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## Towards Intercultural Development: a Bolivian perspective

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#### CLACSO

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### Towards Intercultural Development: a Bolivian perspective\*

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This article was written in November 2005, a month before Bolivian national elections were held. Evo Morales, the leader of the peasant movement, indigenous and marginalized population, was elected president of the nation with more than 54% of the votes; a victory which had never been seen before in Bolivia's electoral system.

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"Above all, we must fight against the power of the dominant neoliberal ideology that keeps on offending and attacking the human nature while reproducing itself socially and historically, threatening dreams, utopias and hopes."

[Paulo Freyre]

To talk about development is to talk about economy, society, environment, technology, organization and culture. However, the mainstream approach to development, as well as development and policy makers, has tended to think and equate development to only one of its realms: the economic development,; leaving the rest of the realms subjugated to it. And the neoliberal capitalist model has become, through colonialism, globalization and conditionalities in international financial relations, the economic global system. However, the approach undertaken is far from giving the promised results. The assumption that a capitalist development approach -based on free markets, outward oriented and having the private sector as the main actor- was going to induce economic growth, has proven not to be real. The other assumption dismantled by the evidence is that the benefits of economic growth were going to be almost automatically distributed to all society.

Looking at the early history of Bolivia, we can affirm that after two decades of an open adoption of the neoliberal approach of development, growth is still weak. The economy has turned more vulnerable, the State is financially unsustainable and the level of debt is critical. The distribution of the few benefits that could exist has never taken place. Disastrous results on equity and distribution of resources and oportunities can be observed. The wealth concentration has gone deeper and the gap between the poor and the rich is getting wider. Bolivian figures show that in 1992, seven out of ten inhabitants were poor, according to the measurement of Unsatisfied Basic Needs, while in 2001, almost ten years after, six out of ten inhabitants still could not satisfy their basic needs. In absolute figures, the number of poor people in Bolivia has increased from 4,4 million to 4,8 million inhabitants. This situation cannot persist. The political and social crisis and the growing social movements of the last five years affirm it. Government should rethink not only how to achieve the goals of poverty reduction for 2015 (Millennium Development Goals – MDG-), but also how to get out of the delicate situation Bolivians confront.

#### The failure of the capitalist development approach

#### **Economic framework**

In 1985, reacting to a deep political and economic crisis, a renewed Bolivian government adopted the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) imposed by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs), mainly the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as counterpart for new financial resources. This program signified the profound implementation of the neo liberal development model. This model was designed as a recipe for all developing or undeveloped countries facing economic and political crisis at that time. The uniform policy prescriptions were: i. Stabilization through open capital account, floating currency, slash public spend-

ing and firings, ii. Economic reactivation through the end of subsidies, opening borders to trade, promotion of foreign investments and privatization.

In the nineties, the second wave of reforms took place: the role of the State got limited to the social development responsibility (education, health, infrastructure); the private sector becoming the only responsible for the economic and productive sphere; a broad privatization of public enterprises (electricity, communication, transport, mining, hydrocarbons....) and the social security system.

However, two decades after the implementation of this model, there is a recognition of its failure. The trickle-down effect does not appear, the economic growth was not important at all, there is nothing to trickle down. There is no equity on the distribution of gains, and the economy becomes more vulnerable. Seventy per cent of the population lives with less than 2 dollars per day, and 42% with less than 1 dollar. In the year 2000, the wealthiest 20% of the population concentrated 59% of the income (54,9% in 1992), while the poorest 20% retained no more than 3% (4,3% in 1992).

The recognition, at least on the rhetoric, of the poor results of the model has made international institutions and policy makers introduce into the debate and their programs the notion of Poverty. The new buzz word of the end of the XXth century and beginning of XXIst is "Poverty Reduction." However, the logic of the approach has not change. The connection between economic and social policy has never appear, the first being always the priority: the objective of growth still comes before distribution. Social policy, subjugated to the economic one, consisted on no more than poverty alleviation programs (centred on the satisfaction of basic needs such as health, educaction, shelter) without facing the real causes of poverty (employment and incomes were only attacked by emergency programs).

The so-called new approach, the poverty reduction one, tries to reinforce the idea of participation, to broaden the participation of civil society on the development policy debate. However, institutional channels of participation seem not to be the adequate. Not enough participative, narrow delimitation of themes for debate, no translation of the results of debate into policies. The emergence of fresh ideas is limited by the governmental care for not altering fiscal, monetary, commercial and financial policies.

#### Social and political framework

Altogether with this economic scenario, as Garcia Linera observes, the political system has enter into a process of losing its social legitimacy, the fracture of conservative beliefs, of frustration between the offerings of modernity and the real reached results. The components that all State has, the correlation of forces, the institutional system and the belief system, are collapsing.

The leading forces of the last twenty years –the export sector,mining and agroindustry, the banking system, foreign direct investments and international financing institutions– are being faced by other sectors that,since the last four years, have been starting to create pressure and influence on public policies. According to Garcia Linera, this means that the first component of the patrimonial and neoliberal State is weakened.

The other element of the crisis of the State is the destabilization of the intitutions; the subordination of the judiciary and legislative powers to the executive power; the decisions taken on one side, in the parliament, on the other, through social movements, the union demonstrations and the civic committees and communities demands. Politics is not only made by political parties anymore, but by other structures of social action.

Finally, the belief system. The dominant beliefs that characterized the last twenty years were: modernity, free market, foreign investment and liberal democracy, as synonyms of progress. These ideas that seduced society in all its strata have become weaker, and new ideas such as: nationalization, decentralization, authonomy, indigenous government, indigenous self-government have emerged.

The critical economic and political situation of the last two decades led the Bolivian society to a crisis on another realm. The identification that marginalization does not only affect poor people, but also has a deep racial basis; we face cultural marginalization.

Inequalities of wealth distribution and opportunities, poor conditions in work and living, impossibility of having their voices heard; were some of the elements that gave rise to growing social demonstrations that ended up in several letal confrontations between the marginalized population and the leading political (and economic) forces. Seventy per cent of poor people in a population where 62% identifies itself as being indigenous, just reinforce the notion that the marginalized population, the poor, is mainly the indigenous population of Bolivia.

Therefore, it is not surprising that in the last years, social movements and demonstrations that historically had a basis on labour organizations and sectorial activities, started to come altogether with cultural identification and demands of respect of the identity of each indigenous nation. The collective feature that characterises the cosmovision of the diverse indigenous group helped raise a fight against marginalization for the recognition and respect of their identity, social and political structures, uses, customs and own ways of organization and decision making.

Social mobilizing forces that are fighting against the current development model are composed by indigenous organizations, labour organizations and sectorial organizations. Sometimes it is difficult to make a clear differentiation among them. The Bolivian indigenous population is not longer exclusively a rural population, processes of migration led to a quick urbanization. The indigenous population can be exclusively rural, urban, but the gross being both rural and urban since they occupy both spaces in permanence.

The neoliberal capitalist development approach neither considers nor offers any space of interaction with alternative forms of thinking life, other political and social structures, other forms of decision making and other economic organization with special features as regards production, distribution and property concerns. And all this happens under a normative frame that is supposedly appropriate for the respect of the other, and specially for the respect of the indigenous populations of the world.

The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No.169) adopted in 1989 by the general conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO), has renewed the form to understand and to approach development in indigenous populations. From an integrationist logic, which was the logic of the 107 ILO Convention in 1957, to a logic of recognition of own forms of organization, production and reproduction, in addition to the recognition of the right of participation and consultation, as a basis for the design of any development strategy or policy.

Bolivia not only has ratified this agreement in 1991 through the law No.1257, but has also incorporated in 1995, in its Constitution, the recognition of its multiethnic and pluricultural character (Article 1) and the respect and protection of the social, economic and cultural rights of the indigenous and originary peoples, specially regarding communitarian territories, guaranteeing the use and sustainable management of natural resources, their identity, values, languages, customs and institutions (Article. 171).

Some historical moments of the last decades for the indigenous thematic in Bolivia:

- 1989 Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention No. 169, ILO
- 1980-1990 Indigenous Movements For the recognition of their rights to culture and territory – March for Territory and Dignity
  - 1991 Law 1257 Approval and Ratification of ILO Convention No. 169
  - 1994 Reform of the Bolivian Political Constituency CPE Bolivia Multiethnic and Pluricultural (Article 1 and 171)
  - 1996 Law of the National Service of the Agrarian Reformation N° 1715 (Law INRA)
  - 2003 Creation of the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs

#### Thinking of interculturality

In the nineties, Bolivia identified itself as a multicultural and pluriethnic country. In 2001, 62% of the population identified itself as being indigenous, as being a member of one of the 37 different indigenous nations that share the Bolivian territory with the non- indigenous population. All of them have their own history, culture, social, economic, political structures and functioning; their own *cosmovision*.

With colonialism and neocolonialism, the one that comes along with globalization the indigenous population had to incorporate in their everyday behaviours the colonial way of living, being forced to neglect their own customs, structures and functioning.

#### **Redefining Progress**

Last year, the German cooperation (GTZ) promoted a conference to debate about the different visions of progress. In that conference -held also in Egypt, India, Namibia and Russia- social movements and indigenous peoples were called to analyze the concept of progress from their different perspectives and historical and cultural frameworks. The debate comes out of a project of Constantin Von Barlowën, a German anthropologist, who considers that the debate of development has so far considered Progress only from an occidental perspective, without contemplating cultural and anthropological realms. That is to say that it has not considered important values, such as religion, tradition, culture, so relevant for countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America that have a broad indigenous culture base. According to Von Barlowën, it could therefore be understood why many development models have not succeeded, since they ignore proper values that are the basis of internal/local behaviours and dynamics.

The debate has questioned the main vision of development, this search of a unique model, of an absolute universal culture. According to Von Barlowën, the internationalization of the world economy could only succeed in the long term if an equilibrium of the pluralism of cultures is maintained and diversification and culture differences are kept on equilibrium trough integration. The Occidental progress model, based on technology and permanent economic growth, could only succeed on culturally homogeneous societies, since it does not consider the diversity of cultures and ways of living. Participants in the Bolivian Conference agreed that the fragmentation and the weakening of the previously existing social, economic and political forms of organization, plus the imposition of a foreign model had been the main and persistent cause of the failure of public policies and international cooperation in Bolivia. The lack of a full political recognition by the national State and foreign powers of the multiculturality of Bolivia was the most heard complaint.

Representatives of the Aymara, Quechua, Guarani and Chiquitano worlds presented their interpretations of the concept of Progress. The first conclusion is that diverse understandings of progress and history evolution exist, and that the indigenous visions are very different, if not opposed, to the occidental one.

Felix Patzi, and Aymaran sociologist, highlights that there is a growing nonconformity with the predominant unilineal way of seeing history. He observes the emergence of social movements -mainly indigenous- in the whole world, taking the place of previous movements, class movements that got stuck on the progressist vision of history. Concepts of development, evolution, progress and civilization have articulated a unilineal history that signal a search of something that is never found. Patzi notices that the hegemony of the unilineal history of Occident has been present on the cultural, economic and politic aspects. In the realms of culture and economy, the logic is based on science and on the optimization of time. Human beings are no more free because time controls them. In the political aspect, there is a belief that democracy is the best, the last goal. These visions made sure that there is no other way out, and have denied other civilizations and worlds that have existed in America, Asia, Africa and Europe. These other worlds have another conception of history: a cyclic conception of history, where there is no beginning and no end. There is a departure point from where we always and permanently come back in a renewed way.

Another important issue learnt at the conference is that in the different Bolivian indigenous cultures, from highlands or low lands, the concept of progress does not exist. Progress in the Aymara, Quechua, Chiquitano and y Guarani cultures is a myth, a terminology used by technicians and specialists interested in promoting an occidental, rationalist and utilitarist development model. It is a concept from the Occident, closely related to accumulation and technology use, efficiency and time. For the indigenous people the comprehension for progress needs a circular and equilibrated relation with nature, cosmos and religion. Indigenous representatives said that in their cultures words and concepts as progress and development had not being formulated. When looking for a concept closest to this idea, aymaras refer to summa gamaña that means "good life" and refers to the integral wellbeing with all and ourselves. Guaranies talk about the "land with no evil", where what is important is not how much you can have or accumulate, but how much you and the families can enjoy life, it talks about internal wealth. Chiquitanos say big house, which shows the relation with the extended family and means living in harmony with the cosmos, the nature and the human beings.

#### Can we talk of an indigenous economy?

In order to deepen the knowledge about indigenous economy –conceptual debate, practical experiences and instruments– for the action taken by public and private institutions and the cooperation to development, the Bolivian Ministry of Indigenous Affairs organized at the end of 2004, the seminar *Thinking the Indigenous Economy*.

Some questions guided the reflection:

- Is there an indigenous economy which can present specific characteristics different from those of the capitalist economy?
  Which are the different means and production relations that appear in an indigenous economy?
- If there exists an indigenous economy. How is it being addressed? How the relation: indigenous economy - rural development is being addressed? Which are the mechanisms of articulation of families into the capitalist market?
- How the relation Indigenous people versus Farmers is perceived? How the relation Indigenous people versus non-indigenous population is perceived?
- Is it possible to think about an intercultural economy?
- Which would be the instruments, methodologies and actions

that could stimulate an economic development that will respect equity and identity? Can the Indigenous Territorial Management be considered among them?

- Which experiences of indigenous management of the territory have taken place? How are they characterized with respect to other experiences of territorial and local development?
- Which are the stakeholders considered in the coordination of territorial management (the public sector in its different instances and levels; the private sector and others)?

The first conclusion of the seminar is that in the indigenous worlds, economic logic, different from capitalist logic, do exist. These, which have as basis diverse cosmovisions, determine different ethics of behavior. It has been recognized that all cultures have developed forms of exchange and markets; however, the forms of transaction, accumulation and treatment of returns or benefits are different.

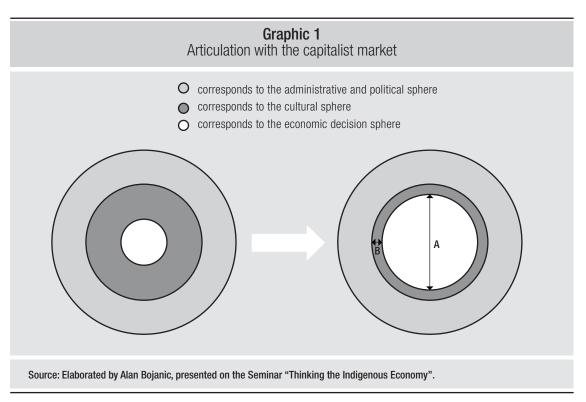
Diego Muñoz, a speaker of the seminar, initiates his analysis starting from the Martin Luther King's revolution which has generated a shift in the relation of human beings with the Divine: going from a collective relation with the Divine to an individual relation generated a spirit of individuality among human beings. This process came along with the beginning of the era of market economy, and competition among human beings. Muñoz stresses this fact as an important breaking point that differentiates collective cultures of individualistic cultures.

According to other speakers and to the debate of the seminar, the notion of is precisely the basic characteristic of the social, political and economic indigenous structures and their functionning. Despite some considerations that the notion of *collective* is currently being ideologized, the debate previously presented on the conception of progress, illustrated that the different indigenous cosmovisions have as a basis the coexistence, not only among human beings, but also with the nature, gods, cosmos, and oneself. In these cosmovisions, a collective logic and an individual one coexist in different degrees.

Therefore, the indigenous economic logic organization forms are from complementariness and redistribution. Their organizations have a purpose of service than one of profit. People come before capital; whereas the capitalist market economy is related to individuality, competition and the maximum objective is wealth generation. That is the greater difference with the collective cultures characterized by forms and processes of collective decision making, joint possession and administration of natural resources and the collective management of these. Nevertheless, in spite of this collective character, individuality is still respected. Private initiative is not eliminated. As it was presented and debated in the seminar, work can be collective, but the worker is the owner of his own work. Cooperation occurs in the provision of services.

Theoreticians of indigenous economies use theoretical instruments of analysis, quite different from the ones used for neoclassic economy. They take into account other variables which are related to cultural aspects, forms of life, uses and customs; the indigenous economy being an economy highly influenced by the cultural matter.

Indigenous economies in no ways are static economies. They are, indeed, economies that face intense dynamic movements towards a greater articulation with the market, larger exchanges, and a more intensive exploitation of natural resources. And this participation in capitalist markets implies the rupture of some schemes, fundamentally of the notions of "collective and communitarian". Policy makers and thinkers should be aware of the dismantling of indigenous economy structure (that a greater articulation with the market means) and the loss of identity, in order to define an intercultural economy that will preserve ways of life and social, political and economic relations that have allowed these civilizations to stay on the go for centuries. Alan Bojanic raises the following scheme to illustrate the transformation in the structures of the society as the relation with the capitalist market is increased:



The superior frame corresponds to the sphere of the administrative policy. The first case represents an indigenous economy, in which the sphere of culture has a very important weight in relation to the sphere of economic decisions. However, as the articulation with the market grows, through broader availability of goods, products, services and labour force, it can be observed that the spread of the sphere of economic decisions grows (more and more important exchanges take place) [A], reducing the influence of the sphere of culture [B], which is related to uses, customs, beliefs and diverse collective processes. This represents the *desestructuration* of the economies and the loss of identity.

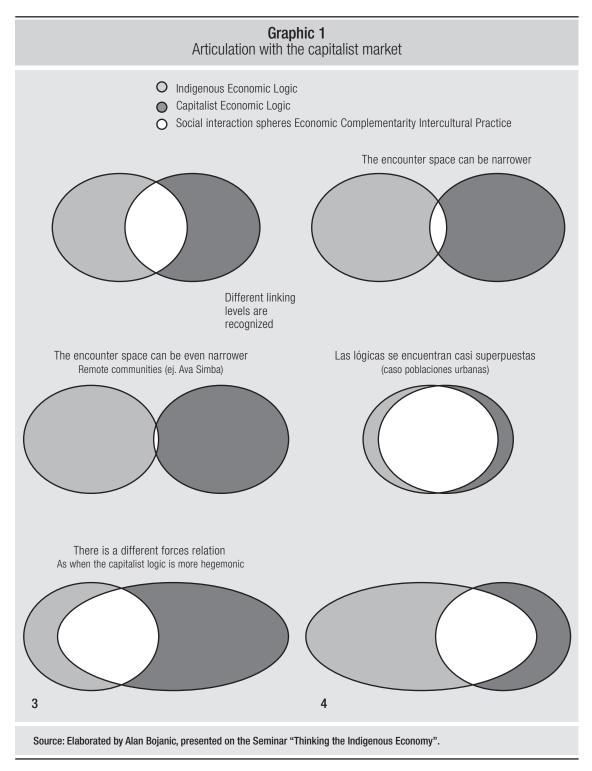
#### Some initial alternative proposals

Plenty of studies about indigenous cosmovision are available, however, their logic –because there is a broad diversity among indigenous logic- for economic functioning and political structure, elaborated in a way that could serve as an alternative to the mainstream approach, is yet to be constructed.

In the year 2004, the Bolivian Ministry of Indigenous Affairs elaborated a proposal of territorial management established from indigenous conceptions. That proposal looked for an economic development with equity and identity, understood as an integral process oriented to improve the material actions of indigenous peoples; directed to the qualitative and quantitative increase of means and social relations of production in order to cover unsatisfied needs, respecting indigenous cosmovisions, and reinforcing market strategies for the attainment of advantageous relations in the market.

The implicit idea is that indigenous peoples have been *managing* their territories for the time being, according to their uses and customs, as well as that, in most of the cases, they have been redirecting their economic activities towards the markets. The Ministry of Indigenous Affairs therefore tries to optimize

these self-management forms, in the intersection between the indigenous logic and the capitalist logic.



A territorial management established from indigenous conceptions is an integral participatory process oriented towards a development with identity, which has as main vision to improve the conditions of life of indigenous peoples in their territorial spaces with sustainability criteria and with a suitable interaction with the market.

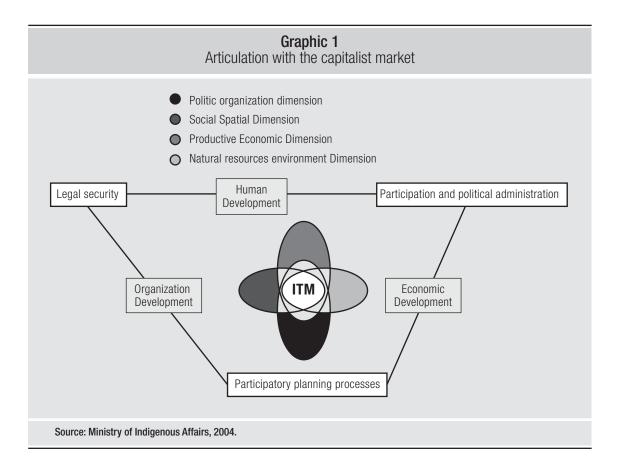
The conceptual framework for this territorial management is based on the systematic interaction of four dimensions:

- 1. Social and spatial dimension:
  - Territory habitat, space of social interaction, at the same time it requires its use / its *management*.
  - Population Main actor, indigenous peoples considered as economic subjects, emphasizing values, own practices and cultural norms.
  - Services set of factors that allow minimum conditions for social reproduction: health, education, basic cleaning, security and others.
- 2. Politic organization dimension:
  - Internal organization structure.
  - Articulation to local, regional and national development processes.
- 3. Productive and economic dimension:
  - Access to productive and financial services.
  - Production primary productive processes.
    - Transformation processes of value aggregation.
  - Distribution Access to local, regional, national and international markets.
- 4. Natural resources and environment dimension:
  - Control, preservation and management sustainability.
  - Management plans must include the notion of natural, cultural and economic patrimony.

In these four dimensions, where culture and gender should be dealt with in all fields, three other elements interact:

- 1. *Processes of political participation and administration* in a broader context: agreements and strategic alliances between governmental, non-governmental actors, communities; and a proper normative framework definition.
- 2. *Legal security of the Territory*: concluding the titling process, plans of protection and territorial control, prevention and conflict management.
- 3. *Participatory planning processes*: opportunities for internal reflection, construction of strategies, socialization and consensus, agreements, working plans, implementation, supervision and evaluation.

The interaction of the elements with the dimensions is what generates the development process, as the following picture illustrates:



It is important to emphasize that indigenous territorial management must respond to the specificities of each population and territory; in such a way that it does not exist a unique form of management that can be adapted according to the need, but rather an own strategy is developed.

Felix Patzi, goes further beyond in his alternative proposal and introduces his "comunal system" as an alternative for the capitalist system. He distinguishes main differences between the liberal economic system and the comunal system. While the liberal system is characterized by exploitation (*enajenación*):

Private appropriation of resources,

- i. Economic growth based on exploitation of labour,
- ii. The worker, agricultural or entrepreneurial, is not the owner of his own work;

The indigenous economy, or communal economy, has as main characteristics:

- i. Collective appropriation of resources,
- ii. The worker owns his work, despite collective work,
- iii. Private initiative is not eliminated; it is fomented according to its capacity and necessity.

Patzi brings up the following scheme to illustrate its proposal of the social system:

	Graphic 4	
Economic Administration	Foreign context	Politic administration

Patzi identifies that the realm from which transformation can come is the economic and the political administration. Regarding the economic realm, among diverse contributions, some ideas of what are the characteristics of an indigenous economy different to the capitalist economy, and which are the means of production and relation with the production can be rescued. All cultures have a market and exchange forms, however, the transaction and accumulation forms and gains administration are different. And these are the elements which define the kind of economy. The indigenous cosmovision determines different behaviour ethics, in which conviviality between a collective and an individual logic is found in different degrees.

Patzi's practical proposal to solve what he calls the problem of coloniality is:

- a. to substitue the capitalist economy with comunal entreprises This is to build a comunal economy in which natural resources would be of comunal/collective property and private distribution as long as resources do not become monopolized by a person or a small group of persons.
- b. To substitute the representative democracy by comunal power. All national decisions should be taken in assemblies or other traditional/indigenous process. Representatives should rotate. Political parties, that base their logic on the monopolization of the decision, would disappear.
- c. To constitute Comunal Systems where workers and indigenous people would be the main actors, it is the respect to cultural pluralism as a base of interculturality and intercommunication.

In the indigenous logic, organizations forms are of complementarity and redistribution. Organizations have a goal of service than one of benefit, because people are prior to capital. On the other side, the market economy is related to individuality It is a competition among human beings and the objective is the wealth generation. This is the biggest difference with collective cultures, characterized by the collective decision making, the mancommunated property of lands and natural resources and the collective use of them. But despite this collective feature, individuality is respected. The private initiative is not eliminated. The work can be done in a collective way, but the worker is the owner of his work, the help comes from the services provision.

Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore that indigenous economies are in none way static economies There is a growing articulation with the market, through more exchanges, more volumes of sales, a more intense use of natural resources. To participate on the capitalist market implies breaking some social schemes, mainly breaking with the communitarian and collective feature.

Thus, some questions arise: Is a modernization process possible without occidentalization? Is it possible to melt local traditions with the globalizing modernity? How do we build a theoretical and structured proposal that will rescue the collective features of indigenous cosmovision with the globalized economic system? How do we build an intercultural development approach, which not only recognizes the existence of the diversity of cultures –multiculturalism- but also allows this diversity to interact towards a better living of the whole population?

Bolivian indigenous population is aware of their rights and their marginalization. And the attempt of building a new constitution is necessary, but maybe insufficient. It should be taken into account that culture is political. Van Barlowen considers that the Andean communitarian system and logic of reciprocity could be a way out. Andean ways of being, and living together, could be the basis for the construction of a model that could take the place of the one that is going down. And reciprocity, integral vision of nature, solidarity, rotative power of authorities, social control and complementarity are some of those social, political and cultural principles that the indigenous peoples could bring into this construction.

#### Looking forward

Some future actions can be identified and organized in three areas of projection: a conceptual and technical area, which suggests the continuation of research and debates; a practical area which looks at the way of dealing with the indigenous issue in a cross sectional approach, and a third one referred to institutional aspects.

1. Conceptual and technical area:

More room is needed for public and private spheres to continue impelling conceptual and technical research and debates that will take into account the complexity and reality; at national or global levels; in order to elaborate a development policy approach that will respect the diversity of cultures and their interaction. To continue elaborating on central elements of interculturality, some specific subjects of research are the following:

- Elements of the indigenous social, politic and economic structures and organizational functioning that could cooperate to the improvement of the current economic development.
- Which are the means of production and social relations in the indigenous economic logic apart from the ones presented in the capitalist model? Which are the linking mechanisms between families and the market? Which are the characteristics of the relationship between indigenous versus non-indigenous?
- How to deal with the relationship between indigenous economy and rural development; Indigenous economy and urban development
- Integration versus Complementarity; Multiculturality versus Interculturality.
- Which are the special features of a territorial management established from indigenous conceptions, from other experiences of local territorial development?
- Instrument to a factual integration of indigenous territorial management plans and other indigenous development planning, to develop plans from the formal state in its different levels.
- 2. Cross sectional approach strategy:
- Elaborate on how the indigenous matter can become a substantive area of all development strategy. Strategy, instruments and space to allow an effective incorporation of interculturality.
- The indigenous matter should be treated in all entities of the public State. Technical support and lobbying activities should not be focalised only on specialized entities, but on all stakeholders of development.

- Development planning from diverse actors, indigenous organizations, associations, protected areas, municipalities and central government among others should be complementary in the spaces where they operate.
- 3. Institutional sphere:
- There must be a sustainable institution in charge of the matter to guarantee the continuity of policies and working lines.
- Mapping the actors with whom to work on an intercultural economic development. (public in its different levels and institutions, private non governmental, cooperation, social, political and economic organizations representatives of indigenous peoples; alliances with universities and research centers).

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