

The Andean-Amazonian worldview: an alternative proposal

By Cristina Cardozo

The development model instituted after World War II is a proposal born in the United States to create conditions for wellbeing, mainly for itself. The development proposal divided the world in: a) Developed countries, or those that captured most resources, industrialised the most, and provided a comfortable way of life; and b) Underdeveloped countries, or those that were unable to achieve the life envisioned by the model and, quite the opposite, dropped to levels of extreme poverty in the subsequent years.

After forty years, the development model has begun to weaken because it imposes a way of life very few can reach and implies environmental and economical deterioration for the world's majority. United Nations requested the World Commission on Environment and Development a status report, which was submitted in 1987 as *Our Common Future*¹. This report diagnosed the problems and consequences of such model and proposed sustainable development strategies for life in this world towards the year 2000.

In 1992, states participating in the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro² expressed their concern for the first time and pointed to the need for strategies to reduce the effects of environmental deterioration, the ozone layer destruction, forest devastation, and the environmental pollution of industrialisation and other practices that would aggravate life conditions in the planet if unchecked. Warnings, however, have not led to significant changes.

In 60 years, the development model has globalised, displacing the ways of life of other peoples in order to attain a "life style" that makes it increasingly unlikely for the world population to meet its needs and security with basics such as water, food, and clean air.

According to Esteva, "...in South America, a new era of capitalist expansion and mainstream development would produce unparalleled environmental devastation and the usual extension of social inequality, with the displacement and marginalisation of large groups. It would be fostered by an impious alliance between the vast multinational capital and the leftist governments that have been dominating in the region"³.

This year, Bolivia, at the centre of South America, has seen the signs of environmental decline showing up in the rest of the world. The Bolivian Government decided to build a very important road through indigenous territory and a National Park, arguing that it would "bring development" to local indigenous peoples, who instead perceive it as a threat to their quality of life and even, in the short run, the reason they will have to leave their lands. Local indigenous people consider that the road will overpower the Isiboro Sécure National Park and Indigenous Territory (TIPNIS, *Territorio Indígena del Parque Nacional Isiboro Sécure*). In this reserve of notably diverse flora and fauna, which ensures the quality of their life, they coexist harmoniously with nature. This conflict showed Bolivia that indigenous peoples lack the globalised monetarist concept but rather have kinder ways with nature and among themselves.

¹ Also known as the Brundtland Report, United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987. Also available at: <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-ov.htm#1.2>

² United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Rio Summit or Rio Conference, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 3 – June 14, 1992.

³ Esteva, Gustavo (1992) 'Development' in Wolfgang Sachs (ed.) *The Development Dictionary: A guide of knowledge as power*, London: Zed Books.

In Latin American cultures, these kinder ways are expressed in the Andean-Amazonian worldview, which sustained American cultures, from Mexico (with the Zapatista movement) to the Argentinean Patagonia, for centuries in front of the extermination of its indigenous population. Nonetheless, today the past needs to be recapitulated in order to retake the road of cultural assertion as an alternative to the current model of worldwide declining life conditions.

In Peru and Bolivia, South America, the road of cultural assertion as an alternative has been travelled for twenty years. In the knowledge of the Andean-Amazonian cultures, a kinder life for all is sought. The latest expression of this search is the Titikaka Programme. This Programme aims at recognising and strengthening life centred on agriculture in the Central Andes in Latin America, and based on breeding diversity in all its forms and in all ambits of life. Therefore, the diversity of plants and animals and of human relations is patently being bred, making of this region a world centre of biological mega-diversity. The global value of this grower and breeder way of life is founded on sustainability and on fondness and respect for the world as it is, expressing a reverent attention to Mother Earth's vital cycles.

The Titikaka Programme and the development of Cultural Assertion as a possible alternative way of life contributes its own view to recover the knowledge of world cultures, while acknowledging that the developmentalist western model, in its devastating power, has dragged us to the edge of a cliff. Indigenous peoples around the world can show us a safer path to a kinder world for all, where the dialogue between these cultures and the western world will pose a life with greater opportunities for all, respecting the environment as the foundation for the world.

On the other hand, universities in the development model have failed to respond academically to life challenges because their role obeys to the model; it is a space for few. Permanent and fluid education is currently needed at the grass roots of the population. The more people recognise their capacity to recover and regenerate diversity in the world, in a collective effort, by learning and exchanging knowledge, the more knowledge will be bred to respond to today's needs and challenges. Cultural mediators as facilitators can be educated in "multiversities."