Decolonising Neo-Liberal Innovation: using the Andean philosophy of '*Buen Vivir*' to reimagine innovation hubs

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Abstract. Innovation is increasingly portrayed as central to social and economic development. Models of innovation from the global North are often applied uncritically in the global South. Doing so may unwittingly silence indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing, and cultural values. From an ethical perspective this can be considered to be 'cultural invasion' (Freire 1970) or 'epistemic violence' (Spivak 1988). From a political and ecological perspective importing neo-liberal growth-focused approaches to innovation may be considered to be both neo-colonial as well as environmentally unsustainable. Santos (2014) has argued that epistemic violence is committed when actors from the global North are insufficiently mindful of 'Epistemologies of the South'. Neither Santos nor the authors of this paper believe that there is nothing of value to be learned from the global North – only that there is as much to be learned from the global South – and everything to be gained from a skillful combination of different ways of knowing. This theoretical paper proposes a future line of research to examine in what ways Epistemologies of the South might inform innovation processes to produce different outcomes. We use the example of innovation hubs and although we might have used the philosophies of *Ubuntu* from Southern Africa or *Swaraj* from India, in this paper we use the lens of *Buen Vivir* (living well) from Andean communities in South America to suggest that *another innovation is possible*.

150-250 words.

Keywords: Innovation, development, neoliberalism, Buen Vivir, innovation hubs, epistemologies of the South, indigenous knowledge

1   Introduction

Over recent decades we have seen income inequality increased in every region (World Inequality Lab 2017). The number of African people living in poverty in 2018 is now 113 million more than it was in 1990 (World Bank 2017), and the dominant economic development model has proven to be ecological unsustainable (Kothari, De Maria, & Acosta, 2014); Fioramonti 2017)

Innovation has variously been proposed as a way to reduce poverty, inequality and climate change (Cozzens & Sutz, 2014) ; World Economic Forum 2017; UNDP 2015).

In the Sustainable Development Goals innovation is referred to as a 'crucial driver of economic growth and development' and is considered sufficiently important to feature explicitly in six different SDG targets[1] (UNDP 2018). In the research discourse innovation is often presented as an ideologically neutral 'technical fix' divorced from any industry interests or political aims (Ferguson 1994; Pansera & Owen 2018). Despite attempts to portray innovation as politically neutral, several decades of evidence from Science and Technology Studies (STS) research demonstrates that innovation processes generally reflect the dominant political and ideological values of innovators or societies in which they lived (McKensie and Wacjman 1985; Winner 2017).

From a development perspective innovation is defined as applying new tools or processes to address development challenges and unmet needs (World Bank 2015). Billions of dollars are now being invested in innovation by donors through their own Innovation Labs, via dedicated funding mechanisms, and as support to hundreds of local technology and innovation hubs[2]. The World Bank, UNDP, UNHCR and UNICEF are among the many development agencies that established their own Innovation Labs. The Global Innovation Fund[3], the Global Challenges Research Fund and a range of other funders, provided funding to a wide range of innovation initiatives, including more than 300 'innovation hubs' in Africa alone (World Bank 2016).

Innovation Hubs

Innovation hubs are places where technology entrepreneurs, experts and enthusiasts meet to collaborate on their latest apps, platforms and development projects (Jimenez & Zheng 2017; GIZ 2013). The authors' prior experience of long-term research based in innovation hubs gave rise to our research interest in whether hubs in the global South were too closely modelled on the global North template of Silicon Valley start-up culture, and if so whether this might lead to a lost opportunity to nurture indigenous approaches to innovation, as well as the risk of importing political and ideological values that drown out and silence local values and interests (See Jimenez & Zheng 2017; Roberts 2015).

Funders often send hub staff from the global South to visit innovation hubs in the global North. Innovation hub events in the global South often feature 'masterclasses' led by individuals or featuring methods from the global North – sometimes hosting venture capitalists or famous entrepreneurs such as Mark Zuckerberg from the global North (Friederici 2018). Often, the hackathons and pitching events that they host, assess innovations in terms of whether they are patentable, monetisable, or scalable, and calculate the value of innovations as dollar return on investments. From this perspective technology and innovation hubs can be interpreted to be sites where the goal and measure is to become as much like the Silicon Valley (USA) as possible. This is evidenced by the label of Silicon Savannah, (Gitau 2010), thereby assimilating previous forms of mechanistic modernisation theory (Escobar 2012; Willis 2011). Models of innovation, consciously or unconsciously built in this mould, may smuggle in neo-liberal values of individual enterprise, heroic inventors, market valuation and the goal of private wealth

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[1] Innovation in included in SDG targets 8.2, 8.3, 9.5, 9b, 17.6 and 17.8.
[2] The UK GCRF alone is £1.3bn of funding.
[3] https://globalinnovation.fund/

accumulation. In many ways these values are in conflict with the indigenous value systems that exist in many places that innovation hubs are located. Values of shared enterprise, communal interests, reciprocity and interconnectedness are central to, for example, the worldviews of *Ubuntu* in Southern Africa, *Swaraj* in South Asia, and *Buen Vivir* in South America (Kothari, Demaria & Acosta 2016).

This paper addresses the concern that if innovation approaches from the global North are applied uncritically in the global South, they may unwittingly subordinate indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing, and cultural values. This paper also makes the political and ecological argument that smuggling in growth-orientated neo-liberal development under the guise of innovation can be considered to be both neo-colonial as well as environmentally unsustainable. We use innovation hubs as an example of innovation processes in this paper because of our prior experience but hope that researchers and practitioners with other innovation experience will find resonance in other innovation settings. Although we would like to examine the relationship to innovation of other Epistemologies of the South including *Ubuntu* from Southern Africa or *Swaraj* from India, in this paper we remain with de Sousa Santos' (2014) example of *Buen Vivir* (living well) from South America in order to argue that another innovation is possible.

2   Literature Review

Innovation is 'the process by which novelty is taken up and circulated in the public sphere' (de Saille & Mevecky 2016). Scholars, practitioners and policy makers have focused on ways in which innovation can be improved, enhanced and diffused (Fegerber 2009; Srinivas & Sutz 2008). Most innovation research has been framed explicitly or implicitly as concerned with making firms more competitive and countries wealthier.

 In the innovation for development literature authors often argue that innovation is central to economic growth and thus crucial to development (Gitau et al 2010; Williams & Woodson 2012) and innovation is promoted as a development mechanism (Valaskivi 2012, Krause 2013). The National Systems of Innovation (NSI) approach has been a dominant discourse (Freeman 1987; Lundvall 1992, 2003) emphasizing the interrelation of different actors as fundamental to strong national innovation ecosystems. In this process, authors have often focused on economic actors and institutions, exploring the role of NSI in competitive advantage and economic growth. The Diffusion of Innovation literature (DoI) (Rogers 1995) has also been influential in focusing attention on channels and stages of innovation uptake. These theories and approaches have often been applied to understand how innovation can improve a country or bring about economic growth in a region. In this respect, DoI has often been applied by focusing on diffusion of goods and services without really considering the value of what is being diffused (Jimenez & Zheng 2017).

More recently, there has also been a proliferation of innovation concepts that attempt to describe phenomena happening in resource-constrained environments to explain innovation phenomena. In this respect, terms like 'frugal innovation, 'reverse innovation', 'pro-poor innovation', 'Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP) innovation', 'grassroots innovation', 'inclusive innovation' are most popular in the literature (Zeschky et al

2015; Berdegué 2005). Although these concepts have expanded our understanding of innovation by focusing on the marginalized in society, they tend to still be framed within the dominant economic discourses albeit with some better focus on inclusivity. Pansera & Owen (2018) have argued that all approaches embody distinctive political dimensions, cultural values and normative worldviews, and that they often leave un-problematized implicit neo-liberal, individuated and market-oriented approaches. In this sense, even though these concepts advance our understanding of innovation in the global South, they still operate within a neoliberal paradigm.

Most innovation research is framed within an economic system based on of perpetuates growth (Kallis, Demaria & D' Alisa 2015) despite irrefutable evidence that perpetual growth is not possible on a finite planet (Meadows 2004; Jackson 2011). The Sustainable Development Goals fail to address this inconvenient truth when they set continued growth as a key Global Goal (SDG8) and commit the international community to building innovation capacity (SDG 17) in order to achieve it (UNDP 2015). As Aubert (2004) has shown countries with high levels of innovative activity and innovative capacity are ranked as the most developed and lack of innovative capacity is considered to be "precisely why they remain underdeveloped" (p. 6). The next section shows how the underlying logic of neo-liberalism demands requires perpetual innovation in pursuit of the unattainable goal of perpetual growth.

2.1   Neoliberalism

Although there is no agreed definition of neo-liberalism, there is consensus that it "is built on deregulation, liberalization, privatization and ever tighter global integration" (Crotty 2003 p. 361). In this paper we rely on the more expansive definition of Harvey (2005 p. 2) that neoliberalism is an hegemonic ideology or a theory of political economy discourse that 'proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade'. In this respect, innovation is framed as key in improving efficiency and driving economies.

The neo-liberal paradigm also holds an underlying notion that economic liberalisation (freedom of market and trade) is a necessary step towards individual freedom (Harvey 2005). In this respect, Bourdieu (1998) argued that the neoliberal project was 'a programme of the methodical destruction of collectives' (emphasis in original, pp. 95–96). This implies that individuals have moral priority and '[…] may not be limited by the community, common good or interest' (Ikuenobe 2017 p. 6). Neoliberalism then, encourages the individualisation of the social and the collective (Ferge 1997; Tu¨rken et al. 2016).

In neo-liberal theory, economic growth is portrayed as self-evidently desirable (Friman 2002), driven by the dynamism of individual entrepreneurs and by creative gales of technological destruction. Growth itself constitutes the goal of neo-liberalism, overriding concerns for social equity or environmental sustainability (Ronnblom 2009).

Despite neoliberalism being founded on the idea of freedom, the globalization of the neoliberal project demonstrated its imposition in countries of the global South through

coercive programs of structural adjustments (Willis 2005). This took the form of 'modernisation' as the enforced adoption and imitation of economic and ideological approaches copied from 'developed countries'. The social, cultural, and structural forms stemming from Western societies were idealised and compared to the 'traditional' societies, seen as backward and as such in crucial need of modernisation (Makki 2015; Rostow 1960).

One devastating effect of this modernisation process has been the exploitation of natural resources to industrialise and urbanise societies. To counteract the negative consequences of climate change, there have been attempts to manage the environment without stopping growth, with the introduction of concepts like 'green economy' and 'sustainable development' (Kallis, Demaria & D'Alisa 2015).

Furthermore, in the current era there has also been an attempt to step away from mechanistic modernisation by highlighting economic growth in southern contexts, with examples like the rise of Asia and the increasing influence of the East in the world. However, it other contexts like South America and sub-Saharan Africa there is still the contentious push for recognising their own voice, given the pressure of modernisation patterns still experienced (Kothari, Demaria & Acosta 2016).

2.2 Neoliberal innovation for development

This dominant neoliberal paradigm is also framing the way innovation for development is conceptualised and practiced. There are two main characteristics of this framing. Firstly, there is a strong emphasis on funding disruptive innovation to drive economic growth (Ojomo 2016). As such, innovation is often framed from an individualistic dimension, embracing the ideal entrepreneur as seeking profit maximisation. Secondly, innovation in the South is expected to mirror models and concepts from the North, following a path of uncritical modernisation. This amplifies the dominant worldview at the expense of other voices.

Rather than continuing to uncritically adopt and adapt neo-liberal concepts and theories of innovation from the Global North, this paper argues that it is important to also explore alternative conceptions of innovation, taking into account indigenous knowledges and values from the Global South. The next section details alternative frameworks known as epistemologies of the South (Santos 2014).

3 Epistemologies of the South

In this section we introduce the overarching notion of 'Epistemologies of the South', this will help to explain how and why a concept like Buen Vivir becomes relevant in our understanding of development and subsequently, innovation. Ever since colonial times, certain kinds of knowledges have been privileged as valid, consequently prioritising certain kinds of activities, and by extension have de-legitimised and subordinated others (bell hooks 1990, Tuhai-Smith 1990). This epistemic dimension has been referred by Aníbal Quijano (1991) as the "coloniality of power", and later described by

Mignolo as "the less visible side of modernity" (As cited in Bruman 2017, my transla-
tion). Moreover, this epistemological dimension has followed through to current con-
text, as explained by Tuhai-Smith:

> "There is a direct relationship between the expansion of **knowledge**, the
> expansion of trade and the expansion of the empire. That relationship contin-
> ues, although in the reframed **discourse of globalisation** it is referred to as the
> relationship between the expansion of technology/information, the expansion
> of economic opportunities and the expansion of 'the market'" (Tuhiwai-Smith
> 2012 p.92 emphasis our own)

This practice, of imposing a foreign knowledge as valid and diminishing indigenous
knowledges is labelled by postcolonial scholars such as Spivak (1988) as 'epistemic
violence', which actively obstructs and undermine non-Western methods or approaches
to knowledge as the Other. As explained by Theo, epistemic violence happens when
'[…] theoretical interpretations regarding empirical results implicitly or explicitly con-
struct the Other as inferior or problematic, despite the fact that alternative interpreta-
tions, equally viable based on the data, are available' (2010 p.298). Freire refers to a
similar phenomenon as 'cultural invasion', where '[…] invaders penetrate the cultural
context of another group, in disrespect of the latter's potentialities, they impose their
own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded
by curbing their expression' (Freire 1970). At the heart of this understanding of impos-
ing Western knowledge into other contexts is the notion that such type of knowledge
has become hegemonic and dominant, and other types of knowledges are subverted and
portrayed as inferior.

It their substantive senses, epistemologies of the South replace the dominance of
Western ideas by a notion of 'interculturality', from which Western knowledge is not
rejected but seen as one among many options (Gudynas 2015 p. 202). As a way to do
this, Santos, suggests we engage in a plural dialogue between different systems of
knowledge and between different epistemologies, without pre-established hierarchies
(Santos 2014).

The next section introduces one epistemology of the global South, which guides the
framework for this analysis.

3.1 Buen Vivir

Buen Vivir is a discursive 'work-in-progress' resulting from the cross-pollination of
traditional indigenous knowledges and the interpretive and articulating work by schol-
ars and political leaders (Acosta 2010). Indigenous ontologies and traditions do not
involve an idea of progress as a linear unfolding of history, nor do they perceive that
wellbeing is associated with ideals of individuation where humankind is separate from
nature (Gudynas 2015). Rather they see the world as a plurality of stories happening
alongside each other, with no single totalising narrative (Kauffman & Martin 2013).
Buen Vivir scholars and activists suggest that we reframe our understanding of the
world from the existence of a 'uni-verse' to a 'pluri-verse', which is defined as "[…]

understanding that reality is constituted not only by many worlds, but by many kinds of worlds, many ontologies, many ways of being in the world, many ways of knowing reality, and experimenting those many worlds" (Querejazu 2016).

Scholars saw an alternative to neoliberalism and the growth paradigm that was characterising the way development was implemented in Latin America, enhancing inequalities and destroying ecosystems. The consequence of discussions between indigenous communities and scholars has led to a definition on Buen Vivir as a concept under construction, shifting away from the mind-set of production and consumption and against growth-based development (Gudynas 2015). Instead, Buen Vivir values aspects that benefit the community, with strong environmentally-oriented ideas. This suggests that some indigenous communities would prioritise values of collectivism, environmental justice and reciprocity.

Buen Vivir introduces three novel ideas: first, it is elaborated by peoples who have been historically marginalised (Giovanini 2014); second, well-being is not conceived in its individualistic Western sense, but rather in the context of a community (Huanacuni 2010); and third, the natural environment can be conceptualised as a subject of rights and therefore cannot be subjected to market logics (Mamani Ramirez 2004 Giovaninni 2014 p. 73).

In more practical terms, the notion of plurality is also in relation to the economy, which would effectively transition from a capitalist mode of production to a social and communal economy. This economy would be '[...] in harmony with nature, where renewable natural resources are exploited with consideration for the constraints of the environment; where surpluses are invested in the development of community economies and in the conservation of the forests and quality of the environment.' (Prada Alcoreza 2011 p. 154).

Some attempts to include Buen Vivir into policy have been present, even though they have largely represented an abstract construct (Radcliffe 2012). The experiences of both Ecuador and Bolivia, where Buen Vivir was adopted as nation-state projects and introduced into their constitutions, demonstrated that Buen Vivir can become coopted as a discourse, without much change (Gudynas 2015; Willingford 2018). Authors explain that the structural preconditions for the implementation of Buen Vivir at a nation level are not in place yet (Beling et al. 2018). However, other authors argue that the way in which Buen Vivir has been incorporated in government initiatives is dialogical, and as such the implications should be measured by its contribution to destabilising dominant existing cognitive and cultural templates, and by, most importantly, showing that it is possible to explore alternative ways of living than the neoliberal one suggests (Merino 2014; Kothari, De Maria & Acosta 2014).

Buen Vivir resembles aspects from other concepts developed elsewhere. For instance, it has been related to the concept of degrowth, developed mainly by European scholars to critique the growth paradigm, suggesting instead values of 'sharing', simplicity, conviviality and care (d' Alisa, Demaria & Kalis 2015). Furthermore, they also share commonalities with indigenous concepts that have been historically part of other cultures in the Global South. For instance, Swaraj, developed in India which refers to self-reliance and self-governance (Kothari 2014; Kothari, De Maria & Acosta 2014) and Ubuntu in Africa, which emphasises human mutuality (Metz 2011; Msila 2017).

Even though they stem from different contexts and are based on different traditions, scholars have demonstrated the similarities of such concepts in terms of their rejection to individualism and growth without consideration of the environment. Furthermore, they also share in common the fact that they often arise from traditionally marginalised groups (Kothari, De Maria & Acosta 2014).

In summary, Buen Vivir is a work-in-progress presented as an alternative to development. It does not aim to become a dominant, hegemonic ideology because it is based in the recognition of multiple perspectives coexisting. It proposes that we replace values of individualism and growth, without consideration of the environment, with values of solidarity, reciprocity, complementarity, harmony and interdependence.

4   Analysis

Having introduced the concept of Buen Vivir as an alternative to the dominant neoliberal view, this section will establish the distinctive elements of neoliberal and Buen Vivir philosophy, to then describe what features innovation would have under each paradigm. We distinguish three themes emerging from our review of both paradigms, the ontology, concerned with the nature of reality and what there is to know about the world; the ideology, understood as distinctive set of discursive themes and standpoints and finally, ethics, as what is considered to be good and valued. We recognise that these elements form part of a complex reality, yet for analytical purposes they are being separated here.

4.1   Neoliberal vs Buen Vivir

Table 1 presents a summary of the key aspects of a neoliberal innovation paradigm in contrast with a Buen Vivir innovation paradigm. In the neoliberal paradigm, the ontology functions around an individualistic worldview, that is the idea of individual freedom to set and pursue one's own goals. This type of individualism 'hence puts a claim on the nature of human beings, on the way they live their lives and their relation to society' (Robeyns 2005 p.17). Furthermore, linked to the notion of individualism is the understanding that it is individual economic interests and overall economic growth. By adopting this worldview, material resources exist in function to individuals, and not the other way around. As a consequence, the environment is perceived to be at the service of pursuing individual freedom and therefore subsumed to an individual's path to achieving his or her own goals.

Given that this is the worldview adopted, then anything that benefits individuals constitutes part of the ideology. The environment becomes a commodity, that has economic value and that is subordinated to the advancement of human interests. This means that it is imperative to produce benefits for individuals in their quest to satisfy what they perceive as needs and desires. Furthermore, what is considered as ethical is that people perceive 'freedom' to achieve their own goals, being them the primary point of concern. If the environment is an impediment for one's own perception of wellbeing, then it is subordinated, commodified, transformed and in some cases destroyed to achieve individual success.

By contrast, from a Buen Vivir's ontological perspective, the individual is only a part of a collective, of species, non-human and of different peoples in other contexts. In this sense, it is not possible to separate the individual from its interdependence with others, because everybody and everything is connected. This means that it is not possible to subordinate the environment and perceive it as a commodity.

This way of looking at the world is translated into an ideology that relies on strong environmental ethics, collective benefits and a strong spiritual and affective rationality. The main logic therefore looks out for what process would provide a better outcome for everyone, rather than an individual. As Willingford (2018 p. 103) writes 'the goal of living is not to have more than one's neighbour but for everyone to have enough.'. It also rejects a market-based logic that may have detrimental effects in the environment and instead supports models that would benefit it. In this sense, it would support alternative ways to being, producing and obtaining resources, one that first and foremost is in harmony with the environment and with others. It would also imply that the earnings of a particular resource would be shared amongst everyone.

Table 1. Neoliberal Paradigm vs Buen Vivir Paradigm (Source: authors)

Neo-Liberal	Buen Vivir
Ontology	**Ontology**
Individual (others out there)	Collective, connected, related,
Independent	Interdependent, mutuality
Environment (out there) as resource	Environment as part of us
One knowable reality	Pluralities – pluriverse
Ideology	**Ideology**
Market-based capitalism	Needs-based cooperativism
Private profit	Collective benefits
Market logic	Logic of shared interests
Secular rationality	Spiritual / affective rationality
Environment as private resource	Environmental as part of us - Pachamama
Goal of economic growth	Goal of collective living well (de-growth)
Ethics	**Ethics**
Individual self-interest serves common interest	Collective shared interest
	Distribution according to needs
Distribution according to means	Shared responsibility for care of others and the environment
Privatisation of care	

4.2   Neoliberal Innovation vs Buen Vivir Innovation

The purpose of this table is to illustrate certain aspects of neoliberal innovation and contrast it with what Buen Vivir innovation would encompass. For the former, we consider concepts like NSI, and DoI, but also concepts like inclusive innovation, frugal

innovation and others. The purpose is to show that whilst concepts like inclusive inno-
vation and others shift towards a more nuanced understanding of innovation, they still
operate within the neoliberal paradigm.

Following the neoliberal paradigm, innovation adopts an individualistic form,
framed around the notion of individual wellbeing. Stories of individual 'innovators'
becoming billionaires would be valued as a heroic achievement. An innovation would
be considered a novelty that can be patented or privatised, and there is a need to promote
more development of such novelties. Finally, scaling would be appropriate to reduce
costs and promote value for money.

By following the Buen Vivir paradigm, then innovation takes a collective form that
would support mutual respect for each other and the natural world. Collective processes
would be valued and innovation would be effectively benefiting the commons rather
than individuals. Appropriateness would be valued over the costs and it would aim for
producing positive effects for as many as possible. Table 2 summarises the different
characteristics of innovation from each paradigm.

Table 2. Neoliberal Innovation vs Buen Vivir Innovation (Source: authors)

Neo-Liberal Innovation	Buen Vivir Innovation
Heroic Inventors – individual billionaires Patentable Products (monetisable) Private goods – commodifiable Solve social problems (with value for money) Hackathons to identify winners Can be frugal and accessible for poor people Scaling-up	Collective processes with shared benefits Contributes to ways of living well Contributes to collective commons Environmentally sustainable Adds value to community Scale appropriate to community Open and accessible to all

4.3 Neoliberal Innovation Hubs vs Buen Vivir Innovation Hubs

As already mentioned, our previous research centred in understanding the role of
innovation hubs in development. In such work we have argued that there is an expec-
tation that hubs will promote economic growth. In this paper we present some charac-
teristics of a hub, framed in a neoliberal context.

A neoliberal innovation hub would prioritise innovations that are patentable, for in-
stance mobile applications that can be monetised. Furthermore, it will seek to promote
innovations that are investable, to attract angel investors or other types of investors. It
will seek to do this in a dynamic and efficient way, and often host hackathons and
events that seek to develop cool/interesting ideas. As a result, innovations that are per-
ceived to have monetary value would be framed to be scaled.

In contrast, a Buen Vivir innovation hub, if it ever existed, might reasonably be ex-
pected to have a strong focus on innovation for collective well-being. Such hubs might
emphasise collaborative process and prioritise inclusive innovation. In this sense, rather

than focusing on whether an innovation will be scalable and investable, it would prioritise innovation that is environmentally just, that include all voices and that contributes to living well, rather than making a profit. Table 3 summarises these points:

Table3. Neoliberal innovation hub vs Buen Vivir innovation hub

Neo-liberal innovation hub	Buen Vivir innovation hub
Patentable (privatisable)	Collaborative process
Monetisable- commodifiable	Social benefits
Profitable	Environmentally sustainable
Scalable	Contributes to living well
Rate of return on investments	Shared benefits (collective commons)
	Shared responsibilities (solidarity economy)
	Profits reinvented for communal goods.

5   Conclusion

In this paper we counterposed existing neo-liberal innovation with an imagined alternative approach to innovation informed by the values of Buen Vivir. We do so because we see value in imagining innovation otherwise and in reflecting the worldviews of the people that they are intended to benefit. Furthermore, we explored alternatives around innovation which pushed a neoliberal agenda (of which uncontrolled growth is one element). By doing so we hope to get closer to acknowledging what people value and have reason to value (Sen 1999).

By adopting this alternative perspective, we have attempted to provide a starting point for problematizing neoliberal innovation and opening a thought-space for considering new possibilities. We have suggested that another innovation, one informed by the values and worldview of Buen Vivir might prioritise collective, ethical, ecological and culturally sensitive innovation that contributes to the common well-being.

We recognise how difficult it would be to actually transform the neoliberal ideas around innovation and development. The example of Ecuadors show that we are far from achieving a real transformation with the adoption of indigenous knowledges. This makes us wonder, as Willingford (2018; 110) asks, "Is maintaining western notions of development in practice while investing in the social sector a first step in the process of moving away from the modernist paradigm? Or is the commitment to *buen vivir* principles in this particular case only superficial?" The answers to these questions should encourage future research.

Future research should put this in action to see in what ways innovations/tech hubs can produce values of environmental ethics, collective benefits and a strong spiritual and affective rationality, thereby promoting an alignment with such worldviews. The inclusion of indigenous viewpoints (like Buen Vivir) should not just be instrumental, it should be epistemological and ontological. In our view, the Western (neoliberal) approach to innovation represents only one possible approach among others, and we should therefore accept the possibility of a plurality of legitimate paradigms around innovation and its impact in our societies. In this sense, in a world with increasing inequality, huge environmental and ecological risks, 'Is another innovation possible?'

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