propose to go beyond anthropocentric sustainable development. Nonetheless, the actors had to recognise that BV is an open proposal under constant construction (Villalba-Eguiluz and Extano, 2017, p. 2).

The complexity of intellectual currents that were confronted at the Constitutional Assembly becomes apparent in Cubillo-Guevara and Hidalgo-Capitán's (2017) genealogy of BV (Figure 2).

**Figure 2:**

*Genealogy of Buen Vivir*



*Note:* Adapted from "Deconstruction and Genealogy of Latin American Good Living (Buen Vivir). The (Triune) Good Living and Its Diverse Intellectual Wellsprings." by Cubillo-Guevara & Hidalgo-Capitán (2017), *Alternative Pathways to Sustainable Development: Lessons from Latin America*.

According to them, three discursively opposed interpretations of BV flowed together at the assembly (p. 26). Firstly, representatives from the indigenous groups advocated for a BV that emphasises self-determination, plurinational statehood, pre-modern alternatives to capitalism, and a non-anthropocentric understanding of nature (p. 27). Secondly, a group of post-development scholars and ecologists, including the assembly's president Alberto Acosta,



supported a BV based on post-extractivism, decolonisation, empowered civil society and the transformation of the system's productive matrix (Cubillo-Guevara & Hidalgo-Capitán, 2017, p. 29; Villalba-Eguiluz & Extano, 2017). The indigenous group criticised the post-development faction for altering the meaning of BV by applying foreign concepts such as Western postmodernism (Oviedo, 2011 as cited by Cubillo-Guevara & Hidalgo-Capitán, 2017). A third, socialist/statist group, blamed the others for "lacking political pragmatism" (p. 29), while being "trapped in a discourse of romantic ecology" (Cubillo-Guevara & Hidalgo-Capitán, 2017, p. 29). The statist group instead stressed the role of the state to reach BV, tolerated extractivism as a necessity to transform the socioeconomic system towards post-capitalism and proposed the 'citizen revolution' as a way towards equity and social justice (Cubillo-Guevara & Hidalgo-Capitán, 2017, p. 28). After long debates, the constitution became ratified in September 2008 with BV as the guiding principle of the state (Caria & Domínguez, 2016).

### **The Ecuadorian constitution and the 'National Plan for Buen Vivir' (NPBV)**

Ecuador's constitution is the outcome of the previously described conceptual struggle over BV. While difficult to classify, Villalba-Eguiluz and Extano (2017) argue that the legal documents and policies most closely reflect the statist discourse, even though they significantly changed over time. Next to the constitution, there have been three 'National Plan for Buen Vivir' (NPBV) with a similar function to other country's development plans (SENPLADES 2009; 2013; 2017). The documents are briefly discussed here to give the discursive context for the subsequent analysis.

The constitution presents BV as a set of fundamental rights (Gudynas, 2011a, p. 4; Merino, 2016): these include individual social rights (in areas such as education, water, housing, health etc.), collective rights (participation, indigenous rights etc.) and the rights of nature

(intrinsic value of the environment). It recognises Ecuador as a plurinational state and determines equity and inclusion as basic rights (Williford, 2018). Moreover, the constitution reconceptualises 'development': instead of defining development in terms of macroeconomic targets, it becomes the organised set of sustainable and dynamic economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental systems that guarantee the enforcement of BV (Gudynas, 2011a, p. 4).

Yet, the term BV is not explicitly defined in the constitution and thereby leaves room for interpretation or cooptation (Williford, 2018). This ambiguity is the result of the struggles at the Constitutional Assembly. It is only in the three NPBV that the term becomes more substantiated. The plan from 2013-2017, defines BV as a "way of life that enables happiness, the preservation of cultural and environmental diversity; BV is harmony, equality, equity and solidarity" (SENPLADES, 2013, p. 13). The plan rejects the notion of development and emphasises the necessity of a long-term structural change through the 'citizen revolution' in a plurinational state (Baez & Sacher, 2014, p. 246; Williford, 2018, p. 107).

Nevertheless, the plan also stresses the role of the state to achieve this structural change and lead the way towards BV (Baez & Sacher, 2014). The second plan under Correa accepts economic growth and extractivism as a tool to transform the productive matrix in the long-term towards a post-capitalist society (Cubillo-Guevara & Hidalgo-Capitán, 2017; 2018). Appendix A shows how the objectives of the development plans changed over time (Williford, 2018; own elaboration). Overall, BV remained a fluid discourse in the policy papers. The next chapter will turn towards BV in the presidential speeches.

### ***Buen Vivir* under Correa and Moreno: a declining emancipatory project**

As outlined in the theoretical framework, this thesis adopts a critical realist stance: immaterial factors such as discourse can have observable consequences. For instance, discourses provide the premises for a government to pursue a particular policy, create new institutions or defend the status-quo (Motion & Leitch, 2009, p. 1047). Parallely, however, discourse is shaped by the existing socioeconomic structures. Consequentially, this chapter follows a twofold approach: first, it employs CDA to assess how Correa's and Moreno's framing of the BV discourse has limited the opportunity of profound transformation. A second part then links the framing to the implementation of BV in the state's policies, while particularly focusing on the structural constraints on the discourse.

#### **Correa's appropriation of *Buen Vivir***

The following part applies the theoretical framework to explain why Correa's framing of BV hindered the socioeconomic transformation that was outlined by the new constitution.<sup>1</sup> The first speech was held by Correa (2008) during the closing ceremony of the Constitutional Assembly. The second speech took place during a conference in Quito on the 28.12.2012 when the Ecuadorian government announced a large campaign of oil-drilling in the south of Ecuador's Amazonian rainforest (Correa, 2012).

#### ***Discontinuity from neoliberalism***

According to Laclau (1996), the discourse of a new hegemonic project promises the total discontinuity to the previous discourses. It claims to replace all the old 'flawed' structures even though that is illusionary (as cited by Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 259). Given the novelty of BV

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations from the speeches were translated by the author. The speeches were coded and analysed in Word.

and its popularity among the diverse groups in Ecuador, Correa can use it to mobilise support by promising a total break from neoliberalism.

In Correa's speeches, the dichotomy between the "old country" of neoliberal rule and the "new homeland" formed by the constitution is a key theme. By framing the constitutional change as a "citizen revolution" and by demanding social, economic and ethical change, he commits to the participatory and transformative language of BV from the constitution. He claims that his government "work[s] day-by-day to free the citizens, our people, the human beings, from this fantasy called market" (Correa, 2008).

Correa (2008) characterises the old regime as "undemocratic" and corrupt exploiter of Ecuador's resources for foreign and private interests. This language indicates his commitment to the anti-imperialist dimension of BV, but also implies the new government's respect for nature (Correa, 2012). More specifically, Correa (2012) states: "For a long time our money went abroad, and here where this wealth originated, there was only waste, contamination and poverty left". He declares that under his regime, all these dislocated structures have been repaired: the new state is "transparent", with "clean hands" and restored national sovereignty (Correa, 2008, 2012). He assures that "(...) with the 'citizen revolution' the committed mistakes (...) are not bound to repeat themselves" (Correa, 2008).

In essence, Correa mobilises support by creating the impression that the new government is about to overcome all the neoliberal governments' fallacies. Thereby, he implies that the social transformation of BV is already a reality, misrepresenting that economy and state still require profound restructuring.

### *Internal contradictions*

This subchapter outlines how Correa altered the emancipatory meaning of BV by reframing it in terms of conventional development.

The NPBV of 2013 determines that the state should not pursue development based on economic growth but instead establish BV (Lalander & Merimaa, 2018, p. 495). BV entails the search for post-capitalist alternatives and new economic institutions (Vanhulst, 2015, p. 10). Correa, however, surrenders the conceptual particularities of BV by rewording it so that it becomes equivalent to development. This logic of equivalence (Laclau, 2005, p. 78) becomes apparent in the following quotation:

"(...) we have lost so much time on our way towards BV - towards development. (...) make use of our non-renewable natural resources, with major social responsibilities, with major environmental responsibilities, to bring the country as quickly as possible out of underdevelopment, to reach as quickly as possible BV, (...) to finally overcome misery and poverty in Ecuador" (Correa, 2008).

He sets the goals of BV not in terms of overcoming market-logics or transforming social institutions and structures, but as part of ending "underdevelopment", "misery" and "poverty". These goals have little in common with the indigenous cosmovision of BV ingrained in the constitution as a "new form of citizen coexistence, in diversity and harmony with nature" (Walsh, 2010, p. 18), nor with the establishment of "a just, democratic, productive and solidarity-based economic system" (p. 19). Instead, there is a narrower definition of development as poverty-reduction and improved material wellbeing. This is reflected by his address to the Nation of 2016. Correa defines his political term as a "*Década Ganada*" [a won decade] based on large infrastructure projects, stable growth rates and good macroeconomic indicators.

The contradictions in Correa's conception of BV are even more salient in regards to the environment. Correa presents himself as an environmentalist and characterises the constitution of Ecuador as the "greenest constitution in the world, the first and only constitution that recognises the rights of mother earth" (Correa, 2008; 2016). However, he then undermines this principle of the constitution by metaphorically stating that "for us and for the revolution, the human beings are not the only important thing, but they remain to be the most important element of 'Pachamama', and we can't be beggars sitting on a sack of gold". Correa draws on indigenous language ('*Pachamama*')<sup>2</sup> to demonstrate his commitment towards the idea of harmony in the human-nature relation (Lalander & Merimaa, 2018, p. 499). Nevertheless, he adopts an anthropocentric stance by demanding that "we can't be beggars sitting on a sack of gold", showing the necessity to make use of Ecuador's non-renewable resources to improve material wellbeing (Correa, 2012). In this conception, the natural environment has no intrinsic rights but only instrumental value for promoting development.

Overall, Correa uses the term BV in contradictory ways. For example, he employs the radical conception of BV to stress the break with neoliberalism and to appeal to the demands of various social movements. Simultaneously, he undermines this radical conception by equating BV with narrowly-defined development and extractivism to justify his actual policies. The persisting contradictions render the meaning of BV ambiguous.

### ***Antagonism***

This section demonstrates how Correa employs antagonism against the environmental, indigenous and post-development groups to claim interpretative authority on the concept of BV. Through this appropriation, BV turns into the government's legitimising tool instead of being an

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<sup>2</sup> Pachamama is the Andean personification of Mother Earth

emancipatory agenda for the country (Caria & Dominguez, p. 28). According to Lander (2013, p. 90), the success of an emancipatory project like BV depends on whether the different groups of a heterogeneous society become complementary parts in the process of social transformation. This requires mutual learning, dialogue and complex alliance-building (p. 90). Constructed antagonism between the groups, on the other hand, will only lead to the defeat of the project as overcoming the old structures will require broad support (p. 91).

Correa (2008), however, asserts that "the greatest danger for our project is the infantile leftism and environmentalism" and the "childish indigenous." He discards the contributions of the environmental and indigenous groups to the new constitution as "blah blah democracy" and "dilettantism", even though they introduced the term BV. He stigmatises the groups as enemies of the new project, meanwhile presenting himself as the rightful representative of the Ecuadorian people. Additionally, he questions their trustworthiness by referring to them as "irresponsible", "infantile" and accuses them of spreading "myths and "deception" (Correa, 2012). By revealing his negative attitude towards these groups, Correa also implies his rejection of the indigenous/environmental envisionment of BV. Moreover, Correa (2012) polemically includes alternative viewpoints only to negate them straight away: "(...) they can't paralyse us with this fundamentalism - this infantilism - which already has made us lose so much time on our way towards BV." Thereby, he indicates a lack of respect for the plural interests in the Ecuadorian society.

In sum, Correa's antagonism against his opponents demonstrates that there is an ongoing conflict over who controls and defines the meaning of BV. Correa aims to empty the term from the transformative demands of the environmental and indigenous groups, as these contradict his positions. Instead of entering a dialogue, he seeks the interpretive authority over BV and thereby

risks losing support for the project in society. Finally, by framing the indigenists and environmentalists as enemies, the meaning of BV increasingly shifts away from its progressive socioeconomic/environmental outlook.

***Buen Vivir as empty signifier***

This last section applies Laclau's theory on hegemony to explain how BV turned into an empty-signifier. The analysis revealed that Correa defends his contradictory use of BV by applying the 'logic of equivalence': he argues that all different demands by the societal actors can fit under the umbrella of BV, as defined by his government. He aims to overcome the competing interests of the constitutional assembly and wants to secure the broad support of the heterogeneous and pluricultural society. To turn into a point of identification for all the actors, however, BV has to lose its previously held particularity (Stengel & Nabers, 2019, p. 258). In other words, BV has to surrender the transformative meaning given to it by environmental, indigenous and post-development actors. The following quote illustrates that logic:

"We are the left, but not those dumb leftists that oppose everything, all the time, and thereby only reinforce the status-quo. We are indigenous, and I have the authority to say that (...); we are indigenous, but not like any of those that hide a deep racism behind their supposed indigenism, by pretending the misery is part of the folklore of our ancestral heritage. We are environmentalists, and I have authority on that given my background as professor of environmental economics" (Correa, 2012).

Through this anaphora, Correa acknowledges issues of the environment and plurinationality and presents himself as the only actor that can solve those problems. He later states that ecologist and indigenous opposition frame a "false dilemma" between indigenous rights and environmental protection on the one hand, and extractivism, development and growth on the other. Correa



(2012) insists that under BV, this false dilemma does not exist. Instead, he uses the term to justify the compatibility of contradictory activities. For instance, he affirms extractivism as a necessity to reach a post-capitalist BV, as it can finance the shift towards a knowledge economy (Lalander & Merimaa, 2018, p. 500). Additionally, while declaring a participatory "citizen revolution" and indigenous autonomy, he simultaneously demands higher central state authority to facilitate the transformation of the country (Correa, 2008). According to him, extractivism, and state-centralization on the one hand, and indigenous autonomy and the rights of nature on the other hand, are perfectly compatible under BV. The government only has to act with "social" and "environmental responsibility" (Correa, 2012).

To sum up, Correa uses the discourse of BV as a legitimising and mobilising instrument and not as a plan for social change. He draws on its environmental, indignant and emancipatory language to secure support. Contrarily, he equates BV with development and poverty-reduction when justifying the state's increasing centralisation and extractivism. These contradictions, combined under one discourse, suggests that BV turned into what Laclau (2005) denotes as empty-signifier: a term void of meaning that can be used interchangeably. It has moved away from its transformative conception as "alternative to development" and turned into a device to justify government activities (Caria & Domínguez, 2016, p. 29). Thus, its potential to serve as a conceptual premise for meaningful societal transformation has been limited. Furthermore, the hostility against environmentalists, indigenous and post-development groups suggests that Correa's intention to transform the country towards an ecologist and post-capitalist paradigm remains an empty promise. Instead, the persisting antagonism hinders BV from becoming a shared emancipatory project.

### **Contradictions between speech and policy**

The constitution defines a set of core principles that should inform the government actions: these include the rights of nature, plurinationality, development towards BV, a commitment to deliberative and direct democracy and national sovereignty (see SENPLADES 2009, 2013; 2017; Cevallos, 2013, pp. 103/104). While the first part of the analysis has focused on the internal content of Correa's speeches, the following section relates the framing of BV to the policies of the government and the structural limits of the Ecuadorian state and economy. The aim is not to provide an extensive analysis of all policy fields but to illustrate the discrepancies between discourse and socioeconomic reality.

#### ***Rights of nature vs extractivism.***

Correa presents his administration as one of the most ecologically progressive in the world. He stresses the end of unsustainable, exploitative practices, while simultaneously identifying extractivism as a necessity for reaching BV. This contradiction is the outcome of Correa's attempt to legitimise a range of government policies. On the one hand, he proposes to establish an international court for environmental justice (Correa, 2012). Furthermore, he initiated a global campaign against the petrol company Chevron-Texaco that caused environmental damages through oil-extraction in the Ecuadorian rainforest between 1964-1990 (Lalander & Merimaa, 2018, p. 498). As a result, the company was obliged to pay compensation of \$18 billion to the indigenous population in the affected region (p. 498). Most remarkable is Correa's Yasuni-ITT initiative: in cooperation with the UN and environmental groups, Correa agreed not to touch the country's largest oil reserves in return for a compensation of 50 percent of the expected income by the international community (p. 494). Nonetheless, responding to the lack of compensation and the need for redistributive social policies, he decided to start exploiting

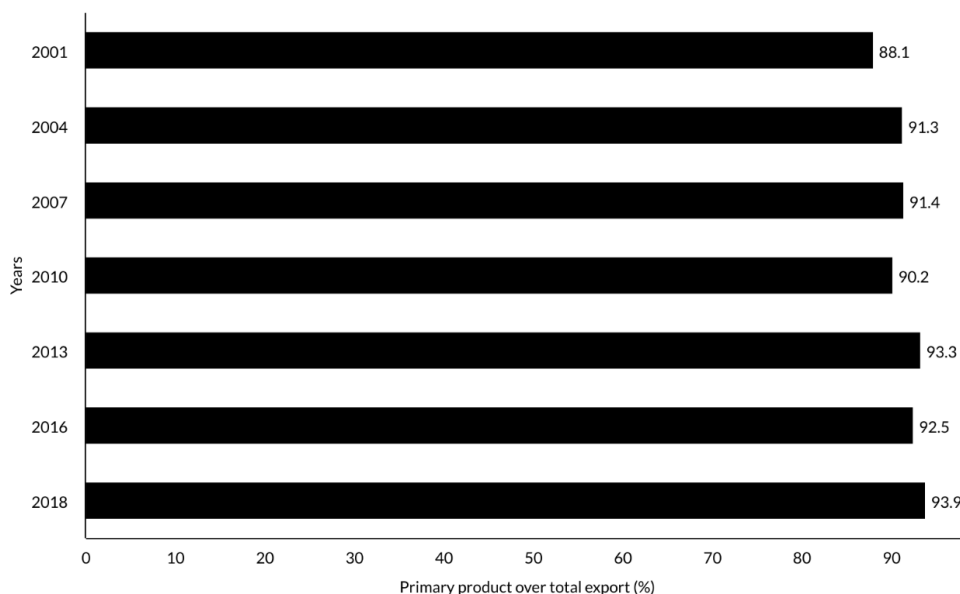
the Yasuní oil reserves in 2013 (Villalba-Eguiluz & Extano, 2017, p. 6). This resulted in an intensification of extractivism across Ecuador (p. 6).

Correa (2012) had already announced extensive new oil drilling in the southern Amazon a year before ending Yasuní. According to Cevallos (2013), these drillings had the aim to extract 1955 million barrels of oil (p. 106) and would result in the loss of 185.224 hectares of rainforest (p. 111). Additionally, Correa declared to expand the mining sector. Just one year after the constitution was ratified, the government approved a new mining law and turned five large mineral deposits into key strategic projects (Van Teijlingen, 2016, p. 903).

As a consequence, the objective of the NPBV (SENPLADES 2009; 2013) to move away from commodity export, was even reversed. Instead, there has been a slight increase in exports of primary products as the share of total exports since the ratification of the new constitution in 2008 (Graph 1).

### **Graph 1:**

*Exports of primary products' as share of the total exports in Ecuador during the years 2001-2018 (%)*



Note: Data retrieved from CEPALSTAT (2019). "Exports of primary products as a share of total exports." Graph created by the author.

Correa's promise to diversify the economy by establishing a knowledge-based economy is not reflected by the indicators. Table 1 illustrates that among the primary exports, petroleum remains the largest sector, accounting for more than half of total exports during most of Correa's terms. This large proportion shows that Ecuador remains heavily dependent on global petrol prices. This became clear when global oil-prices dropped by 70% in 2014 (Stocker et al., 2018), which caused the natural resources rents and petroleum exports to decline sharply (Table 1; Graph 2).

**Table 1:**

*Main products of Ecuador's exports 2007-2015 (in thousand US dollars; and percentage of total exports)*

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Petroleum and derivatives	8329	11,721	6965	9673	12,945	13,792	14,107	13,275	6660
Banana and plantain	1302	1640	1995	2032	2246	2078	2322	2577	2808
Coffee and elaborates	123	130	139	160	260	261	218	178	146
Shrimps	612	712	664	849	1178	1278	1783	2513	2280
Cocoa and elaborates	239	290	402	424	586	454	527	710	812
Fish	169	192	233	237	257	324	264	280	231
% of the 6 main items/total	71.32%	75.46%	72.16%	73.76%	75.70%	74.03%	75.13%	73.45%	67.91%
% Petroleum/total	56.00%	60.22%	48.32%	53.33%	56.08%	56.13%	55.13%	49.91%	34.96%

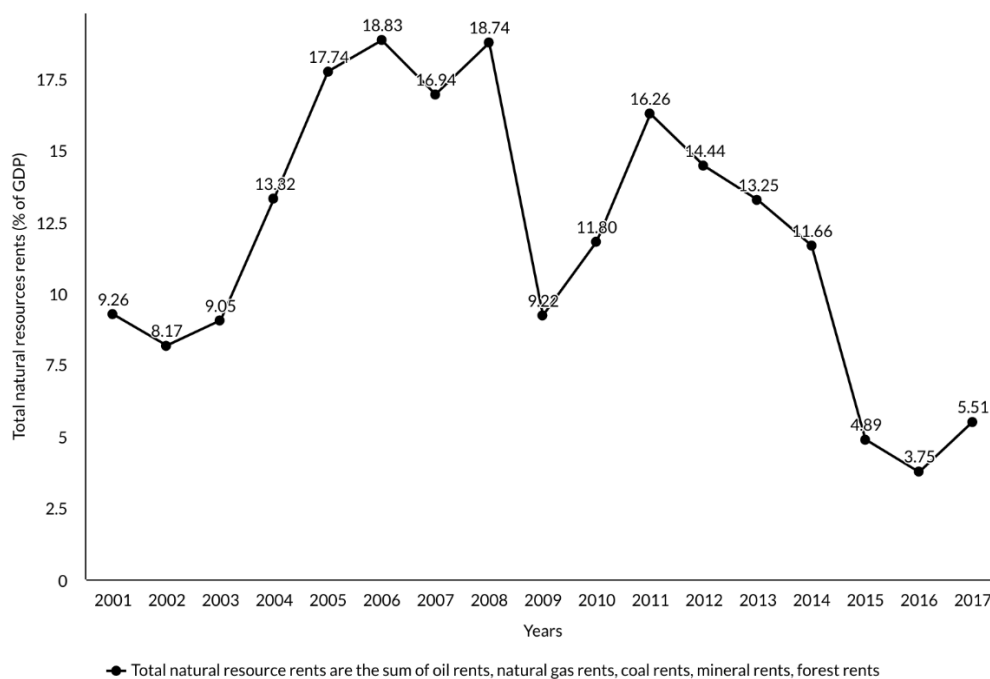
Note: Adjusted from "BV vs development (II): the limits of (Neo-) Extractivism." by Villalba-Eguiluz, C. U., & Etxano, I. (2017). *Ecological Economics*, 138, 1-11.

Overall, extractivism in Ecuador has deepened since the establishment of BV, and primary products remain the leading source for economic growth. During Correa's first two terms (2007-2013), for instance, the total natural resource rents continued to form a large proportion of the country's total GDP (Graph 2). Moreover, negative social and environmental impacts continue to be high (Villalba-Eguiluz & Etxano, 2017, p. 4). The limits on BV's rights of nature is not only the result of lacking political will of the Ecuadorian state but the outcome of international geopolitical and economic constraints. After rejecting free trade deals with the US and moving

away from World Bank and IMF, Ecuador increasingly turned towards Chinese loans (Cevallos, 2013, p. 107; Williford, 2018, pp. 112-113). These were conditionally linked to petrol deliveries. Only between 2009 and 2012, the government received US\$ 1000 million in return for 69,12 million barrels of oil over two years (Cevallos, 2013, p. 108). By 2015, Ecuador had already borrowed \$11 billion for infrastructure projects (Krauss & Bradsher, 2015). The conditionality between Chinese loans and oil deliveries created new dependencies and is among the reasons why the government intensified its extractivist activities (Cevallos, 2013, p. 108).

### Graph 2:

*Total natural resources rents of Ecuador 2001-2017(% of GDP)*



Note: Data retrieved from World Bank (2019). "Total natural resources rents (% of GDP) – Ecuador." Graph created by the author.

### *Deliberative democracy and indigenous rights*

One of the most recurring themes of Correa's speeches is the "citizen revolution". The new government is committed to empower the people by promoting direct and participatory democracy in line with BV (SENPLADES, 2009; 2013). This commitment, however, is undercut

by an authoritative, pejorative and statist attitude. Correa (2008) summarises the intense debates at the Constitutional Assembly as "much time lost, after all this so-called blah blah democracy". Moreover, he stigmatises his critics as the enemies of the people given that they came to "boycott" and "hinder the work of the (...) grant majority of the Ecuadorian people that really wanted this constitution" (p. 14). For instance, post-development scholar Alberto Acosta resigned as president of the Constitutional Assembly after internal struggles with Correa, who curtailed key demands by the indigenous population related to natural resources and plurinationality (Toledo, 2014, pp. 80/81).

According to Caria and Dominguez (2016, p. 26), there is very mixed evidence of participatory democracy during Correa's administration. Firstly, Correa created a 'Council for Civil Participation and Social Accountability' (Ortiz Lemos, 2015, p. 34). However, the government elected all of the members and 6 out of 7 were closely linked to Correa's party alliance (p. 34). The administration also ratified a 'Civil Participation Law': this law encouraged participation in local government and the incorporation of participatory advice for the state secretaries (p. 35). Nevertheless, this advice was not binding and always remained "under the subjection of political representatives" (p. 35). Furthermore, the government used referendums where the citizen only "reaffirm their support for Correa's government rather than to express their opinion on the subjects of consultation" (Caria and Dominguez 2016, p. 26). Moreover, Correa increasingly regulated civil society. For instance, the 2013 'Executive Degree 16' allowed the government to discipline civil society organisation if they engaged into politics beyond their purpose or posed a threat to security or public peace (De la Torre & Ortiz Lemos, 2016, pp. 229-230).

While appropriating indigenous concepts such as '*Sumak Kawsay*' or '*Pachamama*' and speaking in the name of "our ancestral heritage", Correa suppressed indigenous opposition and showed little respect for the value of plurinationality. During his presidency over 200 indigenous protesters were jailed, he stopped funding for indigenous organisations, and he excluded indigenous representatives from the talks on new mining and drilling projects on the indigenous territories (Becker, 2012, pp. 124-125; Cevallos, 2013, p. 113; Williford, 2018, p. 110). Similarly, when local population protested against Yasuní oil-drilling in 2007, Correa sent in the military to arrest 45 people under the charge of terrorism (Zibeche, 2009 as cited by Becker, 2013, p. 14).

Lastly, Correa's government introduced a new communication law in 2013 that monitored and regulated media outlets, and resulted in efforts to silence critical journalism (De la Torre & Ortiz Lemos, 2016, pp. 232-233). Parallely, he greatly extended government ownership of media outlets and increased the spending into state's publicity from the \$2 million of previous governments to \$129 million in 2012 (Becker, 2013, p. 11).

The previous two sections show how the gaps between the discourse of BV and the state's policies concerning participatory democracy, indigenous rights and the environment have reduced the credibility of BV. Furthermore, it illustrates how difficult it is to scale-up a transformative agenda, given the competing interests of a heterogeneous society, the internal-struggles of the state, and international economic and geopolitical constraints. Overall, Correa rhetorically occupied the political spaces that were previously held by the social movements, without committing to the demanding policy agenda these transformations would require (Becker, 2011).

### **From Rafael Correa to Lenín Moreno: the decline of BV**

The transition from Correa to his party colleague Moreno in 2017 marked both a shift in the presidency and a profound break in the discourse on BV (Cubillo- Guevara & Hidalgo-Capitán, 2018, p. 52). While Moreno was vice president under Correa, they dissociated over a corruption scandal of Correa's close ally Jorge Glas in 2017 (p. 52). This rupture between the two former allies impacted the discourse substantially: in his inaugural address Moreno (2017) still argued that "we should continue to transform the productive matrix" and commit to the "citizen revolution". Nevertheless, despite remaining the guiding principle of the constitution, the analysis has shown that BV disappeared most widely from the presidential discourse.

Instead, Moreno decided to close the 'Secretary for BV' in May 2017 (Angulo & Carvajal, 2017). Moreover, the new government plan of 2017 was now named 'Plan for development 2017 For All Life', and a separate and shorter NPBV was published independently with only 41 references to BV in comparison to the 265 in the previous NPBV (SENPLADES, 2013; 2017). Moreno (2017) redefined BV as an "a citizen's philosophy of life" that "should not be constructed by the government but instead within the private sector". Moreover, he started to define the state's developmental objectives in conventional macroeconomic terms. In his speeches, the most recurring themes are high employment, prosperity, growth, the fight against corruption and a more efficient, transparent and smaller state (Moreno, 2018; 2019). According to Veltmeyer & Petras (2019), Moreno turned his campaign against corruption into a mechanism to embrace neoliberal economic reforms (p. 113). The decision to accept US\$ 4.2 billion loans from the IMF in 2019 marked a further rupture with the core tenets of BV (Moreno, 2019). The fall of oil and gas prices since 2014 has affected the government's economic position and forced



the Ecuadorian state to "increase extractive activities, realise budget costs and achieve foreign credits." (Lalander & Merimaa, 2018, p. 498).

While Correa decided to tweak BV despite the apparent internal contradictions, Moreno left the discourse behind. This was partly a response to the new economic and political circumstances but also a reaction to the quarrel between the two politicians: after BV had become so closely associated with Correa's government, Moreno had turn towards new discourses to distance himself from the predecessor.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis addressed the following research question: *why and how has the Ecuadorian government's framing of Buen Vivir (BV) in public discourse undermined its transformative potential?* The goal was to shed light on how a post-development discourse evolves once confronted with the structures of the state and the constraints of society and economy.

In conclusion, under Correa, BV developed into an 'empty-signifier': a legitimising and mobilising instrument without a fixed meaning. Correa increasingly equated BV with material development and only drew on its transformative language to occupy the political space of the indigenous and environmentalist opposition. The discourse lost further credibility due to the persisting gap between state policies and its transformative core tenets. Lastly, after the shift in the presidency to Moreno, BV disappeared from public discourse despite remaining the guiding principle of the constitution. Instead, Moreno replaced it by more narrowly-defined development language.

Nonetheless, the analysis faces several limitations that should be addressed by future studies. Firstly, this paper investigated the discursive change of BV only based on presidential speeches. Presidents are the most authoritative figure in a state; nevertheless, their discourse is

not representative of the competing interests, identities and values that exist within a state bureaucracy (Brand, 2013). To mitigate that limitation, the thesis considered government papers, secondary literature and the policies of the state. Nevertheless, to assess more comprehensively how BV developed within the state's institutions, future research could turn to expert- and stakeholder interviews in the bureaucracy to acquire a more rounded understanding of the discourse.

Secondly, this thesis focused on the official state discourse of BV. However, a discourse unfolds its transformative potential, once it is perceived as 'common sense' by society (Jessop, 2004, p. 164). Thus, future research should exceed the state and investigate whether BV informed behaviour among the wider Ecuadorian public. This could be done through a discursive analysis of newspaper articles or by gathering direct insights from various social movements, for instance through ethnographic inquiry.

Lastly, this paper only scrutinised how BV has been limited in the state's policies on a national level in Ecuador. BV, nonetheless, has been implemented with some success across local- and regional projects related to the social and solidarity economy or indigenous cooperatives (Giovannini, 2019). Future studies into these projects could teach us how 'alternatives to development' such as BV can more realistically be implemented. Furthermore, studying the role of the state in these local initiatives could provide insights on how an emancipatory project such as BV can be scaled-up to state policies.

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## Appendix A

Summary of the government's objectives outlined by the National Plans for Buen Vivir

### **Objectives of the 'National Plan for Buen Vivir' 2009-2013 (SENPLADES 2009)**

1. Foster a cohesive and socially-integrated environment through diversity
2. Improve the educational capacities and potential of the citizenship
3. Improve the citizenship's overall health and quality of life
4. Improve environmental rights and promote environmentally sustainable programs
5. Maintain sovereignty, promote peace and foster greater Latin American integration
6. Promote stable, dignified and just work laws and provide work options for citizens
7. Construct and strengthen intercultural and public spaces
8. Affirm and strengthen plurinationalism and interculturalism
9. Guarantee individual rights and ensure a proper system of justice
10. Increase the ability of the citizenship to participate politically
11. Establish a socioeconomic system based on sustainable development
12. Construct a democratic state based on the idea of 'good living'

### **Objectives of the 'National Plan for Buen Vivir' 2013-2017 (SENPLADES 2013)**

1. To consolidate democratic governance and construct the people's power
2. To foster social and territorial equity, cohesion, inclusion and equality in diversity
3. To improve people's quality of life
4. To strengthen citizen capacities and potential
5. To build spaces for social interaction and strengthen national identity, diverse identities, plurinationality and interculturality
6. To consolidate the transformation of the judicial system and reinforce comprehensive security, with strict respect for human rights
7. To guarantee the rights of nature and promote environmental sustainability globally
8. To consolidate the social and solidary economic system, sustainably
9. To guarantee dignified work in all forms
10. To promote transformation of the productive structure

11. To ensure the sovereignty and efficiency of the strategic sectors for industrial and technological transformation
12. To guarantee sovereignty and peace, enhancing strategic insertion

**Objectives of the 'National Plan for Buen Vivir'/Development 2017-2021**

**(SENPLADES, 2017)**

1. To assure that everyone can pursue his life with dignity and equal opportunities
2. To affirm interculturality, plurinationalism, valuing all identities
3. To guarantee the rights of nature now and for future generations
4. To consolidate the sustainability of the economic, social and solidarity systems and support the dollarisation
5. To promote productivity and competitiveness for sustainable, redistributive and solidary economic growth redistribution
6. To develop productive capacities for reaching food sovereignty and rural 'good living'
7. To promote a participative society with an inclusive state in service of all citizens
8. To promote transparency and responsibilities for new social ethics
9. To guarantee sovereignty, peace and locate the country strategically in the region and in the world

Note: Adapted from "Buen vivir as policy: challenging neoliberalism or consolidating state power in Ecuador." by Williford, B. (2018) *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 24(1), 96-122. The third section of own elaboration.

## Appendix B

### Sample from the second stage of the Critical Discourse Analysis – Coding for Broad Themes

This table only serves illustrative purposes. It shows the research process during the second stage of the Critical Discourse Analysis. I created tables for the three speeches that were selected for the second stage. This particular table presents the findings from the speech of Correa (2012).

<b>Initial Themes from the second stage</b> (based on evolutionary coding with particular attention to word frequencies and discourse context)	<b>Examples of codes from the text related to Theme</b>	<b>Points of Reflection (including own subjectivity)</b>
Respect for Natural Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (bio)diversity</li> <li>- environment as heritage (e.g. "our jungle is the proof of extensive life from the beginning of time")</li> <li>- environmental as responsibility</li> <li>- environment as privilege</li> <li>- environment as a public good</li> <li>- respect for nature as demonstrated by current government practices (Yasuní, thermal energy etc.)</li> <li>- respect for nature as a constitutionalised principle</li> <li>- human as part of nature (equivalence: respecting</li> </ul>	First reflections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- theme declined in the course of the text; strong presence at the beginning, increasingly mixed with other themes</li> <li>- given the controversial context, he could have tried to play down the topic; instead, it is highlighted and dominates the introduction (despite apparent contradictions)</li> </ul> Research subjectivity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- limitations of language skills given that Spanish is not my first language (nuances might have been missed)</li> <li>- little attention to direct context (intonation etc.) provided that the speeches</li> </ul>

	human same as respecting environment)	were analysed in textual form
Development (Human-centred)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the priority of human over nature</li> <li>- impossible to overcome misery and poverty without natural environment (petrol)</li> <li>- natural rights as an obstacle to overcome underdevelopment</li> <li>- development as economic growth and way towards social justice; as building infrastructure, technology and knowledge capacity</li> <li>- local instead of national development</li> <li>- parallelism to the trajectory of Asian tigers</li> </ul>	<p>First reflections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- repetitive rhetoric ("poverty", "misery" etc.)</li> <li>- balancing between an audience of investors and appealing to the wider Ecuadorian public that is critical towards extractivism</li> <li>- developmentalism embedded in socialist ideology but presented as sustainable and human development; compatible with indigenous rights and rights of nature → development as necessary evil and change to transcend into a knowledge-based economy</li> </ul> <p>Research Subjectivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- reading was influenced by my understanding of the socioeconomic discourses (Developmentalism, Buen Vivir, Neoliberalism)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- material development as necessity/necessary evil to reach Buen Vivir, overcome capitalism (extractivism to finance shift towards knowledge economy)</li> </ul>	<p>First reflections:</p> <p>strong hybridisation of discourses → developmentalism with the language of Buen Vivir</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- very contradictory speech: the argument is to exploit the environment to overcome extractivism and</li> </ul>



<p>Compatibility developmentalism/extractivism with constitutional values (BV)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- development/extractivism as a way to promote biodiversity</li> <li>- The choice between extractivism and environmental protection as a false dilemma</li> <li>- limited impact: extractivism with social and environmental responsibility</li> <li>- extractivism only as a temporal policy</li> <li>- extractivism compatible with indigenous rights and diversity of human life</li> </ul>	<p>natural degradation in the longterm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- trying to combine all subjective demands under one discourse (indigenous rights, environmental protection, social justice, growth)</li> </ul> <p>Research subjectivity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 'Buen Vivir' is only three times explicitly mentioned, but relating much of the speech content to the discourse given its centrality in the constitution, focus on interdiscursivity</li> </ul>
<p>Dichotomy: Old Ecuador vs New Ecuador</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- foreign control vs national sovereignty (decolonised state)</li> <li>- a new form of extractivism (end of exploitation) and with national control</li> <li>- the new government (transparent, not-corrupt, clean-hands)</li> <li>- the ongoing revolution (citizen revolution as participative democracy)</li> <li>- before and after the new constitution of 2008</li> </ul>	<p>First reflections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- contrasting the old regime (neoliberalism) with his new government</li> <li>- the old regime being framed as a corrupt, unsustainable, enemy of the indigenous population</li> <li>- his government is the motor of the citizen revolution (transparent, clean hands metaphor, participative democracy)</li> <li>→ overcome the mistakes of the old regime</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- discrediting critics as liars (they impose false dilemma, create a myth and engage in deception)</li> </ul>	<p>First reflection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- strong contextual reference to the approaching elections</li> <li>- antagonism to the old political regime and even</li> </ul>

<p>Antagonism/Enemies of change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- false revolutionaries: enemies of extractivism are enemies of Buen Vivir</li> <li>- environmentalists as fundamentalists</li> <li>- parts of indigenous population prioritise folklore over ending misery</li> </ul>	<p>more towards current critics mostly from the left, environment groups and the indigenous population</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- clear evidence of populist rhetoric</li> <li>- many parallels to the rhetoric from other speeches, same groups attacked</li> </ul>
<p>Plurinationality/Representing indigenous interests</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- using indigenous discourse (Pachamama)</li> <li>- respecting indigenous autonomy</li> <li>- priority to develop indigenous territories</li> </ul>	<p>First reflections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- framing the ancestral heritage of the indigenous population as his cultural heritage (all Ecuadorian people's heritage)</li> <li>- contradictions: attacking the indigenous people in one part and talking on their behalf in other parts</li> <li>- evidence of discursive struggle over indigenous concepts (Sumak Kawsay, Pachamama etc.)</li> </ul>

### Appendix C

The checklist on the third stage of the analysis based on Fairclough's (2003) criteria for CDA

This table provides one sample on how I analysed the speeches in the third stage. The same process has been applied to all of the three texts.

<b>Textual Analysis Stage 3:</b> Checklist by Fairclough (2003) adapted based on Schneider (2013b)	<b>Analysis of Speech:</b> Correa at petrol conference "Suroriente" (2012)
<p><b>Social Event/Cultural reference</b> (establish the context):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the context inform the argument</li> <li>• What social events/or chain of events is it part of?</li> <li>• What social practices does it refer to?</li> <li>• Part of a chain or network of events?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Broad context:</b> the election of Alianza País and the new constitution of Montecristi as a critical juncture; shifting away from neoliberalism institutionally. Rise of BV as a new discourse filling the void; at the same time commodity boom in Ecuador driven by high demand from China that resulted in the intensified engagement of the Ecuadorian government in resource extraction on large-scale, oriented towards export and without own industrial processing. (Villalba-Eguiluz, 2017). Furthermore, the Ecuadorian government is relying on loans from China that are paid by supplying oil (Cevallos, 2013, p. 108).</p> <p><b>Intermediate context:</b> Confirming Oil-drilling on an extended scale in the Southern part of the Ecuadorian jungle, also referred to as <i>Suroriente</i>. According to calculations of the University of Sussex building up infrastructure for the drilling would mean a loss of 185.224 hectares of forest and the production of 136,371,072 tons of CO2 emissions (Cevallos, 2013, p. 111). Furthermore, the expanded drilling would have effects in 75,91% of the regions of the indigenous population including the Achuar, Andoa, Zápara and Shiwiar and pose a risk especially to biodiversity (p. 111). The <i>Suroriente</i> initiative needs also be closely related to the Yasuní-ITT initiative. In line with the progressive claims on the rights of nature and plurinationality in the constitution, the Ecuadorian government announced in 2007 that they would leave the country's biggest oil reserves in the Amazonian national-park of Yasuní-ITT untouched (Lalander &amp; Merimaa, 2018, p. 494). The initiative was embedded with the <i>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</i>, however, after not receiving sufficient financial support from abroad, Correa announced the end of the</p>

	<p>initiative in 2013, which triggered further extensive oil drilling in the region (Lalander &amp; Merimaa, 2018, p. 497). <b>Close context:</b> Official announcement of the petrol-initiative at an investors conference in a Hotel in Quito. It was accompanied, but protests outside the building (Cevallos, 2013).</p> <p>The context creates an inherent tension between the discourse of BV as outlined in the constitution and the perceivable actions of the government (Dávalo, 2013). Instead of dropping the concept in light of these contradictions, Correa decides to appropriate it and redefine it given the circumstances. He aims to embed all the different demands under the same narrative, claiming they are not mutually exclusive but instead reinforce each other.</p>
<p><b>Genre of the text</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tied to a particular social practice</li> <li>• Other authors involved?</li> <li>• Subgenres</li> </ul>	<p>The text is a political speech and characterised by mixed genres: the main two are an economic-technical and a polemical genre. Correa has to handle two audiences. Firstly, he addresses a technical audience of investors from petrol companies present in the Hotel. Nevertheless, he does not have to focus too much on the technical aspect of the initiative <i>Suroriente</i>, given that his speech followed a more technical statement of the minister for natural resources Wilson Pástor. Secondly, he addresses the more general public, specifically those that protest against the initiative outside of the hotel.</p>
<p><b>Intertextuality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant other texts/voices, which are included or excluded?</li> <li>• When other voices are included, are they attributed, and if so, specifically or non-specifically?</li> <li>• Are attributed voices directly reported (quoted), or indirectly reported?</li> <li>• How are other voices textured in relation to the authorial voice, and in relation to each other?</li> </ul>	<p>The Constitution of Montecristi defines core principles that need to be reflected by the policies of the Ecuadorian government. These include the respect for plurinationality and indigenous autonomy, a development towards BV and the recognition of the rights of nature. Correa several times refers explicitly to the constitution, highlighting it as the foundational moment of a new era, stressing the discontinuities with the old regime.</p> <p>These values are also reflected in the 'National Plan for BV: it explicitly refers to environmental, indigenous rights, direct democracy, sustainable development, finite natural resources (SENPLADES, 2009; 2013). The plan is not expressly mentioned. Nevertheless, the plan's language is strongly present.</p>

	<p>He includes the voices of the environmentalists, indigenous and left-wing movements that criticise the government's policies but does not specify the subject of the sentence. He refers to them as "many people" in a generalised and anonymous way and creates a clear line between them and the Ecuadorian people in general, thereby marginalising them.</p>
<p><b>Difference vs Equivalence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Openness, acceptance, recognition of difference</li> <li>• Accentuation of difference, conflict, polemic, struggle over meaning, norms, power</li> <li>• Resolve difference</li> <li>• Bracketing of difference, focus on commonality, solidarity</li> <li>• Consensus, normalisation of difference of power</li> </ul>	<p>There is an explicit notion of difference: the polemical struggle over BV is most relevant to the research. Correa does not seem to accept the differences but characterises other people's visions as an obstacle for positive change. By consistently using the first-person plural, he does not only speak on his behalf but of all Ecuadorian that he presents as a united and homogenous group.</p> <p><b>Ad hominem and equivalence:</b> he refers to the opposition of indigenous, environmentalists and the left and aims to devalue and discredit their discourses by questioning their trustworthiness and honesty. He collectively refers to them as "dumb", "infantile" "fundamentalist" and "irresponsible" and accuses them of spreading "myth" and "deceptions" (Correa, 2012). He characterises them as the enemies of positive change. Correa adapts a defensive position given that the claims of the opposition are actually grounded on the values of the constitutions and thereby pose a challenge to Correa's discursive representation of BV. Moreover, his dialogical rhetoric shows that the discursive struggle of the Constitutional Assembly is still ongoing in 2012. Correa (2012) accuses the opposition of formulating a "false dilemma" between indigenous rights and the rights of nature on the one hand and extractivism on the other side. Instead, he proposes the idea that all the different subjective demands such as environmental protection, social justice, economic growth and plurinationality go hand in hand under BV.</p>
<p><b>Assumptions/Assertion/Presupposition (Ideology?)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existential, Propositional or value assumption?</li> <li>• Are they sincere or manipulative or polemical? (negative phrasing)</li> <li>• What kind of truth is established?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Negation:</b> He engages in negative phrasing and includes the vision of the opposition to negate it straight away. He cites his critics (without direct reference) only to reject their criticism as a myth. Thus, he presents himself as being highly committed to the truth to elevate himself from his opponents. Overall, his commitment to truth becomes questionably given the magnitude of internal contradictions in his speeches.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Modalities:</b> should, would, could</li> <li>• <b>Evidentiality:</b> factuality implied, common sense</li> </ul>	<p><b>Modalities:</b> There is a strong presence of existential assumptions in regards to Ecuador's nature. These assumptions are closely linked to evidential modality: Correa provides evidence for his claims, for instance, arguing that Ecuador's environment is so unique given that it "is the first place for invertebrate species (9.2 for every thousand square-kilometres)."</p> <p>As soon as Correa shifts away from describing the natural environment, it turns from existential to propositional assumptions. He talks about what could be if the country would commit itself to extractivism. There is also a modality of obligation and prediction: he argues if Ecuador acts the way that he proposes, by making use of its natural resources, it will be possible to overcome misery and poverty, while at the same time preserving the environment. These modalities make his proposition seem the only valid one.</p>
<p><b>Semantic/grammatical mood</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominant semantic relations (causal, purpose, conditional, additive etc.)</li> <li>• What kind of word groups (business, militaristic etc.)</li> <li>• What type of adjectives, what subjects and objects in the sentence</li> <li>• Active vs passive phrases</li> <li>• Nominalisation?</li> </ul>	<p>Correa regularly uses the pronouns "we" and "our" creating an "us vs them dichotomy". It is, however, unclear whether he speaks on behalf of the government or claims to represent all the people of Ecuador; by shifting subject, he occults direct responsibility. He implies his identification with the indigenous/ancestral roots by repeating the phrases "our ancestral people", "our country". The aim is to create a common sense and to isolate the critics as opponents of the "revolution". Thereby, he indirectly implies that they reinforce the old dysfunctional Neoliberal order.</p> <p>Furthermore, Correa is aware of the environmental issues and the indigenous struggles and anticipates critique. Thus he adopts a generally defensive stance: for instance, he asks rhetorical questions: "That is why, some are going to ask, with such biodiversity (...) why turn towards the non-renewable resources, that could ruin this biodiversity?" He goes on to say: "On a personal level (...) I dislike mining, and I dislike petrol, but poverty and misery I dislike even more."</p>

<p><b>Exchanges, speech function, Rhetorical and linguistic mechanisms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subjective statements vs objectified statements</li> <li>• Allegories, metaphors, idioms, idioms, proverbs and how do they fit into the overall argument</li> </ul>	<p>He uses parallelisms to subvert the differences between development and BV. He is construing BV as an all-encompassing term in which extractivism, social responsibility and environmental concerns can co-exist without a contradiction of demands.</p> <p><b>Metaphors.</b> He uses the indigenous concept of Pachamama, that values nature as a female entity with rights and an identity. Then, he contradicts that vision by metaphorically referring to it as a 'sack of gold' that needs to be instrumentalised to overcome underdevelopment.</p> <p>"Clean hands" metaphor to stress the discontinuities between the neoliberal regime and his government.</p> <p><b>Anaphora:</b> He employs rhetorical devices to convince the audience that he speaks on their behalf. This particular anaphora shows how he appropriates his opponent's space.</p>
<p><b>Style:</b> In what style does the speaker present himself?</p>	<p>Correa presents himself in a range of styles. Firstly, he portrays himself as a speaker that has more authority than his critics given his own experiences. He claims to speak on behalf of the indigenous population because he has worked with the poorest indigenous sectors. Furthermore, he presents himself as an environmentalist that has more authority than the opposition given his background as a professor for environmental economics. Secondly, he presents himself as Ecuadorian that speaks on behalf of the people and the country. He appeals to the cultural heritage of the indigenous population by using their vocabulary and calling it "our ancestral". Correa also claims authority as the president of the country.</p>
<p><b>Discourse:</b> "What discourses are drawn upon in the text, and how are they textured together? Is there significant mixing of discourses?"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indirect or direct representation of discourse?</li> <li>• Who benefits from the discourse?</li> <li>• What sorts of transformation does this (type of) discourse?</li> <li>• Is it stable or contested?</li> </ul>	<p>The speech by Correa demonstrates a strong hybridisation of discourses and hints towards hegemonic struggle over the meaning of BV.</p> <p>Three main discourses can be highlighted:</p> <p>BV discourse is present and mentioned several times explicitly by the text. Correa is aware of the varying conceptions and acknowledges the contesting environmental and indigenous interpretation of the term. He also perceives the tensions between the government's practices and the core tenets of BV in the constitution;</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the discourse in the text differ from other documents?</li> <li>• Can the sample be characterised overall?</li> <li>• Anticipates more than one audience?</li> </ul>	<p>however, instead of downplaying or silencing the differences, he commits to the environmental, postcolonial, participative democratic and indigenous language.</p> <p>There is a language of 'socialist developmentalism' with focus on human wellbeing that is also directly present. Correa identifies the termination of "underdevelopment", "poverty" and "misery" as the crucial goal of the state. Human wellbeing is the priority of the state's activities, and other demands such as environmental protection or indigenous rights are only secondary. Generally, the discourse resembles both welfare state ideas combined with a conventional understanding of development as progress that contains economic growth (as measured by BIP), infrastructural projects and the extensive use of national resources. Correa intends to mix the BV discourse and 'socialist developmentalism'. This hybridisation takes place in various ways: Correa positions himself as a person that dislikes extractivism and frames it as a necessary evil that is vital to overcome capitalism in the long-term by shifting towards a knowledge-based economy. In other words, he proposes that extractivism and developmentalism are pathways towards biodiversity and the rights of nature in the long term. Furthermore, he argues that the government's activities can be completely compatible with the idea of BV when conducted with social and environmental responsibility. All these efforts hint towards Correa's intention to ascribe the meaning of BV towards a broader and more inclusive term.</p> <p>Implicitly, there is a neoliberal discourse present. The "long, sad night of neoliberalism" is defined as the opposite of the new government. Correa argues that the government has taken back national control, decolonising the state, while promoting local development, indigenous rights and environmental responsibilities.</p>
<p><b>Evaluation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To what values do the authors commit themselves? How are values realised?</li> </ul>	<p>Correa is authoritative and does not accept dissensus. He is manipulative as he tries to persuade the audience that BV and 'development' are factually linked. He is disrespectful and commits to personal insults, derogations and devaluing language.</p>

Note: The checklist has been based on Fairclough (2003) *Analysing Discourse - Textual analysis for social research* and was adjusted through insights by Schneider (2013a; 2013b)