

## **Ecuador's Buen Vivir: Implementation, challenges and ways forward**

24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> September 2015  
Department of Geography, University of Cambridge

After national elections and a constituent assembly, nine years have passed since Ecuador adopted Buen Vivir as a key concept in its constitutional and planning process. Since then Buen Vivir has captured significant international attention due to the notion's progressive, innovative and époque changing proposals. Buen Vivir in the Ecuadorian context has been undertaken in the context of President Correa's 'Citizen Revolution' and moves towards the goal of 21<sup>st</sup> century socialism. Referring broadly to collective well-being among social groups and in harmony with nature, Buen Vivir has additionally been subject to debates concerning its origins, main precepts, and policy implications. Drawing from indigenous concepts and worldviews, Buen Vivir was depicted as a set of radical epistemologies that were post-development, post neoliberal and even de-colonial. From this perspective, the Ecuadorian constitution of 2008 focused on collective rights, the rights of nature, plurinationalism and interculturalism, amongst other innovative ideas. Meanwhile critical perspectives on neoliberal capitalist economies proposed a post-extractivist economy and a greater distribution of resources. Bureaucratically, Buen Vivir has encompassed the entire political apparatus with each public policy defined by the National Plans of Buen Vivir (2009-2013, 2013-2017). Scholars have focused on Buen Vivir's critical engagement with neoliberal development, calling attention to its tensions with postcolonial conditions of development (Radcliffe, 2012). Others have stressed an anti-development paradigm and the domestication of its concepts (Gudynas, 2011).

In light of Buen Vivir's significance within Ecuadorian governmental goals and citizen-state politics, and its international profile, the focus of this conference will be the contemporary moment of Buen Vivir in Ecuador. The concept of Buen Vivir has traveled and changed over the short period of time since its establishment in the 2008 Constitution. Buen Vivir has also become embroiled in contests over its meanings and consequences, such as among indigenous movements (Becker, 2013) and feminist groups (Lind, 2012). Meanwhile, however poverty has declined and inequality, education and health indicators have improved, indicating broad state and societal transformations. In this context, the conference seeks to examine the current dynamics around Buen Vivir and discern future directions for policy, society and government over the next few years.

The workshop brings together a multidisciplinary group of scholars to discuss the contemporary dynamics related to Ecuador's model of Buen Vivir. Participants are requested to submit a written version of their paper one month in advance of the workshop, for circulation and to facilitate discussion. The conference papers will be prepared for publication in a special issue of a journal, such as *Latin American Perspectives* or *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*.

## Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September

9.30 Coffee and Registration Department of Geography, University of Cambridge  
10 Introduction Sarah Radcliffe

### 10.30 Papers

‘This road takes you to development’: State, buen vivir and post-neoliberalism in Ecuador. **Murat Arsel**, ISS International Centre of Social Science Education and Research, The Hague  
Buen Vivir and Social Development: Postcolonial intersectionality and the challenges of diversity. **Sarah A Radcliffe**, Geography Department, University of Cambridge

Lunch 12.30 – 2pm

### 2pm Papers

Sovereignty, Borders and Buen Vivir in Ecuador. **Sofia Zaragocín**, Geography Department, University of Cambridge

Buen Vivir and the appropriation of political rhetoric: the multiple uses of Buen Vivir in strategic differentiations. **Daniela Bressa Florentin**, University of Bath

4pm Tea

### 4.30pm Papers

A new South-South paradigm? The paradoxes of the China-Ecuador resource development nexus. **Ruben Gonzalez-Vicente**, Department of Asian and International Studies, City University of Hong Kong

Buen Vivir, plurinationalism and extractivism in Bolivia. **Isabella Radhuber**, Department of Political Science, University of Vienna

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Conference Dinner, Christ’s College 7pm for 7.30pm

## Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September

**9am Papers** Department of Geography

Buen Vivir in Ecuadorian Education. **Freddy Alvarez**, UNAE (Universidad Nacional de Educación, Ecuador) [paper to be discussed in Spanish]

Proposal for Life: Sumak kawsay and feminisms. **Soledad Varea**, Yachay TECH, Ecuador [paper to be discussed in Spanish]

11 Coffee

### 11.30 Paper

Post-neoliberal Governance in the Pluri-nation: Food sovereignty, technocracy and biopolitics. **Johannes Waldmüller**, Anthropology Department, New York University

### Closing comments

Lunch 1pm