FFHS
Fernfachhochschule Schweiz
Mitglied der SUPSI

Scuola universitaria professionale della Svizzera italiana
SUPSI

Towards a Sustainable Economy: Comparison and Integration of El Buen Vivir and Elinor Ostrom's Governing the Commons

Master of Science in Business Administration
with a Major Sustainability and Circular Innovation of
Swiss Distance University of Applied Sciences

Author(s): *Arturo Javier Vásquez La Torre*
Calle Los Gorriones #235. C-606. Chorrillos, Lima, Perú.
+51 988559605
arturo.vasquez@students.ffhs.ch

Submission date: *10.01.2025*

Supervisor: *PhD. Natascha Hebestreit*

Management Summary

The growing concern for a real sustainable economy and the contribution for the academic research in the field of sustainable development motivated this investigation for alternative concepts, based in ancestral Andean wisdom and empirical research, that could be integrated in order to fulfill the requirements for a balanced, environmentally-centered, public and private administration. El Buen Vivir philosophy and Ostrom's Governing the Commons deliver knowledge that can be blended to improve academis and policy advancements towards a more sustainable economy. We couldn't find in the current literature any investigation abording the subject described. The present investigation served to deep dive into both theories with different foundations, but yet complementary, to achieve the end of improving the sustainable development theory. By researching both concepts, the Biocentric Design Principles were developed as a modification of Ostrom's Principles with an ethical twist focusing on biocentrism.

Table of contents

List of abbreviations ..... **v**

1 Introduction **6**

1.1 Initial Situation 7

1.2 Purpose and Motivation 8

1.3 Problem Definition 9

2 Methodology **10**

2.1 Protocol 11

2.2 Search 11

2.3 Appraisal 12

2.4 Synthesis 12

2.5 Analysis 12

2.6 Report 13

3 Towards a Sustainable Economy **13**

3.1 Degrowth 15

3.2 Biomimicry 15

3.3 Circular Economy 16

3.4 Regenerative Economics 17

3.5 Corporate Social Responsibility 18

4 El Buen Vivir **19**

4.1 Historical and Philosophical Foundations 20

4.2 Critique of Modernity and Development 22

4.3 Key Elements of El Buen Vivir 26

4.3.1 Living in Harmony with Nature 26

4.3.2 Collectivism as central tenet 27

4.3.3 Respect for ancestral wisdom in association with present knowledge 28

4.3.4 Different discourses of El Buen Vivir 29

4.3.5 El Buen Vivir, a framework in construction 31

5 Elinor Ostrom's Governing the Commons **31**

5.1 Overview of Elinor Ostrom's Theory of Governing the Commons 34

5.2 Governing the Commons: The (revolutionary) Book 34

5.2.1 Game Theory: Collective action problems and the prisoner's dilemma 35

5.2.2 Commons-pool resources or The Commons 36

5.2.3 Governing the CPRs 37
5.3 Main Arguments of Ostrom's Theory 38
5.3.1 Problem recognition and availability of information 39
5.3.2 Rules focused on local conditions. 40
5.3.3 Communication leads to cooperation. 42
5.3.4 Diversity of ideas in a homogeneous population 43
5.3.5 Third Way Beyond Dichotomies 45
5.4 Core Framework: Design Principles 47
6 Comparative Analysis 49
6.1 Blending El Buen Vivir with Ostrom's Governing the Commons 49
6.2 The Biocentric Design Principles 51
6.3 Boundaries of El Buen Vivir and "Governing the Commons" 54
7 Conclusion 56
8 Limitation of the Study 57
9 Bibliography 58
List of Aids and Tools 64
Declaration of Independence and Consent 65

List of abbreviations

CPR	Common-pool resources
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
n.d.	No date
“Governing”	“Governing the Commons” by Elinor Ostrom

1 Introduction

The collapse of planetary life-support systems, driven by the climate crisis and biodiversity loss, poses a critical threat to human well-being and the long-term viability of our civilization. If the current economic system and unsustainable trends persist, such as consumer economy combined with the goal of maximization of profit, the potential for societal breakdown within the next three to four decades is a concerning prospect (Brand-Correa et al., 2022; Ozesmi, 2019). Communities worldwide face a complex crisis at a local level, dealing with climate change, pandemic recovery, socioeconomic inequalities, and extractive economic policies. While traditional economic development models prioritize growth, alternative, community-driven and pluralist economic approaches are challenging these models in favor of principles that center quality of life and build local, sustainable, and equitable economies. Cultivating an economy that fosters public health and environmental sustainability is a paramount priority for the people and the planet (Brand-Correa et al., 2022; Jamal & Gordon, 2024).

This master's thesis aims to explore the potential synergies between the South American philosophy of El Buen Vivir and the work of Nobel Laureate Elinor Ostrom on the governance of common-pool resources, with the goal of identifying key insights that could inform the transition towards a more sustainable economic development. This is of particular interest because both, El Buen Vivir, and Ostrom's work complement each other making a bridge between South American ancestral knowledge, cosmovision and ethics with empirical studies and modern frameworks of governance brought by Ostrom. The two, in conjunction, are uniquely placed to contribute to sustainable development because they prioritize community agency, harmony with nature and practical governance, making them essential resources for academic investigation and practical application within sustainable economic models.

El Buen Vivir, a holistic theory rooted in the traditions of Indigenous communities in the Andes, emphasizes the interconnectedness of human wellbeing, ecological balance, and

communal harmony, rejecting the anthropocentric and individualistic assumptions of mainstream development paradigms (Tertulia Andina Coffee, 2021). Elinor Ostrom's groundbreaking research on the 'tragedy of the commons' has demonstrated that, under certain conditions, local communities can successfully self-organize to manage shared natural resources in a sustainable manner (Laerhoven & Berge, 2011), challenging the prevailing notion that centralized state control or privatization are the only viable solutions (Herzberg, 2020).

By examining both perspectives in depth, this study seeks to uncover innovative pathways for a transformative shift towards more ecologically and socially responsive economic models.

1.1 Initial Situation

A sustainable economy is the one that provides the greatest amount of quality of life for people, and at the same time, reduces the environmental damage and the use of natural resources (Econation, n.d.). A sustainable economy also needs deeper, integrated notions of wellbeing which should include nature, societies, local and global communities (Becker, 2023).

There exist two theories developed that are compatible with the conception of sustainable economic development, which are the South American philosophy of *Buen Vivir* (living well) and Elinor Ostrom’s study on governing the commons. The comparison of both concepts can help to advance on the theoretical and applied sustainable economic models due to their complementary approaches to addressing global sustainability challenges. El Buen Vivir offers a holistic, culture-based idea that combines ecological balance, social equity, and communal well-being. Ostrom's research provides practical governance methods for managing shared resources effectively. Together they challenge the current profit-maximization economic model connecting ethical principles with practical governance, while highlighting the importance of local, interdisciplinary community-led solutions. Examining both

theories enriches the discourse on sustainability by demonstrating how diverse, interdisciplinary models can synergize to promote transformative economic environmental practices worldwide.

For decades in Latin America, “liberation” theories were developed, in order to escape from Eurocentric modernity approaches, which would help countries from the “Third World” find their own forms of social-economic development. Well-known intellectuals such as Anibal Quijano and Enrique Dussel criticized inequalities and rooted to recover autochthonous cultural and intellectual resources (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). Despite the importance of these theories, which we will not develop in the present work, it is the aim of this thesis to advocate for integration rather than liberation. Instead of looking for separate ways to reach sustainable development, we ought to serve as a starting point to merge ancestral cosmovision with modern empirical research and framework which will nurture the current sustainability theories.

1.2 Purpose and Motivation

The purpose of this master's thesis is to conduct a comparative analysis of the South American philosophy of El Buen Vivir and Elinor Ostrom's work on the governance of common-pool resources, with the aim of identifying key complementary elements in relation to the sustainable economic development.

This thesis will examine the conceptual structures, underlying principles, and practical implications of El Buen Vivir and Elinor Ostrom's work, deepening the academic understanding of how culturally rooted philosophies and empirically grounded frameworks contribute to update the design of more sustainable and equitable economic models, helping to rethink and reframe policy approaches that go beyond the current neoliberal system.

The study is motivated by the urgent need to transition to a more sustainable and fair economic system. This can address the interconnected challenges of environmental degradation, social inequality, and the weakening of community resilience. Building a bridge between ethical worldviews, biocentric foundations and practical cooperative governance strategies could address sustainability challenges holistically, balancing environmental, social, and economic dimensions.

Additionally, as a Master student with major in sustainability and circular innovation, I am personally driven by a deep concern for the long-term viability of our socio-ecological systems and a desire to contribute to the search for transformative solutions that can safeguard the wellbeing of present and future generations.

1.3 Problem Definition

El Buen Vivir is an indigenous South American philosophy that advocates for living in harmony with nature, putting communal prosperity over individualistic needs in balance with natural resources. Elinor Ostrom, based on empirical research, studied common-pool resource management to overcome the “tragedy of the commons”.

“Governing” studied and gave the scientific support to the fact that common dilemmas could be resolved locally (Herzberg, 2020) which is also a notion advocated in the philosophy of *El Buen Vivir*: “Given the unique cultural, political, social, economic, and ecological conditions of each country and region, solutions must be worked out at a local level” (Husted, 2021).

This research aims to fill the gap in the literature regarding a comparative analysis for a potential contribution to a sustainable economy. By bridging ethical considerations based on biocentrism from El Buen Vivir and community-based CPR management guidelines brought by the Ostrom in her empirical research, we can provide a reimagination of current sustainable economic paradigms that continue unexplored in the academic writings.

Therefore, this study will explore the following research question:

How can the philosophy of El Buen Vivir and Ostrom's work on the governance of common-pool resources be analyzed, compared, and integrated to enrich the current sustainability literature and practices? Specifically, how can these distinct yet complementary approaches encourage new models for ecological and social sustainability that are adaptable across diverse cultural and governance contexts?

2 Methodology

In the context of the present study and, in order to answer the research question proposed, a combination of systematic literature review (SLR) and meta-analysis will be used, under the umbrella of the PSALSAR method developed by Mengist et al.

SLR collects relevant evidence on the given topic that meets the pre-specified eligibility criteria to answer the research questions. Meta-analysis utilizes statistical methods, both descriptive and/or inferential, to summarize data from multiple studies on the specific topic of interest. These techniques generate knowledge from multiple studies in both qualitative and quantitative ways. The standard method has four basic steps: search, appraisal, synthesis, and analysis (SALSA). However, the authors added two additional steps - research protocol at the initial stage and reporting results at the final stage. Consequently, the new method has six basic steps, abbreviated as PSALSAR (Mengist et al., 2020).

SALSA is a timesaving “scoping review” designed to find the most relevant literature, with minimum attempts of quality evaluation, a basic synthesis of findings, and an analysis focused on the overall quantity and distribution of the studies (Booth et al., 2016). By adding two steps (Protocol and Report), PSALSAR becomes a more robust method that ensures to be explicit, transferable and reproducible for conducting a SRL (Mengist et al., 2020). This structured framework presents a more comprehensive approach to a systematic review

contrasting to other methods such as narrative synthesis (Popay et al., 2006) because of its simplicity and linearity, or to grounded theory, discourse analysis and narrative analysis (Burck, 2005) because of its transparent and organized step-by-step guide.

The six steps of the methodology for this Master Thesis, are detailed as follows:

2.1 Protocol

Determining the appropriate research scope represents the most challenging aspect of this stage. Precisely delineating the boundaries of the inquiry is essential to ensuring the research question can be addressed effectively within the given constraints (Mengist et al., 2020).

The present research focused on two concepts: El Buen Vivir and Governing the Commons. It was also needed Sustainable Development background in order to criticize, complement and/or improve current approaches based on the synergies traced from the main theories explored. Narrowing down the central concern of the investigation, the research question was developed as shown earlier.

2.2 Search

The search phase involves defining the search strategy and conducting the actual research. The search strategy helps determine the appropriate keywords and identify relevant databases, as well as restrict others, to collect the necessary documentation (Mengist et al., 2020).

In this step, the databases were narrowed to four: Elicit, Web of Science, Scopus, and MDPI. Elicit is an AI-powered search assistant where we could put the entire research question, and it responded with relevant papers as starting point. The other three databases

operate as traditional academic repositories and allowed us to use key words for the search such as “Governing the commons”, “El Buen Vivir”, “Sustainability” or “Elinor Ostrom”. The publishing date was also restricted from 2010 to 2024, with an exception for the original work of Elinor Ostrom taking 1990 as the baseline. The goal set was to obtain twenty studies referring to El Buen Vivir and Governing the Commons, ten talking about Sustainability and one for Methodology.

2.3 Appraisal

In this phase, the selected articles need to be evaluated based on the objectives of the review (Mengist et al., 2020).

The selection criteria included the reading of titles, abstracts, and keywords within the repositories to identify relevant studies that matched the scope of the Thesis. The elected articles were downloaded for full reading,

2.4 Synthesis

The synthesis stage involves the extraction and classification of relevant data from the selected publications in order to derive knowledge and draw conclusions (Mengist et al., 2020).

Important data was highlighted and extracted from the selected scientific papers. The content was stored in Microsoft OneNote, then transferred to Microsoft Word to make a classification of topics related to the outline of the thesis.

2.5 Analysis

The analysis phase involves evaluating the synthesized data, extracting meaningful information, and drawing conclusions from the selected papers. At this stage, the research questions formulated earlier would be addressed. Results and discussions must be presented, suggesting future research directions, and reaching an overall conclusion (Mengist et al., 2020).

In the current stage the synthesized data was critically examined to find aligned and divergent elements between the two theories of El Buen Vivir and Ostrom's Governing the Commons, particularly regarding their contribution to sustainable economic development. Later a discussion and conclusion were developed to reach the final recommendation for an updated integrated framework for a sustainable economy.

2.6 Report

The report phase, according to del Amo et al., consists of two key steps: a detailed description of the main methodology followed, and the public dissemination of the research findings, such as through the publication of a journal article, which serves to publicly share the research output for scientific purposes (Mengist et al., 2020).

The final report is the Master Thesis itself which would be published after approval.

3 Towards a Sustainable Economy

The concept of a sustainable economy has gained increasing attention in recent decades, as the shortcomings of the prevailing modern economic approach have become more evident. A sustainable economy, in the broadest sense, is one that prioritizes the well-being of future generations, nature, and non-human species, rather than solely pursuing economic growth and profit maximization (Becker, 2023).

It is important to acknowledge that a sustainable economy requires rethinking its fundamental ethical principles and adopting new ethical foundations (Becker, 2023). As Van Norren suggests, a truly sustainable economic model must transcend the narrow economic and material emphasis of contemporary sustainability frameworks, such as the SDGs, and instead adopt a more holistic approach that includes broader dimensions of well-being, social equity, and ecological equilibrium, as exemplified by the philosophical tenets of El Buen Vivir (D. E. van Norren, 2020) and Elinor Ostrom's groundbreaking work on the governance of common-pool resources, which demonstrated the possibility of communities to self-organize and manage shared resources in a sustainable manner, providing a compelling alternative to the prevailing top-down, state-led or market-based approaches to resource management.

A sustainable economy is commonly related to the concept of sustainable development. During the 1987 World Environment Commission, Mrs. Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway at the time, introduced and popularized the notion of "sustainable development" within the broader international dialogue on global development strategies (Zahedi, 2019).

The Brundtland Report, titled "Our Common Future," defines sustainable development as a process that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development is based on the sustainability philosophy. Sustainability involves maintaining desirability and ensuring the resources needed by human systems, other species, and ecosystems do not diminish over time. Sustainable development is, then, a set of actions guided by the principles of sustainability, where strategies, policies, programs, and activities are regularly reviewed, monitored, and revised (Zahedi, 2019).

Within this broad body of actions, many scholars have developed different theories looking to improve the way we manage ecological, social, and economic systems in a more sustainable way. Some of them are the following:

3.1 Degrowth

The concept of degrowth challenges the prevailing notion of infinite economic growth by advocating for a societal transformation that prioritizes ecological integrity, social equity, and non-material well-being. It critiques the overemphasis on GDP and material consumption as measures of progress, and instead, proposes a deliberate reduction in resource use and production to align with planetary boundaries. This approach shifts the focus from "growth for growth's sake" towards fostering community resilience, ecological harmony, and values like care, solidarity, and sufficiency rather than consumerism (Islar et al., 2024).

Furthermore, degrowth envisions restructuring our built environments and societies to support localized, community-focused lifestyles that prioritize sustainability and equality. The goal is to create systems that reduce our environmental impact while addressing historical inequalities and promoting inclusive well-being. It calls for changes in how we govern, conduct economic activities, and uphold cultural norms. Degrowth is not just an economic adjustment, but a comprehensive transformation of our social and ecological relationships, aiming for a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, balancing global and local priorities (Nesterova, 2022).

3.2 Biomimicry

Biomimicry is the practice of learning from nature's proven designs and processes to create sustainable human solutions. It operates on three core principles: ethos (embedding ethical respect for nature), emulate (designing by imitating biological strategies), and reconnect (reestablishing a harmonious relationship between human activities and the natural world). This approach fosters innovations that align with ecological principles, addressing issues like resource efficiency, waste reduction, and regenerative design, contributing to a circular economy and reduces humanity's environmental impact (Ashwath, 2021; Ilieva et al., 2022).

Within the sustainability framework, biomimicry goes beyond just technical innovations to promote a fundamental shift in how humans perceive and interact with the natural world. For instance, biomimetic designs such as the Eastgate Centre in Zimbabwe, which mimic the passive cooling mechanisms of termite mounds, showcase how learning from biological systems can inspire the creation of resource-efficient built environments. These innovations challenge the anthropocentric design narratives by emphasizing co-evolutionary principles and ecological adaptability as guiding frameworks (Ashwath, 2021; Ilieva et al., 2022).

3.3 Circular Economy

The circular economy (CE) is a transformative approach to sustainability that aims to decouple economic growth from resource consumption. It does this by creating regenerative, closed-loop systems. Unlike the linear "take-make-waste" model, the circular economy focuses on principles like reducing, reusing, recycling, and regenerating materials to minimize waste and environmental impact. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation defines the circular economy as "a systems solution framework that tackles global challenges like climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution" by retaining the utility and value of products and materials while regenerating natural systems (Deksne, 2024). This approach emphasizes systemic thinking, recognizing the interconnection between ecological and socio-economic systems, and aligning economic activities with planetary boundaries (De Angelis & Ianulardo, 2024).

CE is viewed as a tool to integrate environmental conservation, economic viability, and social equity. However, challenges exist in its implementation. Critics highlight limitations due to the second law of thermodynamics, which results in energy losses and byproducts during processes, making complete material circularity impractical. Additionally, there are concerns about rebound effects, where increased efficiency may inadvertently lead to higher consumption (Deksne, 2024). Also, its existing conceptualization and practical application

may not comprehensively address all facets of sustainability. While the framework emphasizes resource efficiency and waste reduction, it may not adequately consider the social dimensions of sustainability (De Angelis & Ianulardo, 2024).

Despite these challenges, the CE provides a practical approach for promoting sustainability transitions. Its principles reflect a shift towards greater harmony between human and natural systems, offering a more sustainable alternative to growth-focused models (De Angelis & Ianulardo, 2024).

3.4 Regenerative Economics

Regenerative economics reframes economic frameworks by aligning them with natural principles, seeking not merely to reduce harm but to actively revitalize ecological and social systems. This approach integrates practices that prioritize ecological restoration, social equity, and community well-being, thereby fundamentally transforming economic activities to support the thriving of life as a whole (Shannon et al., 2022).

The notion focuses on principles that go beyond typical economic goals. These principles are:

- Place: Strengthening local economies by considering community needs and cultural contexts, to promote renewal and resilience.
- Planet: Prioritizing environmental restoration and integrating natural systems into economic activities.
- People: Ensuring social justice, equity, and inclusivity, so economies benefit all stakeholders, including marginalized groups.
- Peace and Progress: Promoting harmony, interconnectedness, and a cultural shift toward sustainability and regeneration (Shannon et al., 2022).

The framework draws inspiration from systems thinking, emphasizing interdependence, diversity, and harmony with nature, and is rooted in Indigenous knowledge and regenerative agriculture practices. Key Indigenous contributions include principles such as Buen Vivir

which inspires regenerative economics by embedding ecological and social justice into economic activities, "Caring for country", from Australian Indigenous land management practices, combine cultural, spiritual, and ecological aspects into how they govern and manage resources. North American Indigenous philosophies also offer principles like reciprocity, right relationship, and honoring place, which are essential for designing economies that restore rather than deplete ecosystems (Shannon et al., 2022).

3.5 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) represents a multifaceted approach through which corporations balance their economic performance with positive social and environmental outcomes (Ashrafi et al., 2020). The conceptual foundations of CSR have been primarily rooted in Western and European philosophical traditions, drawing extensively from thinkers such as Aristotle and Immanuel Kant, while incorporating occasional references to Eastern philosophical perspectives (Husted, 2021).

Rooted in concepts such as corporate philanthropy and the triple bottom line (economic, social, environmental), CSR reflects the evolving recognition that businesses must contribute to sustainable development beyond mere regulatory compliance. CSR strategies integrate stakeholder engagement, ethical decision-making, and practices aimed at mitigating environmental impacts while fostering societal well-being (Ashrafi et al., 2020). By inserting sustainability into their core business models, corporations can cultivate a long-term vision that aligns their goals with broader global sustainability priorities.

Despite the potential benefits, Corporate Social Responsibility faces significant challenges. The risk of superficial "greenwashing" practices that prioritize public perception over genuine change are ongoing concerns. Theories have shown that CSR drivers are corporate reputation and stakeholder pressures, but it is challenging to quantify the outcomes of CSR efforts (Ashrafi et al., 2020). These limitations imply that CSR's effectiveness depends on genuinely integrating its strategies with wider social and environmental goals.

All the theoretical concepts described before have the common intention of transforming the actual economic settings in order to develop practices that reign in balance with nature, ensuring planetary health for the future generations. There is no universal formula to achieve this goal, but looking for interdisciplinary frameworks that combine different perspectives, such as the philosophy of El Buen Vivir and Ostrom's "Governing the commons", can provide valuable insights to advance the sustainability agenda. Both theories will be described in depth in the next sections.

4 El Buen Vivir

El Buen Vivir philosophy emerges as a critical counterpoint to conventional development frameworks, emphasizing principles of harmony, community-orientation, and environmental sustainability. It challenges the state-led extractive paradigms associated with neoliberalism and advocates for a biocentric approach to policymaking and governance structures (Gudynas, 2016; Ranta, 2018; Vanhulst, 2015).

El Buen Vivir is deeply rooted in the worldviews and lived experiences of Indigenous communities in the Andean region of South America, particularly in countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, and Peru (D. van Norren, 2017).

The core tenets of El Buen Vivir include: a harmonious relationship with nature, based on the principle of "Pachamama" or Mother Earth; a communal, rather than individualistic, understanding of wellbeing; a non-linear, cyclical perception of time and progress; an emphasis on cultural diversity and the recognition of indigenous knowledge systems; and the pursuit of a balanced, self-sufficient economy that is attuned to the carrying capacity of local ecosystems (Husted, 2021; Ranta, 2018; D. E. van Norren, 2020).

4.1 Historical and Philosophical Foundations

The philosophy of Buen Vivir, which translates to "living well", is grounded in the worldviews and lived experiences of Indigenous communities in Mexico and Latin America. It represents a conceptual framework for human wellbeing and the good life that is deeply rooted in the cultural traditions and knowledge systems of these regions (Husted, 2021).

“Living well” or Buen Vivir is rooted specifically in the cosmologies and cultural traditions of Indigenous communities in Bolivia, Ecuador, and Peru. At its core, it emphasizes a harmonious coexistence with nature, social justice, and respect for cultural diversity as part of a holistic cosmic perspective (D. van Norren, 2017). Buen Vivir encapsulates a wide range of ideas shared by Indigenous groups across Latin America, offering a critique of contemporary economic systems that is both post-capitalist and post-socialist in nature (Husted, 2021). It describes an approach to life that is community-oriented, ecologically balanced, and culturally sensitive (Balch, 2013).

The concept of "Buen Vivir", as explained, has its origins in the indigenous perspectives and cultural traditions of Latin America, particularly the Quechua notion of "Sumak Kawsay" and analogous concepts from other groups, such as the "Suma Qamaña" of the Aymara, the "Ñandereko" of the Guarani, the "Shiir waras" of the Achuar, and the "Küme Mongen" of the Mapuche (Vanhulst, 2015). Rather than being identical, Sumak Kawsay can be understood as an "indigenist" precursor and parallel version to the more institutionalized Buen Vivir. Sumak Kawsay, similar to the Bolivian Suma Qamaña, reflects a reexamination of the worldviews, ethics, and social practices of the aboriginal Andean cultures by a new generation of indigenous intellectuals, including both academics and social movement activists (Carpio & Ullán, 2021).

The Sumak Kawsay concept is rooted in a fundamental distinction between Buen Vivir and Mal Vivir/Llaki Kawsay (Waldmüller, 2014). Mal Vivir, which translates to “ill living” represents an overly individualized, materialistic, and disenchanted way of living, where individuals have lost connection to their core values and adopted those of the modern economic

system. In contrast, Sumak Kawsay positions itself as a regional, local, and community-oriented approach (Waldmüller, 2014). It is based on the premise that everyone should have access to essential resources like personal gardens, homes, clean water, and forests, and that the Runa (Kichwa indigenous people) must cultivate inner strength (sámai), wisdom (sabiduría), balanced behavior (sasi), comprehension (ricsima), the capacity to foresee the future (muskui), perseverance (ushai), and compassion (llakina) (Waldmüller, 2014). Consequently, humans are integral components of a community of people, which in turn is a constituent part of Pachamama, or Mother Earth (Acosta & Martínez, 2009).

In Andean thought, Pachamama is a sacred tutelary being, a space-time unity that reveals itself across three degrees: the upper stage dominated by atmospheric and celestial phenomena, the present-day realm of everyday human interactions, and the inner space where the cycles of life and death unfold. It represents the Earth as a nurturing mother, not just a resource to be exploited. This relationship is based on reciprocity, where Pachamama cares for its "children" - the beings that inhabit it - and humans are expected to treat it with respect, not as an object to be used without regard (Páez et al., 2023). Pachamama is a combination of two words: Pacha and Mama (mother). Pacha is a dual word that represents two interrelated spatial conditions - a static (space) and a dynamic (time) (Apaza Huanca, 2019). The concept of pacha, which refers to land, earth, and the universe in Aymara and Quechua, provides the knowledge for living well. This knowledge fosters harmonious relations between people, as well as among social, spiritual, and ecological domains (Ranta, 2018).

According to writings by Jesuits during the colonial era, after the Council of Lima in 1551, Pachamama was viewed as a deity associated with agriculture and the natural world. Pachamama was seen as a feminine and maternal figure, as she was believed to provide sustenance to all living beings, much like a mother caring for her children (Di Salvia, 2013). This ancient Andean perspective on the relationship with Pachamama has gained widespread global recognition, contributing to the advancement of international legislation and mechanisms intended to safeguard the rights of Nature or Mother Earth (Apaza Huanca, 2019). The United Nations declared April 22nd as International Mother Earth Day in 2009. This declaration recognizes that the term "Mother Earth" is widely used to refer to the planet Earth, reflecting the interdependence between humans, other living species, and the planet

we all inhabit. This declaration represents a shift in how Nature is appreciated, influenced by Ecuador's Constitution that grants rights to Nature, expressing a biocentric perspective (Apaza Huanca, 2019).

El Buen Vivir philosophy is, then, a synthesis of Andean worldviews, previously described, as well as critical perspectives on modernity from current academia and social movements (Gudynas, 2016). In recent years, the concept has gained political traction and been formally incorporated through the inclusion of some of its principles in the new constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia (Monni & Pallottino, 2015).

4.2 Critique of Modernity and Development

Buen Vivir seeks to overcome the Western perspective that views nature primarily through an instrumental, materialistic, and anthropocentric lens, which means viewing nature as an entity to be controlled and exploited for human purposes (Carpio & Ullán, 2021). Instead, it redefines the relationship between humans and nature, shifting from an anthropocentric to a biocentric worldview (D. van Norren, 2017). Rather than positioning humans at the center of the natural world, Buen Vivir conceptualizes human beings as integral components of nature (Husted, 2021). The distinction between nature and culture, where humans are accorded primacy over other living beings, is not accepted in this framework. The reference to Pachamama, or Mother Earth, is a crucial element of the sociocultural identity of indigenous communities (Monni & Pallottino, 2015).

Western economic system is commonly referred to as "democratic capitalism" which is based on the underlying doctrine of liberalism. Liberal economic theory advocates for a focus on individual gratification, such as the consumption of goods. This pursuit of personal satisfaction often occurs without consideration of moral implications (Poznański, 2018). The term “western”, used by scholars nowadays, refers to the dominant economic and political model that emerged from western Europe during the Enlightenment era (1700-1850). This time period is considered the origin of the central values of democracy, rights, liberty, and

reason. These ideological developments also gave rise to the Industrial Revolution, which, technically speaking, began in Great Britain around 1760 and then spread to Western Europe and the United States within a few decades (Cohen, 2023).

Adam Smith argued that the economy was regulated by morality in his "Theory of Moral Feelings" (1759). He proposed that the primary motive of individuals was to gain social recognition or prestige, which was achieved by identifying with the needs and problems of others. However, liberalism quickly abandoned this ethical dimension. Smith himself introduced concepts unrelated to ethics, such as the division of labor, which, in his view, reduces production costs, representing a key source of national wealth (Poznański, 2018). Is precisely this lack of morality that characterized the evolution of current liberalism and what Buen Vivir seeks to overcome. The Andean philosophy often implicitly defines the "Western economy" through its perceived characteristics, such as its emphasis on material accumulation and its growth-oriented model (Gudynas, 2016; Monni & Pallottino, 2015), its anthropocentric perspective which positions humans as distinct from and dominant over nature, resulting in its exploitation merely as a resource (Apaza Huanca, 2019), and its individualistic values which prioritize self-interest over collective and relational aspects proclaimed by El Buen Vivir (Husted, 2021; Waldmüller, 2014).

Authors as Poznański argues that western economics should be renewed by returning to its origins in the form of proto-liberalism, recovering the early thoughts of Smith where morality was the base of economic systems (Poznański, 2018). A similar path is derived from the Buen Vivir philosophy with the main difference that the critique of modernity and development is rooted on the ancestral wisdom of communities from the Andes as a response to the perceived failures of this current economic model, which is seen as leading to environmental degradation, social inequality, and a loss of cultural diversity.

Is in this sense that, as an empirical example, the application of El Buen Vivir in the legislation of a nation like Ecuador represents a novel constitutional approach in two significant ways. First, it legally acknowledges nature as an entity with inherent rights, departing from the traditional modern legal framework that grants rights only to entities capable of bearing duties. Second, it incorporates the indigenous cosmovision of Pachamama or 'Mother Earth'

as a living, spiritual, and relational totality into environmental legislation, introducing an animistic worldview (Carpio & Ullán, 2021).

A powerful critique of modernity that Buen Vivir offers is that it represents a distinct philosophical framework that diverges from the modern notions of progress and economic growth. The Buen Vivir philosophy is not rooted in the concept of a predetermined, linear historical trajectory, and instead rejects the objectives of progress and growth (Gudynas, 2016). This is because the indigenous worldview sees economic growth as incompatible with living in harmony with nature and its ecosystems (Anastasopoulos, 2019). El Buen Vivir critiques the linear development models that singularly focus on achieving economic expansion (Husted, 2021). Going back to the base philosophy of the Andean Indigenous communities, The Sumak Kawsay reflects the empirical traditions of moderation and harmony with the cycles of nature and its resources. This perspective stands in contrast to cultures that prioritize relentless economic growth at the expense of ecosystems, natural resources, and societies (Anastasopoulos, 2019).

The instrumentalization or commodification of social life and nature is another aspect that the philosophy of El Buen Vivir does not accept (Gudynas, 2016). It provides a strong critique of the discourse surrounding sustainable development, drawing upon the rich cultural traditions of indigenous communities in the region to present an alternative, lived practice that opposes commodification (Salazar, 2015). In contrast to frameworks focused on optimization, such as those prevalent in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sustainability, Buen Vivir conceptualizes nature as holding intrinsic value equal to that of human beings, prioritizing it as an end in itself rather than merely an instrument (Husted, 2021).

Furthermore, the classical liberal approach of multiculturalism is inadequate for El Buen Vivir purpose, necessitating an intercultural perspective (Gudynas, 2011). The Andean philosophy transcends a mere coexistence or juxtaposition of diverse cultures; rather, it involves an interactive dialogue and praxis aimed at promoting alternatives to conventional development models (Gudynas, 2011). Similarly, Buen Vivir rejects the classical notion of a unidirectional, linear historical progression along a prescribed path, acknowledging the potential for multiple possible directions (Gudynas, 2011).

El Buen Vivir philosophy goes way beyond traditional approaches of corporate social responsibility and sustainability. CSR is the field of management that investigates the interconnections between businesses, society, and the natural environment (Husted, 2021). As professor Gudynas argues in an interview by Oliver Balch, CSR helps companies to give higher value to their brands but the social impact on the sector is poor, because companies are made primarily to make profit and not to be responsible (Balch, 2013). Academic literature has shown that numerous attempts to "green" business practices through corporate social responsibility initiatives have largely demonstrated limited effectiveness (Husted, 2021).

Barnett et al. (2020) studied 6,254 academic papers regarding CSR divulged within a 50-year time period. The authors concluded that, despite the visible progress in the literature, the studies have predominantly focused on examining the financial performance of firms and not a single investigation effectively demonstrated that CSR initiatives resolved the social problems they aimed to address (Barnett et al., 2020). Extensive CSR research has centered on the business case, which proposes that companies should invest in CSR initiatives as long as they accomplish favorable economic returns for the organization (Husted, 2021). Prominent business scholars have advised managers to view CSR initiatives as a vehicle to mitigate criticism of capitalism and create value for both firms and society. Managers also consider CSR as a strategic investment in stakeholder relations (Barnett et al., 2020).

In the context of local communities, CSR has been framed as a "social license to operate", requiring companies to obtain the moral endorsement of the communities where they operate. However, companies have frequently fallen short in their objective of meaningfully engaging with local communities and the environment, particularly in emerging market countries (Husted, 2021). Current CSR practices, grounded in the green growth model, are highly focused on quantitative assessments and rating systems to evaluate the "social performance" of firms. These approaches utilize indicators and checklists to make such determinations. However, they often fail to adequately address the impacts on the environment

and local communities, which would necessitate more nuanced, qualitative research methods (Husted, 2021).

Barnett et al. propose that the field of CSR should rethink itself as a design science. Researchers would formulate initiatives aimed at achieving specific social and environmental goals, bridging the gap between analysis and real-world impact. This would enable CSR studies to become more action-oriented and focused on solutions, without compromising their scholarly foundations. By adopting this perspective, CSR researchers would shift towards "small data" research designs, which can better elucidate causal relationships rather than merely identifying correlations (Barnett et al., 2020), an orientation more aligned with the Buen Vivir philosophy (Husted, 2021).

4.3 Key Elements of El Buen Vivir

4.3.1 Living in Harmony with Nature

In the Andean philosophy of El Buen Vivir, Nature and human beings are viewed as a unified whole, with no distinction in rights between them. Harmony among all species and nature is considered mandatory.

As activist-intellectual Catherine Walsh proposed, Buen Vivir represents a philosophical framework that conceptualizes a system of knowledge and being grounded in the communion between humanity and nature, as well as the spatial-temporal totality of harmonious existence. This notion emphasizes the necessary interrelationship of beings, knowledge, logics, and rationalities of thought, action, existence, and life, which is integral to the cosmovision, cosmology, or philosophy of the Indigenous peoples of Abya Yala (the American Continent) (Anastasopoulos, 2019; Salazar, 2015).

Is in this sense that harmony above all is the key element of the concept of Buen Vivir. Harmony not only between human beings but also in a deep relation to nature (Balch, 2013). It is a new proposal for understanding the relationship between humanity, nature, history,

society, and democracy which is the combination of ancestral indigenous understanding of good living with a critique of classical Western development theories (D. van Norren, 2017).

This perspective embraces biocentrism, where nature and human beings are viewed as a unified whole without a subject-object distinction. It emphasizes that life is centered around Mother Earth, which is reflected in the recognition of the inherent rights of nature (D. van Norren, 2017). This is a new framework for conceptualizing and pursuing alternative futures grounded in a "bio-civilization" approach, (Salazar, 2015) where is imperative to respect and protect the Pacha Mama (our social-natural network in the eyes of Andean cosmo-vision) in counter position to current governmental development models (Gudynas, 2016).

4.3.2 Collectivism as central tenet

The socioeconomic philosophy of El Buen Vivir is characterized by principles of complementarity, redistribution, sufficiency, work as both a duty and a right, prioritizing service over profit, cooperation and reciprocity, a balance of individual and communal labor, and the collective ownership of natural resources (D. van Norren, 2017). This means that in Buen Vivir, the focus is not on the individual as the subject of wellbeing, but rather on the individual within the context of a community and its specific cultural and natural environment (Salazar, 2015).

The modern economic system of capitalism emphasizes individual rights, such as the rights to own, sell, retain, and possess. In contrast, the alternative paradigm of El Buen Vivir from South America prioritizes the rights of peoples, communities, and nature over the rights of the individual (Balch, 2013). As an example, numerous ways of ownership are embraced by this alternative model, centered around the community property or “ayllu” (D. van Norren, 2017).

In other words, as mentioned by Professor Gudynas, socioeconomic development or progress can only be achieved when communities and human beings coexist in harmony with

Mother Earth. This is the principle of cohabitation in the eyes of El Buen Vivir (Tertulia Andina Coffee, 2021).

4.3.3 Respect for ancestral wisdom in association with present knowledge

El Buen Vivir philosophy, as an alternative to conventional development frameworks, acknowledges and upholds the inherent value of Indigenous cultures and their ancestral wisdom ("saberes") (Husted, 2021).

As cited earlier, Buen Vivir is based on Sumak Kawsay way of living which can be described by four core principles: integrality, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of life; relationality, which highlights the interdependent relationships between different elements; complementarity, which underscores the importance of balance and mutual support; and reciprocity, which emphasizes the exchange of goods and services within the community (D. van Norren, 2017).

The Sumak Kawsay tradition highlights seven key virtues that are central to its worldview: comprehension, inner strength, the capacity to envision the future, compassion, balanced conduct, perseverance ("Runa") through connection with nature, and communal learning ("Yachachina"). These virtues and principles reflect the holistic and relational understanding of wellbeing that is foundational to the Buen Vivir philosophical approach (D. van Norren, 2017).

El Buen Vivir puts, as well, much attention to the economic dimension of social life (production, consumption, exchange) which is totally compatible with the objectives of the Andean philosophy which must cover the basic needs of every human being (Monni & Pallottino, 2015) but without falling into the trap of unlimited growth and accumulation of wealth. In the same way as in the material dimension, El Buen Vivir extends beyond economic considerations as sharing feelings and affections is important and widespread. This is manifested in

the collective expressions of diverse sentiments, such as joy, sorrow, resistance, and compassion, as demonstrated by the lived experiences of various social movements (Gudynas, 2011).

In such manner, we could say that El Buen Vivir is not only post-capitalist, but also post-socialist (Gudynas, 2016): it involves selectively adopting, adapting, and transforming critical positions and perspectives from Euro-centric political thought, rather than completely rejecting them (Monni & Pallottino, 2015). Thus, the Andean concept makes a close relation to current notions of interculturality and, also, decolonization (Husted, 2021).

We must be careful to avoid an idealized view of El Buen Vivir, as the framework is not in the look for an idyllic Andean and pre-colonial past. It is not a fixed or static concept, but rather an evolving and dynamic idea that is continuously being constructed and reconstructed (Gudynas, 2011). The exhortation is to build shared futures grounded in ancestral traditions, where diverse forms of knowledge converge and integrate (Salazar, 2015) including Western modern knowledge, science, and innovation.

4.3.4 Different discourses of El Buen Vivir

The concept of El Buen Vivir has been widely embraced and adapted by various social, political, and academic actors across Latin America, leading to the emergence of diverse discourses and interpretations of this alternative paradigm.

There are three main discourses of El Buen Vivir that can be identified:

a) The "Indigenist" or the purist, spiritual "pachamamism" of Indigenous communities speaking only of Sumak Kawsay. This discourse emphasizes a deep connection with Mother Earth, as well as the values of harmony and community (D. van Norren, 2017; Vanhulst, 2015). This discourse emphasizes the spiritual, ontologically relational dimensions, which are grounded on acquiring a practice (over knowledge),

both collectively and individually, of a holistic perspective that recognizes the inherent interconnectedness of all aspects of existence. This form of relational ontology is understood as being in a reciprocal and dynamic interplay with the social and natural spheres (Waldmüller, 2014).

b) The "post-structuralist", which includes Western intellectuals seeking to develop alternative approaches to development based on ecological and postmodern perspectives (D. van Norren, 2017; Vanhulst, 2015). In the words of Professor Acosta, a “utopia to be constructed”, this discourse envisions Buen Vivir as a combination of diverse perspectives from international movements, including those of peasants, feminists, socialists, ecologists, pacifists, liberation theologians, and unionists. A key aspect is the demand to reconstruct the national economic system towards localized practices of production, transportation, and consumption (Waldmüller, 2014).

c) The “socialist” or “bio-socialist” of Neo-Marxists characterized by a strong emphasis on the state's role in managing Buen Vivir policies, with a focus on promoting social equity. However, this discourse tends to de-prioritize environmental, cultural, and identity-related aspects (D. van Norren, 2017; Vanhulst, 2015). This discourse represents a political ideology that blends neo-Aristotelian, Christian, and Andean values, often promoted by 'well-intentioned' individuals, into a state-led program. However, it remains largely within the framework of Western-centric development, particularly with a focus on human development. It is also seen as part of the socialism of the 21st century movement (Waldmüller, 2014).

These three different approaches of El Buen Vivir represent a mosaic of perspectives and discourses, which increase the debate about the need of alternatives to development where nature is in the core of the reconstruction of new forms of society. They also reflect the diversity of contexts, worldviews, and political agendas within which this alternative paradigm is being interpreted and applied across Latin America.

4.3.5 El Buen Vivir, a framework in construction

As a general summary, according to Eduardo Gudynas and Alberto Acosta, El Buen Vivir represents an opportunity to construct an alternative society founded upon the coexistence of human beings in diversity and harmony with nature, grounded in the recognition of the diverse cultural values present within each country and globally (Vanhulst, 2015).

Buen Vivir represents an intercultural perspective that synthesizes ideas rooted in Indigenous traditions as well as critiques of modern paradigms. It reconceptualizes well-being by expanding beyond purely economic measures. At its core, Buen Vivir emphasizes values such as harmony, equity, community, subjectivity, and spirituality (Husted, 2021).

It is important to manifest that El Buen Vivir does not constitute a singular, unified philosophical system, it comprehends several core principles. These include perspectives on well-being and quality of life, the relationship between humans and the natural environment, development models focused on economic growth, and the value of Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems (Husted, 2021). In addition, El Buen Vivir includes a critical perspective and a comprehensive strategic approach towards social transformation and praxis which helped the concept to be materialized into the political spheres (Monni & Pallottino, 2015).

The political underpinnings of El Buen Vivir include the acknowledgment of diversity, community, equality, solidarity-based obligations, reliance on the natural environment, cooperation, the right to employment and recreation, the reestablishment of public goods, participatory democracy, and the conceptualization of culture as a public asset (D. van Norren, 2017).

5 Elinor Ostrom's Governing the Commons

Elinor Ostrom (1933-2012) was a renowned scientist and the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences (Indiana University, n.d.). Although Ostrom's formal training was in political science, her scholarly work exhibits a highly interdisciplinary character, drawing on and contributing to various social science disciplines (Acheson, 2011). Her groundbreaking work, "Governing the Commons" (1990) provided fundamental analytical insights into the management of common-pool resources, challenging the prevailing assumptions about the inevitability of the "tragedy of the commons."

A common-pool resource (CPR), also called just “commons”, can be described as a valuable natural or human-created resource or facility that multiple people have access to and that can deteriorate from overutilization, where excluding people from the resource is expensive and one person's usage reduces what is available for others (Lorenzen et al., 2022). Another definition given by Cristopher Gunn is that commons are what we share. Commons refer to privately or community-organized resources that are accessible for public use but require a commitment from members or administrators to ensure their long-term sustainability, for future generations to be benefitted from them. They are different from public sector entities managed by the government (Obeng-Odoom, 2016).

Garret Hardin, a human ecology professor, significantly influenced the agenda and scholarship surrounding the management of common-pool resources from 1968 to 1990 (Laerhoven & Berge, 2011). When confronted with resource scarcity, individuals often exhibit non-cooperative behaviors that accelerate the deterioration of the shared resource, leading to the phenomenon Hardin famously labelled as the “tragedy of the commons” (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021). To ensure the preservation of CPRs, he proposed that the government or private organizations must manage the resources. In Ostrom’s own words, “to solve the problem of overuse, Hardin recommended that a coercive force outside of individual psyches impose either a Leviathan or private ownership” (Ostrom et al., 2007).

An alternative to Hardin’s solutions to the problem - private ownership or state management - Elinor Ostrom, in her seminal work “Governing the Commons” proposed the governance

of the commons which refers to cooperative actions and rules made and managed by the community who are the most interested in preserving the shared resources.

“Governing” provided analytical and empirical evidence to support the argument that individuals can collectively address their shared challenges at the local level, often developing solutions over time, without relying on a central authority to enforce social outcomes (Herzberg, 2020). Because of the case studies, concepts, analytic methods, and conclusions presented in the book, it has profoundly impacted and influenced social scientists interested in the social-science dimensions of resource management (Acheson, 2011). Decades after the book was published, there has been scientific consensus that under appropriate conditions, communities can successfully self-govern common-pool resources without requiring state intervention or resource privatization (Laerhoven & Berge, 2011).

Ostrom’s work has stimulated academic and policy-oriented research of how to effectively govern shared resources, rather than simply dismissing them as inconsistent which is incompatible with sustainable development objectives (Laerhoven & Berge, 2011).

Ostrom was a true believer of interdisciplinary work. She advocated for social science researchers to strengthen their findings by employing a diverse range of methodological approaches (Acheson, 2011). The Nobel Laureate was overly critical of scientists, scholars and policymakers who believed in one-size-fits-all solutions. She emphasized that supporters of universal solutions, or panaceas, assume that all problems, whether in a single resource system or across different resources, can be represented by a few formal models. They also assume that individual preferences, information roles, and perceptions are the same as in developed Western market economies (Ostrom et al., 2007).

Upon further reflection, Elinor Ostrom's legacy will be defined by her important contributions to the academic study of institutions, rational choice theory, and her applied work on environmental policy and governance. She dedicated her academic career to expanding the conventional economic framework beyond the narrow limits of individualistic rational behavior, towards a more comprehensive understanding of self-governing cooperative action within the dominion of public policy (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

5.1 Overview of Elinor Ostrom's Theory of Governing the Commons

Governing the Commons made a profound contribution to transforming academic and policy perspectives on the role of citizens in the governance of common-pool resources (Herzberg, 2020). Ostrom's most significant academic input was her application of methodological individualism to analyze cooperative behaviors and institutional arrangements. This work built upon Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons thesis, and theorized how collective action could emerge despite the assumptions of rational choice individualism (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

Ostrom's research demonstrated that individuals within CPR systems have the capability to collectively establish rule-based frameworks that can mitigate the most severe outcomes projected by Garrett Hardin and other scholars (Herzberg, 2020). Elinor Ostrom proved with considerable fieldwork that individuals across diverse contexts and locations are capable of voluntarily organizing themselves to gather the benefits of exchange, provide mutual risk mitigation, and establish and enforce rules that safeguard natural resources (Ostrom, 2000).

5.2 Governing the Commons: The (revolutionary) Book

Throughout her distinguished career, Elinor Ostrom dedicated significant effort to exploring two central research questions: What factors contribute to the overexploitation of natural resources? And under what circumstances can resource users and communities successfully develop and implement effective governance frameworks to sustainably manage these shared resources? (Acheson, 2011).

In her influential 1990 work, Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action, Elinor Ostrom challenged the prevailing notion that either state control or

privatization is the only viable solution to the problem of managing common-pool resources. She presented empirical evidence explaining that communities can establish their own institutional arrangements to effectively govern shared resources, without relying solely on government or market mechanisms. Building upon the theoretical frameworks of Hardin's "Tragedy of the Commons" and collective action and the prisoner's dilemma, Ostrom's book argued that diverse, context-specific institutions, involving shared norms and regulations, can emerge and enable long-term, sustainable management of CPRs (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

Her conclusion, after the investigation of various CPR systems, revealed that certain local communities were able to manage their shared resources, such as forests, in a sustainable manner. In contrast, resources controlled through private ownership or state management did not consistently result in sustainable outcomes, in opposition to Hardin's thesis (Lopez & Moran, 2016).

5.2.1 Game Theory: Collective action problems and the prisoner's dilemma

Ostrom drew upon the rigorous framework of game theory commonly employed in public choice research but claimed that many real-world common-pool resource situations did not align consistently with the simplified analytical models prevalent in game theory at the time (Herzberg, 2020).

Collective-action problems arise when there is a disparity between individual and societal interests. In these situations, it may not be rational for individuals to engage in cooperative behavior, despite the fact that such cooperation could yield positive outcomes for the collectivity. In such scenarios, actions driven by individual rationality may produce suboptimal or even disastrous outcomes for the group as a whole (Acheson, 2011).

Elinor Ostrom often models collective-action problems using the prisoner's dilemma scheme (Acheson, 2011). The Prisoner's Dilemma is a well-studied game theory model that reveals how individuals who are perfectly rational, each aiming to maximize their personal benefits, can become stuck in a suboptimal outcome despite the potential for collective gains through cooperation (Ostrom, 1990). In this game where two incarcerated criminals were separated to avoid communication with each other, if both prisoners remain silent, they will receive light sentences. However, if one prisoner confesses while the other remains silent, the confessor will receive a noticeably light sentence while the silent prisoner receives a heavy sentence. Fearing this outcome, both prisoners opt to confess, resulting in the worst-case scenario of heavy sentences for both (Acheson, 2011).

Three primary approaches are used to addressing the prisoner's dilemma. The most widely observed solution involves infinitely repeated iterations of the game, which can lead to the emergence of cooperative strategies. A less common scenario occurs when a dominant player or institution grants the public good or the regulation, even if others are acting in their own self-interest. The third approach, which was central to Ostrom's analysis, involves the establishment of rules and norms that shape the behavior of players, steering them away from their individually optimal, but socially suboptimal, dominant strategies (Acheson, 2011).

5.2.2 Commons-pool resources or The Commons

In 1977, Ostrom and her husband developed an initial conceptual framework for classifying economic goods based on the challenges associated with excluding actors who wish to appropriate them. First, private goods, where exclusion of players is feasible, and private consumption diminishes their availability for other consumers. Then, toll goods which experience minimal depletion from use and exclusion of consumers is easy. In contrast, public goods are those that are reduced by consumption, but where exclusion is not possible. Finally, Common pool resources (CPR) refer to goods that are decreased through consumption, but where exclusion is difficult (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

Ostrom's conceptualization of CPRs is influenced by James Buchanan's theory of club goods, which describes a scenario where the consumption of goods and services involves an element of "publicness." In this theory, the optimal sharing group is larger than a single person or family but smaller than an infinitely enormous number (Obeng-Odoom, 2016).

Elinor Ostrom delineates the two key components of the commons as the broader resource system, such as a forest or lake, and the individual resource units that can be extracted from that system, like the fish harvested in the lake (Ostrom, 1990). The actors involved in close relation to the commons and among them are the appropriators who use the resource units, the providers who look for ways to make the resource system grow and the producers who began to operate in the resource system and created the commons in the first place (Obeng-Odoom, 2016).

5.2.3 Governing the CPRs

Ostrom's research revealed that the users of common-pool resources can establish their own institutional arrangements to effectively govern these shared resources, without relying solely on state control or privatization. Her findings challenged the prevailing notion that government or market mechanisms are the only viable solutions to avoid the tragedy of the commons (Lorenzen et al., 2022).

Ostrom's conclusion in Governing suggests her endorsement of the flexibility inherent in self-governing arrangements, rather than advocating for increased government involvement as the sole solution. Prior to the book, social scientists frequently advocated for solutions that necessitated citizens relying on the government to implement programs. This approach presumed an idealized, all-capable government, while undervaluing individuals' ability to consider perspectives beyond their immediate self-interest. These premises are not logically or empirically aligned with the findings of Ostrom's research and the numerous subsequent studies that have built upon her work (Herzberg, 2020).

Ostrom's work sought to expand the principles of incentive-based and locally self-governing institutions into policies that can be scaled up to regional, national, or international levels (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014). The strong heterogeneity of institutional procedures, combined with the capacity for self-governance, provides a counterpoint to the reductive nature of previous theoretical conclusions (Herzberg, 2020).

Professor Elinor's research demonstrated that there were no universal solutions or panaceas to resource management challenges. Her work highlighted the importance of developing multinational, multidisciplinary, and comparative research that bridges the social and natural sciences, in order to better understand the complexities of governance structures (Lopez & Moran, 2016).

The members of a common-pool resource system can collaboratively establish rules that are tailored to the specific needs of their community. However, ensuring the effective implementation of those rules demands considerable effort and commitment from the members themselves (Herzberg, 2020), and that is exactly what Ostrom's investigation revealed. When the anticipated advantages of governing a resource outweigh the perceived costs of investing in enhanced rules and social norms for the majority of stakeholders and their leadership, the probability of self-organization among resource users increases considerably (Ostrom, 2009).

In the next sections we will deep dive into the core elements of Elinor Ostrom's contribution to the governance of the commons.

5.3 Main Arguments of Ostrom's Theory

Elinor Ostrom demonstrated that the users of a common-pool resource can establish their own institutional arrangements to effectively govern these shared resources, without relying solely on state control or privatization. Her findings challenged the prevailing notion that government or market mechanisms are the only viable solutions to avoid the tragedy of the

commons (Acheson, 2011). Institutional arrangements for governing common-pool resources have been autonomously developed by users without reliance on centralized authorities and sustained over extended periods without oversight or enforcement from external entities (Ostrom et al., 1992).

Ostrom challenged that Hardin's earlier concerns about individuals' tendency to overexploit common resources only applied to open-access resources or public goods that were susceptible to appropriation due to insufficient governance or the absence of common property administration that provoke the conversion of open-access resources into CPRs (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

Is in this way that, members of professional collectives with the capacity for self-governance possess greater flexibility to enhance their working conditions - as well as the CPR conditions-. These individuals can engage in both operational tasks as well as organizational, regulatory, and strategic decision-making processes allowing them to operate at various levels in the system (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021).

In the next paragraphs we will revise some important topics which are part of the core arguments made by Ostrom about governing the commons.

5.3.1 Problem recognition and availability of information

Ostrom emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between appropriation issues and provision issues when examining the problems associated with any common-pool resource. Appropriation problems relate to the flow aspects of the resource, while provision problems pertain to the stock aspects (Raudla, 2010).

Appropriation problems conduct to rent dissipation. Rent dissipation occurs when the marginal returns from an extraction process are less than the marginal costs of that extraction (Ostrom, 1990). When there is overexploitation of the resource by numerous individuals, who are permitted to extract resource units in economically suboptimal quantities, and

when appropriators invest excessively in extraction equipment, the rent dissipates. To address appropriation problems, solutions aim to avoid rent dissipation and minimize uncertainty and conflicts over the allocation of appropriation rights. This involves establishing agreements on the appropriate levels, methods, and distribution of resource extraction among the users (Raudla, 2010).

Provision problems in natural common-pool resources are centered around the creation, preservation, and enhancement of the resource, as well as the prevention of its deterioration. Provision problems can be categorized into two types: supply-side and demand-side issues. Supply-side problems arise from individuals' tendencies to free-ride on the efforts of others in establishing and enhancing the resource. In contrast, demand-side problems stem from excessive extraction activities that undermine the future productivity of the resource (Raudla, 2010).

At the same time, the availability of trustworthy and consistent information regarding the costs and benefits of resource decisions, as well as the ability of individuals to participate in determining the governing rules, are key factors that enhance the likelihood of establishing and maintaining common-pool resources (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

Ostrom emphasizes that providing participants with accurate, reliable information about the resource's state and the anticipated costs and benefits is essential for enabling effective governance of the common-pool resource (Raudla, 2010).

5.3.2 Rules focused on local conditions.

A key insight from the literature on governing the commons is that effective institutional arrangements for managing shared resources are those that not only address the fundamental problems of appropriation and provision but also accounting for the local context and prevailing social norms (Raudla, 2010).

In the absence of rules to regulate access, a common-pool resource becomes an "open access" resource, which is vulnerable to unchecked exploitation that ceases only when the resource is depleted (Acheson, 2011). When a common-pool resource is designated as an open-access resource, with no established rules to regulate access and exploitation, it becomes susceptible to unchecked overuse. Users of an open-access resource do not bear the full costs associated with extracting the resource, leading to a tendency to over-invest in extraction equipment in order to maximize individual gains. Consequently, the lack of rules to control such exploitation can result in the dissipation of the potential benefits derived from the common-pool resource (Acheson, 2011).

Ostrom employs multiple evolutionary frameworks to investigate the emergence and evolution of social norms. One such approach is the indirect evolutionary perspective, which proposes the existence of two distinct behavioral types within a population: conditional cooperators (the ones that follow rules) and rational egoists (who deviate from the communal arrangement) (Acheson, 2011).

In experiments, Ostrom and colleagues found that participants used sanctioning mechanisms to impose fines on those extracting too much from the common-pool resource, even though the standard economic model predicted they would not incur costly punishment. Ostrom summarized additional key findings: cooperation diminished over time in repeated iterations, beliefs about others' contributions affected individual decisions, and the frame of the game influenced cooperation rates (Lopez & Moran, 2016).

In experiments designed for evaluating cooperation in game theory games, Ostrom proved that, when the structure of the game allows it, subjects will expend personal resources to punish those who make below-average contributions to a collective benefit, including the last period of a finitely repeated game (Ostrom, 2000).

In sum, the designed rules must be aligned with and tailored to the specific physical background and community characteristics (Acheson, 2011).

5.3.3 Communication leads to cooperation.

The empirical evidence indicates that individuals confronted with social dilemmas frequently develop credible self-enforcing agreements without relying on external authorities. Appropriators of CPRs have consistently demonstrated their ability to self-organize, establish credible commitments, monitor each other's behavior, and impose sanctions on those who violate their agreements (Ostrom et al., 1992).

To achieve the best outcome for the group, communication is a key element. When individuals have information about each other, those employing a reliable, conditional cooperation strategy will more often obtain higher payoffs, while the rational egoists will consistently receive lower payoffs, as others will be less inclined to trust them. Consequently, conditional cooperators will persist as a significant portion of the population. On the other hand, when conditional cooperators interact with rational egoists, without knowing each other (lack of information and/or communication) the rational egoists tend to prevail (Acheson, 2011). Evolutionary theory suggests that some individuals may have an innate tendency to follow a reciprocal norm and be willing to limit their own use of a common pool resource, as long as nearly all others also reciprocate this behavior (Ostrom, 2000). Knowing each other and interacting becomes a substantial factor for the preservation of CPRs.

As a conclusion of Ostrom's investigation, individuals who possess the belief that others will engage in cooperative conduct in social dilemma situations are more inclined to exhibit cooperative behavior themselves (Ostrom, 2000).

Numerous laboratory experiments have shown that when individuals participating in social dilemmas are permitted to communicate, they consistently achieve outcomes superior to those predicted by noncooperative game theory (Ostrom et al., 1992). Participants in the experiments, conducted by Ostrom and team, overharvested beyond the Nash equilibrium when they were unable to communicate and lacked institutional arrangements (Lopez & Moran, 2016). This equilibrium is reached when there is no deviation from the strategies of the participants due to the absence of incentives, which translates into a win-win for all (Holt

& Roth, 2004). Allowing actors to communicate, even just once, enabled them to avoid the tragedy of the commons (Lopez & Moran, 2016).

Research has also found that enabling face-to-face communication among participants in public goods games, as well as in other social dilemma contexts, leads to substantial improvements in cooperation levels that are sustained across all periods, including the final round of a finite game (Ostrom, 2000).

The level of knowledge collected improves collaboration. As participants become more familiar with the game, generally, they tend to exhibit increased levels of cooperation rather than decreased cooperation. Instead of learning not to cooperate, they acquire the knowledge and skills to cooperate at a moderate level for increasingly longer periods of time (Ostrom, 2000).

It is imperative to manifest that the presence of a key initiator, such as a leader or entrepreneur, who articulates novel organizational approaches to enhance collective outcomes, frequently serves as an important catalyzing factor (Ostrom, 2000).

While these findings regarding the positive impact of communication in controlled settings foster optimism about individuals' abilities to resolve social dilemmas, many real-world self-organized arrangements for managing shared resources rely heavily on internal monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms to maintain cooperation (Ostrom et al., 1992).

5.3.4 Diversity of ideas in a homogeneous population

Elinor Ostrom's research reveals that there is not a single, uniform common-pool resource problem or structure, but rather a diverse array of challenges that appropriators of any common-pool resource must navigate and address (Raudla, 2010). She opposed a "panacea trap" - the idea of a single solution. Instead, Ostrom advocated a "polycentric" approach. Her goal was to develop a broader theory of institutional arrangements for effectively governing and managing common-pool resources (Obeng-Odoom, 2016).

The Ostroms and team researched political and economic governance through polycentric systems. As Vincent Ostrom explained, the concept of polycentricity refers to a system with multiple, formally independent centers of decision-making (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014). Polycentric analysis offers the flexibility to account for the diverse range of formal, informal, governmental, and non-governmental stakeholders whose effect on CPR management can vary based on the particular governance approaches utilized (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

Distinct types of resources tend to associate with diverse governance tendencies. The attributes of the resource, the social dynamics, and the institutional arrangements in place will all significantly influence patterns of resource sharing, conservation, and distribution (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

At the same time, it is important to consider the homogeneous or heterogeneous composition of the group of resource appropriators when analyzing patterns of resource use and governance (Raudla, 2010). Ostrom's research indicates that communities are more likely to develop successful resource management norms if they are small, homogeneous, have strong social capital and community bonds, high levels of trust, the ability to adapt rules, dependence on the resource, and the capacity to perceive future benefits over fast earnings (low discount rates) (Acheson, 2011).

Ostrom's work has highlighted that a stable community of resource users, with shared history, sustained presence, and involvement, who are dependent on the mutual resource tend to exhibit longer time horizons and lower discount rates, which eases their capacity to devise solutions to the challenges of resource provisioning (Raudla, 2010).

The number of resource appropriators can be a significant factor in understanding patterns of resource use, though the relationship is more complex. While in certain contexts, sustainable governance frameworks may limit the quantity of appropriators, in other cases, increasing the number of participants can aid in maintaining or even expanding the resource pool (Raudla, 2010).

Empirical evidence studied by Elinor Ostrom and reviewed in the lines above demonstrated substantial overuse of a common-pool resource when participants lacked the ability to communicate or impose sanctions. However, altering the game rules significantly impacted the structure and outcomes. Specifically, enabling face-to-face communication, which facilitated agreements, reduced instances of overharvesting. Further, sequentially introducing face-to-face communication, sanctioning capabilities, and agreements regarding future allocations progressively increased cooperation at each stage. Monitoring compliance with rules emerged as a critical factor. Notably, the level of cooperation exceeded what would be expected based on non-cooperative game theory (Acheson, 2011).

Also, the focus on networks and non-governmental stakeholders accentuates the importance of leaders and informal collaborative structures in fostering the necessary conditions for collective action within polycentric resource governance systems (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014).

In addition to establishing a conceptual model, Ostrom also proposed important policy recommendations. Instead of constructing institutions intended to force individuals to act in particular ways, she contended in her Nobel Lecture that it is more advantageous to facilitate the development of institutions that foster and harness the most constructive aspects of human capabilities (Obeng-Odoom, 2016).

5.3.5 Third Way Beyond Dichotomies

According to a traditional view, there are two main types of goods: private and public. This dichotomy sees the market as responsible for providing, producing, and distributing private goods which can be restricted to those who pay for them, and the government must intervene at times to correct market issues. The government is responsible for delivering and allocating public goods, which can be used by those who did not contribute to their production (Laerhoven & Berge, 2011). For a long time, the perceived dichotomy between private and public goods was reflected in the division of academic fields: economists studied private goods, while political scientists examined public goods (Laerhoven & Berge, 2011).

Ostrom challenged the traditional view that the management of common resources is limited to a dichotomy between state control (Leviathan) and privatization. She argued that citizens could consider a third way in which they could work collectively to address their social dilemmas and govern common-pool resources (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021; Herzberg, 2020).

“Governing” revealed a broad range of social institutions that individuals employ to address collective action problems. She introduced the novel possibility of self-governance by resource users. Instead of relying on a central authority, resource users can develop their own rules to limit overexploitation (Herzberg, 2020). A robust body of empirical evidence suggests that government policies can obstruct, rather than enable, the private provision of public goods (Ostrom, 2000).

Therefore, Ostrom's major contribution is establishing that in addition to the institutions of "market" and "state," there exists a third institutional paradigm: the community. Her work contends that goods are not limited to the dichotomous classification of "public" or "private," but can also be "common-pool resources" exhibiting characteristics of both public and private goods, which are not necessarily inherent to either the public or private domain (Obeng-Odoom, 2016).

This alternative way of self-governance is possible through communication and rules followed by the resource users. This broader range of institutional arrangements allow individuals to collaborate in a manner that aligns more with a voluntary, community-driven approach, rather than Hardin's model of authoritative, externally-imposed state control (Herzberg, 2020).

“Governing” suggests a framework of governance founded on the collaborative efforts of individuals working together towards a shared goal (Obeng-Odoom, 2016) which we will explore in more detail in the next section. It is also important to disclose that in Ostrom’s later work she cautions against imposing a single institutional model on all entities, as uniform arrangements may not fit diverse contexts and environments (Raudla, 2010).

5.4 Core Framework: Design Principles

Elinor Ostrom observed that despite the varied institutional arrangements identified in her case studies, there were general patterns that characterized the long-term, sustainable governance of common-pool resources (Herzberg, 2020). The key question Ostrom explored is how people with diverse interests in a shared resource can organize themselves to obtain mutual benefits over time, despite the temptation to avoid responsibilities and act in self-interest (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021).

She referred to these general patterns as the "eight design principles" of successful common-pool resource management (Herzberg, 2020), which are widely recognized as, perhaps, the most prominent concepts derived from Governing the Commons (Acheson, 2011). Under her vision, the success or failure of self-governance and collaborative administration of CPRs rests on these principles (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021), which we will describe in more detail next.

a) Clearly Defined Boundaries: The users who are authorized to withdraw resources from a common-pool resource and the boundaries of the CPR itself (making a well-defined difference with a larger socio-environmental structure) should be clearly defined and locally recognized (Herzberg, 2020; Lorenzen et al., 2022).

b) Congruence between appropriation rules and user obligations with local conditions: Appropriation rules governing the times, locations, extraction methods, and amount of resource units must be tailored to the specific social and environmental conditions faced by each group of collectors and also aligned with the stablished provision rules which demand work, monitoring, materials, and other responsibilities. Costs and benefits are proportionally distributed (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021; Herzberg, 2020).

c) Collective-Choice Arrangements: Most or all of CPR users should be able to participate in creating and modifying the operational rules governing resource extraction and provision, such as the timing, methods, quotas, and labor obligations for harvesting the resource (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021; Herzberg, 2020; Lorenzen et al., 2022).

d) Monitoring: Effective audit and enforcement of the rules is essential. The individuals responsible for monitoring the state of CPR and user behavior should be accountable to the appropriators of the common-pool resource, or they should be the users themselves (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021; Herzberg, 2020; Lorenzen et al., 2022).

e) Graduated Sanctions: CPR users who repeatedly violate the established rules face increasingly severe sanctions. The magnitude of penalties is graduated, starting at a low level but intensifying for continued transgressions or the harshness of the violation. Sanctions must be imposed by the appropriators themselves or by the administrative entities overseeing their collective organizations (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021; Herzberg, 2020; Lorenzen et al., 2022).

f) Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms: Users of a common-pool resources, as well as the administrative entities overseeing their collective efforts, should have prompt and accessible means to address and settle disputes among themselves or between appropriators and their organizations. It must be done at a reasonable cost within their local context (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021; Herzberg, 2020; Lorenzen et al., 2022).

g) Minimal Recognition of Rights to Organize: Users of a common-pool resource should have their right to establish their own institutional arrangements and rules recognized and not obstructed by external governmental entities (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021; Herzberg, 2020; Lorenzen et al., 2022).

h) Nested Enterprises: When a common-pool resource is closely linked to a broader social-ecological system, its governance activities are structured in multiple nested organizational layers. The involvement of diverse entities operating at different scales is essential for effective management (Fernández & Iglesias, 2021; Herzberg, 2020).

In form of a summary with regard to the first five design principles, Elinor Ostrom outlined the following:

> When the users of a resource design their own rules (Design Principle 3) that are enforced by local users or accountable to them (Design Principle 4) using graduated sanctions (Design Principle 5) that define who has rights to withdraw from the resource (Design Principle 1) and that effectively assign costs proportionate to benefits (Design Principle 2), collective action and monitoring problems are solved in a reinforcing manner (Ostrom, 2000).

6 Comparative Analysis

6.1 Blending El Buen Vivir with Ostrom's Governing the Commons

After reviewing the literature concerning both Elinor Ostrom's Governing the Commons and the South American philosophy of El Buen Vivir, we can focus on addressing the research inquiry that is the basis of the present study and allowed us to reach this stage of the analysis.

El Buen Vivir is primarily a philosophical theory based on "millenary" Andean knowledge (Sumak Kawsay/Suma Qamaña) which seeks to make a transformation in current perspective of our society, setting humans at the same level of every living creature of the planet. It is necessary to say that inorganic elements also play a significant role as part of the so-called "Pachamama", nurturing the organic beings. This statement is what experts, revised previously, denominate as biocentric approach, which differs from the anthropocentric vision that characterizes our modern era. We are used to see people above nature, driving public policies, business resolutions or academic work in order to satisfy human needs first.

By changing the stablished mindset towards an environmentally centered, community-oriented underpinning, we argue that human actions, private and public, could be closer to the desired harmony every Buen Vivir scholar described as its end. Following the path of Spanish philosopher Adela Cortina who proposed to reimagine (radically) the social responsibility of companies by "going to the roots" and think about "business ethics" which, as a moral imperative, must take into consideration every stakeholder affected by the practices of the firm, treating them with justice (Cortina, 2005). We agree with Cortina's proposition, but, as she draws from Kantian philosophy, we suggest that Indigenous understandings, specifically El Buen Vivir, should also be studied to reform the ethical foundations of firms, and/or any institution looking to make a contribution to the sustainable development, giving nature intrinsic rights and respect.

Philosophy, and explicitly ethics, is the base for changing the paradigms of organizations towards a sustainable economic development, but theory must be proven in praxis. This is when professor Ostrom enters the picture.

Elinor Ostrom demonstrated empirically that surviving the tragedy of the commons is possible. As a scientific researcher, she devoted decades to the study of communal interactions that achieved (or not) the self-governance of common-pool resources. Also, when referring to climate change, she manifested that it "is a global collective-action problem (but) while many of the effects of climate change are global, the causes of climate change are the actions taken by actors at smaller scales" (Forsyth & Johnson, 2014). Ostrom truly believed what she said in her Nobel Laureate speech, as a way to overcome economic, environmental and social issues, the responsibility and power to make changes must be adopted by the own people, within their community, who is directly benefitted by the richness of a CPR or affected, on the contrary, by its downfall. In her eyes there is no need to wait for a private company to manage the resources and then deliver "charity" to the community or wait for a central government to dictate rules without knowing in first-hand the characteristics of the local society. Certainly, Ostrom didn't think that local communities could manage everything alone, but the need for cooperation and interaction among state officers, private firms and communal representatives is decisive to resolve conflicts (Laerhoven & Berge, 2011) which

is the path for a real polycentric governance system with substantial authority and supervision from local residents that, in the same way, are linked to bigger government institutions (Acheson, 2011).

Is in this sense that we advocate for the integration of these both rich approaches, making a blend between the biocentric and nature's rights promoter ideas from Buen Vivir and the scientific based framework from Ostrom. The two theories have the common ground that local groups have important social capital to be considered in policy making and must be taken seriously and respected, and their complementarity is consistent with transformative sustainability notions such as Degrowth, Biomimicry, Circular Economy or Regenerative Economics, even Corporate Social Responsibility could be reframed if companies see themselves as part of the community (Husted, 2021), envision nature as a living entity, a subject of rights and work together with stakeholders following Ostrom's guidelines backed in case studies and laboratory experiments, but always having in mind that "there are no panaceas" (Ostrom et al., 2007), decisions and rules have to be constantly supervised, measured and modified, if needed, according to the time and context.

In a way to join both theoretical frames we decide to take Professor Ostrom's design principles as a base and nurture her empirical conclusions with the environment-centered conception as an intention to design a new framework: *the biocentric design principles.* This theoretic proposal could contribute to sustainable development theories. Being influenced from the strong, positive and complementary systems of thought, this new structure could accomplish measurable constructive results in the environmental, social and governance goals of diverse institutions and societal groups.

6.2 The Biocentric Design Principles

Lorenzen et al. claimed that in order for a CPR to be properly governed, the design principles of Ostrom must admit the social capital of native individuals, in the form of ancestral

wisdom followed by the institutionalization of the rules created, from the state government in charge. (Lorenzen et al., 2022).

The Biocentric Design Principles are proposed as a form to look for a harmonious interrelation among people and nature, to consciously govern common-pool resources in cooperation with public and private institutions, being constantly aware of the inherent value and innate rights of nature. The framework is described as follows:

a) **Nature-centered defined boundaries:** CPR boundaries and appropriators must be clearly defined, in addition to nature's boundaries which must be taken into consideration in the design of regulations. Private companies and public institutions must be aware and respect boundaries established by communities and be careful to cross any natural limits establishing their actions with an ethical perspective.

   As an example, this mechanism could help to reduce de over-exploitation of Peruvian sea by industrial fleets (Blume, 2024) or the Amazon rainforest product of extensive livestock farming (Lai, 2024). Local population will have the same weight to demand companies and government to abord these issues, establishing quotas and designing strategies to regenerate the loss. Also, stakeholders will perform their activities ethically seeing forests and seas not as unlimited resource providers.

b) **Congruence between rules and obligations with local conditions and nature's rights**: It is essential that actions, rules and obligations find congruence with local context and consider autochthonous wisdom in their design. In addition, environmentally centered ideas must be promoted and adopted.

   As nature is part of the community, restorative processes must be created and investment in new technologies that help to increase efficiency without compromising additional extraction is paramount.

c) **Biocentric Arrangements**: Users of CPRs should be able to participate in the design of the rules concerning the production, extraction and provision activities, in the same way, Nature's rights must be defended. In this sense, as the environment itself cannot communicate using language, part of the stakeholders must speak on behalf of it.

   In the form of assemblies, people, firms and state representatives will discuss the damage that some practices can provoke, and, as a unity, constitute objectives for the protection of the environment. Also, farm animals could have representatives who promote a future transition to more sustainable products and practices that avoid animal exploitation and wildlife loss.

d) **Socio-ecological Monitoring:** Audits of the rules created must think about environmental degradation and cultural heritage depletion to control human behavior. The same ethical procedures should be applied within companies and public institutions.

e) **Holistic Graduated Sanctions**: Sanctions must me established in concordance with the means of the stakeholder who over-appropriate the resources. It is important to design mechanisms to make governments and enterprises also accountable for their actions. In a biocentric and holistic perspective, sanctions could be resolved by making restoration efforts in favor of the environment.

f) **Conflict-Resolution Mechanisms:** Settling disputes should be efficient and cost-effective and always bearing in mind nature's rights as a subject to protect. Local knowledge should be taken into account, because this type of social capital could have worked for long periods of time and private and public organizations could find a way to adapt to them.

g) **Recognition of Rights to Organize:** In this principle Ostrom advocates for minimal recognition of organization, but we appeal for a full recognition to the rights to organize and the rights of nature.

Rights are institutionalized and recognized by public entities. In a biocentric perspective, these institutions will identify the environment and communities as part of a whole where they also participate. This ethical viewpoint should promote laws to protect nature and communities that companies and users must follow. Enterprises, also, won't need the creation of an specific law to recognize native organizations or nature as subjects of rights, if they perform ethically they would pressure state governments to deliver laws to achieve that goal.

h) **Biocentric private and public cooperation**: The "multiple organization layers" as reviewed in a previous section should be complemented with a change of paradigm: the biocentric way of thinking. We believe that growth is important to the development of any society, but there is a need to question the amount of grow that our planet will resist and the current processes to reach the balanced growth the population and the environment need to "live well".

   Transforming our reasoning with the help of ethical insights, making changes "going to the root" as proposed by Adela Cortina, could be the path to achieve the balance that our socio-ecological systems need to endure for future generations, without compromising the fulfillment of human requirements and organizations. The goal is harmony.

6.3 Boundaries of El Buen Vivir and "Governing the Commons"

Both theories, well-intentioned as they are, are not free from being discarded, misunderstood, instrumentalized or wrongly implemented.

El Buen Vivir as a philosophical paradigm faces the instrumentalization threat. The concept was used by political leaders and parties in Bolivia and Ecuador to make their campaigns

popular and give the image of concern about Indigenous living cultures and the environment, it was commodified as a mean to reach governmental power. Despite the fact, the rights of nature were placed in Ecuador's Constitution, extractivist policies never ceased to increase pollution and ecological degradation which is a factual contradiction between the core ideas of the philosophy and its implementation (Carpio & Ullán, 2021; Gudynas, 2016). The picture was very similar in Bolivia, where the state promoted large-scale resource extraction projects in Indigenous land, giving more emphasis to their dependency to hydrocarbons and mining industries, which is the contrary of looking for harmony with nature (Salazar, 2015; D. van Norren, 2017). Both cases are example that policy reality is hard to overcome, that is why that the transformation must be pursued by changing our ethical foundations.

El Buen Vivir is also a non-unified philosophy which is in constant construction (Husted, 2021; Ranta, 2018). Misunderstanding the ideas or softening its principles could put in danger the goals that need to be achieved. To overcome this limitation, we can use Ostrom's own proposal to stimulate El Buen Vivir inclusion as part of sustainability science, integrating different disciplines, within the social and natural sciences, to elaborate academic work that will conduct to the maturity of the environmental science itself towards an applied science that delivers analytics and diagnostics (Ostrom et al., 2007).

On the other hand, Ostrom was also criticized because her work and findings centered in "small, stable and relatively homogenous in population" commons (Herzberg, 2020) which didn't prove the scalability of her theory to larger domains. In this sense, El Buen Vivir reached the pinnacle of Ecuadorian nation, introducing the idea into their bill of rights, but failed in its application. The knowledge of Ostrom's framework could have helped Ecuadorian authorities to discuss and elaborate policies backed in empirical research, and could have proved that "Governing" is scalable to an entire state.

Obeng-Odoom (2016) also criticizes that Ostrom's theory does not concern about social improvement and justice application, leaving outside of the picture any stakeholder who is

no part of the limits within the CPR (Obeng-Odoom, 2016). In this case, is one of the intentions of this Master Thesis to integrate El Buen Vivir conceptions to Ostrom's investigation, giving a philosophical background that seeks for biocentrism and respect, to the practical premises of "Governing the Commons".

Ostrom was a great adversary of "panacea" theories that intended to look for a single solution to CPR problems, the same way as many state leaders promote, but she also stood against assuring that local administration must be the final solution (Acheson, 2011). Even thought her affirmations, she decided to design her Principles framework as a way to give guidance to diverse stakeholder, but it was criticized by Agrawal and Ribot (2014) because of their generality which made difficult for policy makers to elaborate proper solutions for communal issues (Herzberg, 2020).

7 Conclusion

El Buen Vivir and Ostrom's Governing the Commons are complementary concepts that help to increase the sustainable development theories by blending the philosophical foundations of Buen Vivir, which focus on harmony with nature, community and biocentrism, with the empirical investigation and conclusions of Elinor Ostrom, based on academic knowledge, study of cases and laboratory experiments.

The integration of both theories allowed us to modify the Design Principles proposed by Ostrom, including the powerful idea of socio-ecological harmony, where "Pachamama" or Planet Earth is subject of rights and must be though not as unlimited source of resources, but as an entity that deserves respect and protection.

The Biocentric Design Principles can be used as a start point for communities, government officials and private organizations executives and workers to guide themselves to reach the environmental objectives of a sustainable economy, taking care of future generations and nature as an ultimate goal.

8 Limitation of the Study

The present thesis was elaborated following a clear systematic bibliography review which translated to conclusions and a framework design to increment the knowledge of current sustainable development paradigms and to contribute to improve the sustainable economic objectives. Even though the intention of this work, it is limited to a theoretical background, further practical studies must be completed in order to prove its applicability in real cases.

9 Bibliography

Acheson, J. M. (2011). Ostrom for anthropologists. *International Journal of the Commons*, *5*(2), 319–339. JSTOR.

Acosta, A., & Martínez, E. (Eds.). (2009). *El buen vivir: Una vía para el desarrollo* (1. ed). Abya-Yala.

Anastasopoulos, N. (2019). Buen Vivir, sostenibilidad y bienes comunes: El contexto ecuatoriano y mundial. *Estado & Comunes, Revista de Políticas y Problemas Públicos*, *1*(4). https://doi.org/10.37228/estado_comunes.v1.n4.2017.37

Apaza Huanca, Y. K. (2019). Non-Western Epistemology and the Understanding of the Pachamama (Environment) Within the World(s) of the Aymara Identity. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, *8*(3), 6–22. https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcjsd.v8i3.1241

Ashrafi, M., Magnan, G. M., Adams, M., & Walker, T. R. (2020). Understanding the Conceptual Evolutionary Path and Theoretical Underpinnings of Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Sustainability. *Sustainability*, *12*(3), 760. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12030760

Ashwath, M. (2021). Biomimetics: An Approach to Enhance Sustainability - An Overview. *International Journal for Research in Applied Science and Engineering Technology*, *9*(VII), 2760–2770. https://doi.org/10.22214/ijraset.2021.36947

Balch, O. (2013, February 4). Buen vivir: The social philosophy inspiring movements in South America. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/blog/buen-vivir-philosophy-south-america-eduardo-gudynas

Barnett, M. L., Henriques, I., & Husted, B. W. (2020). Beyond Good Intentions: Designing CSR Initiatives for Greater Social Impact. *Journal of Management*, *46*(6), 937–964. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206319900539

Becker, C. U. (2023). Ethical underpinnings for the economy of the Anthropocene: Sustainability ethics as key to a sustainable economy. *Ecological Economics*, *211*, 107868. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2023.107868

Blume, P. D. V. (2024, October 8). *Crisis pesquera: Flota china sigue desafiando regulaciones peruanas y genera alarma en el sector artesanal*. infobae. https://www.infobae.com/peru/2024/10/08/crisis-pesquera-flota-china-sigue-desafiando-regulaciones-peruanas-y-genera-alarma-en-el-sector-artesanal/

Booth, A., Sutton, A., & Papaioannou, D. (2016). *Systematic approaches to a successful literature review* (Second edition). SAGE.

Brand-Correa, L., Brook, A., Büchs, M., Meier, P., Naik, Y., & O'Neill, D. W. (2022). Economics for people and planet—Moving beyond the neoclassical paradigm. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, *6*(4), e371–e379. https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(22)00063-8

Burck, C. (2005). Comparing qualitative research methodologies for systemic research: The use of grounded theory, discourse analysis and narrative analysis. *Journal of Family Therapy*, *27*(3), 237–262. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6427.2005.00314.x

Carpio, P., & Ullán, F. (2021). The institutionalized Buen Vivir: A new hegemonic political paradigm for Ecuador. *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, *64*(1), e001. https://doi.org/10.1590/0034-7329202100101

Cohen, S. I. (2023). Social System Historical Modeling of Western Economies and its Implications for Eastern Economies. *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, *16*(3), 259–292. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40647-023-00371-3

Cortina, A. (2005, August 19). Ética de la empresa, no sólo responsabilidad social. *El País*. https://elpais.com/diario/2005/08/20/opinion/1124488806_850215.html

De Angelis, R., & Ianulardo, G. (2024). Circular economy principles as a basis for a sustainability management theory: A systems thinking and moral imagination approach. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, *33*(5), 4861–4870. https://doi.org/10.1002/bse.3730

Deksne, J. (2024). Circular Economy as a Tool for Sustainable Development: A Theoretical Perspective. *ENVIRONMENT. TECHNOLOGIES. RESOURCES. Proceedings of the International Scientific and Practical Conference*, *1*, 102–110.

Di Salvia, D. (2013). La Pachamama en la época incaica y post-incaica: Una visión andina a partir de las crónicas peruanas coloniales (siglos XVI-XVII). *Revista Española de Antropología Americana*, *43*(1), 89–110. https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_REAA.2013.v43.n1.42302

Econation. (n.d.). *Sustainable Economy | What is a sustainable economy*. Econation. Retrieved 8 July 2024, from https://econation.one/sustainable-economy/

Fernández, M., & Iglesias, T. (2021). Análisis de las agrupaciones de mariscadores/as a pie en Galicia (España) a partir e la teoría del gobierno de los bienes comunes de Elinor Östrom. *Teknokultura. Revista de Cultura Digital y Movimientos Sociales*, *19*(1), 89–97. https://doi.org/10.5209/tekn.77934

Forsyth, T., & Johnson, C. (2014). Elinor Ostrom's Legacy: Governing the Commons and the Rational Choice Controversy. *Development and Change*, *45*(5), 1093–1110. https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12110

Gudynas, E. (2011). Buen Vivir: Today's tomorrow. *Development*, *54*(4), 441–447. https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2011.86

Gudynas, E. (2016). Beyond varieties of development: Disputes and alternatives. *Third World Quarterly*, *37*(4), 721–732. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1126504

Herzberg, R. Q. (2020). Elinor Ostrom's Governing the Commons. *The Independent Review*, *24*(4), 627–636. JSTOR.

Holt, C. A., & Roth, A. E. (2004). The Nash equilibrium: A perspective. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *101*(12), 3999–4002. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0308738101

Husted, B. W. (2021). Buen Vivir: A Path to Reimagining Corporate Social Responsibility in Mexico after COVID-19. *Sustainability*, *13*(11), 6451. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116451

Ilieva, L., Ursano, I., Traista, L., Hoffmann, B., & Dahy, H. (2022). Biomimicry as a Sustainable Design Methodology—Introducing the 'Biomimicry for Sustainability' Framework. *Biomimetics*, *7*(2), 37. https://doi.org/10.3390/biomimetics7020037

Indiana University. (n.d.). *Honoring Elinor Ostrom, the first woman to win a Nobel in Economic Sciences*. Ostrom Workshop. Retrieved 4 December 2024, from https://ostromworkshop.indiana.edu/about/ostroms-history/nobel-prize/index.html

Islar, M., Koch, M., Raphael, R., & Paulsson, A. (2024). Degrowth: A path to transformative solutions for socio-ecological sustainability. *Global Sustainability*, *7*, e20. https://doi.org/10.1017/sus.2024.13

Jamal, A. C., & Gordon, R. (2024). Grappling with governance: Emerging approaches to build community economies. *Journal of Rural Studies*, *107*, 103242. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2024.103242

Laerhoven, F. van, & Berge, E. (2011). Editorial: The 20th anniversary of Elinor Ostrom's Governing the Commons. *International Journal of the Commons*, *5*(1), 1–8.

Lai, O. (2024, February 20). *11 Amazon Rainforest Deforestation Facts to Know About*. Earth.Org. https://earth.org/amazon-rainforest-deforestation-facts/

Lopez, M. C., & Moran, E. F. (2016). The legacy of Elinor Ostrom and its relevance to issues of forest conservation. *Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability*, *19*, 47–56. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cosust.2015.12.001

Lorenzen, M., Orozco-Ramírez, Q., Ramírez-Santiago, R., & Garza, G. G. (2022). Governing the commons in Mexico's Mixteca Alta: Linking Ostrom's design principles and comunalidad. *Forest Policy and Economics*, *145*, 102862. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2022.102862

Maldonado-Torres, N. (2011). Enrique Dussel's Liberation Thought in the Decolonial Turn. *TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.5070/T411000003

Mengist, W., Soromessa, T., & Legese, G. (2020). Method for conducting systematic literature review and meta-analysis for environmental science research. *MethodsX*, *7*, 100777. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2019.100777

Monni, S., & Pallottino, M. (2015). Beyond growth and development: Buen vivir as an alternative to current paradigms. *International Journal of Environmental Policy and Decision Making*, *1*(3), 184. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJEPDM.2015.074300

Nesterova, I. (2022). Degrowth Perspective for Sustainability in Built Environments. *Encyclopedia*, *2*(1), 466–472. https://doi.org/10.3390/encyclopedia2010029

Obeng-Odoom, F. (2016). The Meaning, Prospects, and Future of the Commons: Revisiting the Legacies of Elinor Ostrom and Henry George. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, *75*(2), 372–414. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajes.12144

Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (1st ed.). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511807763

Ostrom, E. (2000). Collective Action and the Evolution of Social Norms. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *14*(3), 137–158. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.14.3.137

Ostrom, E. (2009). A General Framework for Analyzing Sustainability of Social-Ecological Systems. *Science*, *325*(5939), 419–422. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1172133

Ostrom, E., Janssen, M. A., & Anderies, J. M. (2007). Going beyond panaceas. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *104*(39), 15176–15178. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0701886104

Ostrom, E., Walker, J., & Gardner, R. (1992). Covenants with and without a Sword: Self-Governance Is Possible. *American Political Science Review*, *86*(2), 404–417. https://doi.org/10.2307/1964229

Páez, M. C., Marinangeli, G. A., Maidana, C., & Plastiné Pujadas, I. G. (2023). La Pachamama, memorias de un tiempo pasado y rituales vigentes en el Valle Calchaquí Norte (Salta, Argentina). *RUNA, Archivo Para Las Ciencias Del Hombre*, *44*(1), 91–107. https://doi.org/10.34096/runa.v44i1.11324

Popay, J., Roberts, H., Sowden, A., Petticrew, M., Arai, L., Rodgers, M., Britten, N., Roen, K., & Duffy, S. (2006). *Guidance on the conduct of narrative synthesis in systematic reviews: A product from the ESRC Methods Programme*. Lancaster University. https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.1018.4643

Poznański, K. (2018). Confucianism as moral economy. *Człowiek i Społeczeństwo*, *46*. https://doi.org/10.14746/cis.2018.46.2

Ranta, E. (2018). *Vivir Bien as an Alternative to Neoliberal Globalization: Can Indigenous Terminologies Decolonize the State?* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315180441

Raudla, R. (2010). Governing budgetary commons: What can we learn from Elinor Ostrom? *European Journal of Law and Economics*, *30*(3), 201–221. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10657-010-9187-6

Salazar, J. F. (2015, July 24). *Buen Vivir: South America's rethinking of the future we want*. The Conversation. http://theconversation.com/buen-vivir-south-americas-rethinking-of-the-future-we-want-44507

Shannon, G., Issa, R., Wood, C., & Kelman, I. (2022). Regenerative economics for planetary health: A scoping review: RESEARCH PAPER. *International Health Trends and Perspectives*, *2*(3), 81–105. https://doi.org/10.32920/ihtp.v2i3.1704

Tertulia Andina Coffee. (2021, July 29). A Brief History of Buen Vivir or Buenos Vivires. *Tertulia Andina Coffee*. https://tertuliaandinacoffee.com/history-of-buen-vivir-or-buenos-vivires/

van Norren, D. (2017). *DEVELOPMENT AS SERVICE A Happiness, Ubuntu and Buen Vivir interdisciplinary view of the Sustainable Development Goals* [Tilburg University]. https://research.tilburguniversity.edu/en/publications/development-as-service-a-happiness-ubuntu-and-buen-vivir-interdis

van Norren, D. E. (2020). The Sustainable Development Goals viewed through Gross National Happiness, Ubuntu, and Buen Vivir. *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, *20*(3), 431–458. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10784-020-09487-3

Vanhulst, J. (2015). El laberinto de los discursos del Buen vivir: Entre Sumak Kawsay y Socialismo del siglo XXI. *Polis (Santiago)*, *14*(40), 233–261. https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-65682015000100012

Waldmüller, J. M. (2014). Buen Vivir, Sumak Kawsay, 'Good Living': An Introduction and Overview. *Alternautas*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.31273/alternautas.v1i1.989

Zahedi, S. (2019). Sustainable Development Theory: A Critical Perspective and an Integrative Model. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*. https://doi.org/10.7176/JESD/10-21-05

List of Aids and Tools

The following aids were used:

Aids and Tools	Usage	Affected Parts
Ms Word	Spelling correction	Entire Document
Google Translate / Jenni.AI	Translation of text passages	Entire Document
ChatGTP	Chapter structure	Outline
Jenni.AI	Wording aid	Sections 1 to 5
Elicit.com	Literature review aid	Entire Document
Zotero	Citations and Bibliography management	Entire Document

FFHS
Swiss Distance University of Applied Sciences
Member of SUPSI

Scuola universitaria professionale della Svizzera italiana
SUPSI

Declaration of Independence and Consent

By submitting this thesis, I hereby confirm that:

- I have written the present scientific work entitled

  " Towards a Sustainable Economy: Comparison and Integration of El Buen Vivir and Elinor Ostrom's Governing the Commons "

  independently,

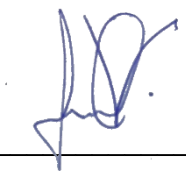
- I have clearly marked all text passages taken verbatim and in spirit from external sources and not used any sources other than these,
- I have precisely declared all parts of the thesis produced with aids and tools,
- I have not used any aids other than those listed in the list of aids and tools,
- the topic, the thesis or parts thereof have not already been the subject of a graded assignment in another modules, unless this has been expressly agreed in advance with the study programme management, and that I have not submitted the thesis to another university,

I am aware that the Swiss Distance Learning University (FFHS) is otherwise entitled to withdraw the title awarded to me on the basis of this thesis.

I agree that my work will be electronically checked for plagiarism and for third-party authorship of human or technical origin.

I further agree that the Distance Learning University of Applied Sciences Switzerland (FFHS) fulfills its obligation as a member of SUPSI and makes this scientific work publicly viewable (Open Access), unless it has been declared as confidential work.

Lima, Perú. 10/01/2015.



Place, date, signature.