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DOSSIER

EDUCATION FOR A GOOD LIFE: TRACING HOW SUMAK KAWSAY AND SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY BECAME IDEALS FOR LIVING WELL

EDUCACIÓN PARA UNA BUENA VIDA: RASTREANDO CÓMO SUMAK KAWSAY Y LA SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY SE CONVIRTIERON EN IDEALES PARA VIVIR BIEN

Gioconda Coello

University of Wisconsin-Madison
gcoello@wisc.edu

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RESUMEN: Tanto Sumak Kawsay (SK) en Ecuador como Sufficiency Economy (SE) en Tailandia son historias de virtud, identidad y progreso que generan un ideal de ciudadano y de estilo de vida propuesto como bueno para todos pero que en realidad es problemático para muchos. Estas nociones surgieron en discursos políticos y educativos como promesa de “rescatar” valores “indígenas” más adecuados para el respectivo país que los propuestos por nociones “occidentales” de bienestar. Es problemático que en el intento de crear “progreso local/indígena” para un vivir “bien” estas propuestas (re)inscriben particulares ideas históricamente transmitidas de quién es un ciudadano ideal y cuál un estilo de vida ideal, que acaba por crear “tipos humanos” desviados de la norma y que deben ser “curados” a través de la educación. Aquí se argumenta que SK y SE dentro del campo de la educación organizan el comportamiento de la gente a través de historias de virtud. También se argumenta que estas historias transforman y son transformadas en la intersección con ideas de progreso que viajan y pasan por un proceso de traducción. Una mirada a ciertos momentos históricos permitirá analizar las categorías y nociones de progreso que han hecho posibles a SK y SE.

Palabras clave: viaje del progreso; ciudadanía; gobernanza de la diferencia; historias de virtud; buena vida.

ABSTRACT: Both Sumak Kawsay (SK) in Ecuador and Sufficiency Economy (SE) in Thailand are stories of virtue, identity and progress that bring about an ideal citizen and lifestyle claimed to be good for all, but which are in fact problematic and dangerous for many. These notions arose in political and educational discourses as a promise to “rescue” “indigenous” values; to make possible ways of good-living better suited for each of these countries than “Western” notions of well-being. It is problematic that in trying to make the idea of progress “indigenous” these proposals (re)inscribe particular historically transmitted ideas of who an ideal citizen is, and a lifestyle which makes deviant “kinds” of people who have to be “cured” through education. This paper will argue that SK and SE in education are ways of organizing the behavior of people through stories of virtue. It will also argue that these stories shape and are shaped by their intersection with the traveling and translation of ideas of progress. The paper will look into particular historical events to analyze what categories and notions of progress make SK and SE possible.

Keywords: Travel of progress, citizenship, governance of difference, stories of virtue, good life.

I. Introduction

Ecuador and Thailand have called the attention of international organizations and scholars around the world through their proposals of alternative development. Both Sumak Kawsay (SK) in Ecuador and Sufficiency Economy (SE) in Thailand are stories of virtue, identity and progress that bring about an ideal citizen and lifestyle claimed to be good for all but which in fact are problematic and dangerous for many. SK and SE have been praised as valuable alternatives for education as part of sustainability and/or intercultural education. Both are proposals to incorporate the “wisdom” of the “ancestors” into a “modern” way of life seeking an “indigenous” or “local” form of progress. These proposals were, and in many ways still are, thought of as a call for questioning the kind of life that so called “developed” countries had offered as a good life. Thus, the promise of SK and SE was to “rescue” “indigenous” values that made possible ways of good-living better suited for each of these countries than “Western” notions of well-being. Within education, it is problematic that in trying to make “local/indigenous” “progress” for a

“good-life” these proposals (re)inscribe particular historically transmitted ideas of who an ideal citizen is, and a lifestyle which makes deviant “kinds” of people who have to be “cured” through education. This paper will argue that SK and SE in education are ways of organizing the behavior of people through stories of virtue. It will also argue that these stories shape and are shaped by the traveling and translation of ideas of progress. The paper will look into particular historical events to analyze the categories and notions of progress that make SK and SE possible. The study draws on Ian Hackings and Thomas Popkewitz’s ideas of the fabrication of “human kinds” and cultural theses about modes of living. It also draws on Said’s traveling theory and Ji-Hye Kim’s ideas of traveling as translation. This paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of how SK and SE became possible as ways of living-well that must be embraced and learned and that are assumed to be good for “all”.

Thailand and Ecuador have moments of similitude in what is mostly a quite different history, geography, religious and cultural background. The moments of similitude have to do with the connections of these places and their people to Christian and science narratives more intensely assembled (and lingering) on what is now known as Europe and the United States. These connections have generated a number of reactions in terms of relationships to a particular epistemological mapping of the world that has come to be called “global.” For example, these relationships produced the categorization of both countries as “third world” and later “underdeveloped” or “developing” countries. They also produced the characterization of colonized or indirectly-colonized that speak of the great influence in the history, politics, economics, religious orientations and “modernizations” of these two countries. In SK and SE within education, these connections have fabricated ideal citizens that respond to desires of being developed and developed otherwise which have caught the attention of many policy makers and intellectuals around the world.

These two countries have been selected because both are considered to have produced exemplar responses to “Western development.” The analysis through parallels between these countries attempts to make evident the multiplicities within the idea of alternative development in education. This is, to show the number of lines of thought, histories and social concerns that connect and disconnect leading to the emergence of similar theories in similar time periods that are indirectly in conversation with each other and are however particular to a place. This paper shows that the discourses of SK and SE are much more than a response to the “West.” They are part of the flows of ideas, beyond national borders, that make “Western” development

and “its alternatives” possible. Simultaneously they are re-articulations of the historical social questions of a place which intersect with notions of human and socioeconomic development.

1.1. About Sumak Kawsay and Sufficiency Economy

This paper does not assume that SK and SE have a single meaning. Both notions have gone through many interpretations and transformations as they have been taken by different groups of people. For this reason, the questions and analysis pursued here are related mainly to the governmental use of these proposals in education as the importance and resonance that these proposals have come to have, nationally and internationally, has been amplified by the fact that they are part of the constitution of their respective countries and in terms of education part of the national curriculum. Moreover, this work does not criticize the inputs that Kichwa or Buddhist thought have to offer to try to think education differently. It does want to make visible that SK and SE add Kichwa and Buddhist language to ongoing ideas of hierarchy within their respective societies and to developmental logics that are not new.

The approximations to the notions of SK and SE in this section are not fixed definitions but cuts of the stream of ideas articulated within SK and SE. These cuts are to allow the reader to have in mind a working idea upon which build a conversation with the text. This is to say that the introduction of how certain governmental institutions define SK and SE points towards an underlying logic. Both cuts are made in the simpler possible expression concerned with the argument of this paper and are briefly situated in the moment of their emergence in official discourses.

In Ecuador, Sumak Kawsay talks about achieving a good-life building on “ancestral” Andean wisdom. This life is characterized by achieving harmony among humans and between them and nature. The former national secretariat of *Buen Vivir* conceives it thus:

Good Living gathers the thought and wisdom of many ancestral groups of people from [the continent of] America. In the Andean countries, the term is used as among Kichwa people who speak of Sumak Kawsay (...). In its original meaning, Sumak refers to the ideal and beautiful fulfillment of the planet, while Kawsay means a dignified life lived in plenitude. In this conception, life is the center of

everything and a relationship of harmony between human and nature must be maintained. (Ecuador's Buen Vivir National Secretariat, 2015)

After 2006 *Sumak Kawsay* was conceptualized as an alternative to a neo-liberal state and ideas of development and a change after heavy economic and social crisis. The 1980's brought structural adjustment policies that were followed by privatization of public goods, high inflation, reduction of income and high migration to Europe and the United States. In the late 1990s and early 2000s dollarization forced millions of Ecuadorians into poverty and by 2005 three presidents had been deposed, all of them with charges of corruption (Ayala-Mora, 2013; idem, 2008, pp. 50-60; Becker, 2011, pp. 83-105). *Sumak Kawsay* then was proposed as the spirit for "civilizational change" by the political left in the elections of 2006.

After Rafael Correa, candidate of the party Alianza País, had a landslide victory, its political project 'the revolution of the citizen' started by calling to a constituent assembly. In this Assembly *Sumak Kawsay*, as interpreted by this party, became an important element of the new political constitution and, later, of governmental planning and the national curriculum.

In a similar way Sufficiency Economy became part of the political discourses in Thailand after the 1997 economic crisis and it is a concept considered to stem from Thai Buddhist traditional teachings. SE speaks of knowing how to live wisely with contempt and moderation. It is said to be that:

a philosophy that stresses *the middle path* [emphasis as in the original text] as an overriding principle for appropriate conduct by the populace at all levels. This applies to conduct starting from the level of the families, communities, as well as the level of nation in development and administration so as to modernize in line with the forces of globalization. (Thailand's National Economic and Social Development Board, 2008)

The core of the theory is knowing how much is not too much or too little to remind one of the importance of cultivating the middle path in every instance of life. The middle path is an eightfold ethical guide towards the liberation from suffering or the achievement of nirvana taught by the Buddha after his enlightenment. Within SE, the middle path functions as a way to govern one's own life. By knowing what it is one really needs, one avoids buying into consumerism and attains contentment and happiness. As such, and in the context of the crisis, SE explained that economic problems follow from

a lack of knowing how to live responsibly and how to take care of oneself by taking care of the resources available for oneself and hence, taking care of the nation.

There are two moments that highlight two important aspects of SE. First, the economic crisis of the late 1990s and, second the coup of 2006. In 1997, after the Asian financial crisis, King Bhumibol in his birthday speech called for returning to “an economy where people are self-reliant and have an adequate livelihood for themselves” (King Bhumibol’s speech in Grossman, 2016, p. 34). The proposal was to strengthen rural economies with ‘traditional’ ways of managing and investing in the land. In this view the rural life of the past was portrayed as prosperous and happy due to the virtuosity and wisdom of kings and also of the people. The project did not last long under these terms but has transformed over time in ways to think about alternative economies and sustainable development. In 2006, SE was used in the discourses that justified the deposition of the president at the time –Thaksin Sinawatra– and established a military coup (November, 2011). Contentment and moderation were framed as essential virtues for the well-being of Thailand that the president did not have and thus could not foster. Moderation and contentment were taken from Buddhist notions of avoiding suffering and made travel to become a way of thinking about Thai virtues for sustainable development.

Both SK and SE narratives have been criticized for relying on romanticized historical accounts and for failing to articulate any coherent system of thought (Dominguez *et al.*, 2017; Bowie, 1992). However, here I will argue that they are not just empty myths nor simply invented traditions, but a construction under the logic of certain cultural understandings and particular readings, on the one case of Buddhist virtue and on the other of the indigenous knowledge. These understandings normalize ideas of how people that are born into particular social groups and geographies ought to be and live and makes it possible to think of SK and SE as stemming from traditional and ancient wisdom.

II. Making “kinds of people”

Both, SK and SE have entered the national curriculum of Ecuador and Thailand respectively as values that are supposed to foster and enact ‘ancestral’ ways of living a good life. From a historical perspective, SK depends on a romantic construction of the Andean *indígena* life as inspiration for the desired good life, and SE depends on the construction of Buddhism as

“indigenous” to claim a life guided by Buddhist values as the desired good life. Through promoting these desires for the nation and all its inhabitants, an ideal person able to lead such life is constructed. These *kinds* of people are, as Popkewitz (2013) says, a fiction. Fictions “provide a way to talk about and interpret things that are happening in the [ontic] world.” The fiction of the *indígena* or the cultural Thai (who embodies “thainess”) as a category is what Hackings (1995) calls ‘human kind’. The ‘desirable’ kinds exist only in relation with the “undesirable”. He describes human kinds as the “product of a particular view” of humans produced by knowledge. These views are formed in two axes: natural and moral. He focuses on narratives that science opens to talk about, classify and know deviant groups. However, desirable/undesirable do not exist independently of each other. For this reason, I will use this approach to talk about the “deviant” and the “virtuous” as I believe that both match Hackings criteria for identifying human kinds: they are relevant today, they are peculiar to people, more knowledge about them is wanted and produced, they are projected onto people.

Human kinds grow together with the knowledge that describes, makes generalizations and forms expectations about them. When a human kind is created, the members of the group on which the kind is projected can either embody the category or refuse to. Either way, over time they both internalize and change the category or some part of its definition. This in turn modifies the knowledge about the kind, providing more narratives and avenues for it to either internalize or reject new descriptions and change again. Hackings call this the looping effect. In talking about the *indígena* as a fiction, the focus will be in relation to a tacit subject that inscribes the condition of the ‘other’ to the *indígena* and in the looping effects that led the category to change over time. The intention here being to better understand how a ‘deviant’ human kind and its abject lifestyle became the source of a beautiful good life for *all*. Talking about Thai and thainess, the focus will be to see them as parts of the same ‘virtuous fiction’ that everyone should aspire to, but not everyone can achieve. The fictions will be searched for in the events and discourses that produced Thai as the virtuous kind (good citizen) whose lifestyle is described and expected to be developed by SE (good life).

The next section will give a general sense of significant historical events that created the categories that make SK and SE possible.

II.1 Historizing the making of the ideal citizen in Sumak Kawsay and Sufficiency Economy

Both SK and SE claim to make people move away from “Western” development and turn to their roots to re-think how life should be lived and how to achieve a more suitable progress. As stated before SK and SE (re) inscribe particular historically transmitted ideas of who an ideal citizen is, and a lifestyle which makes deviant ‘kinds’ of people who have to be ‘improved’ through education. There are at least two ways in which this happens, first, these proposals claim to trace a root to ancestors and recover traditional knowledge to achieve the desired life/person who lives that kind of life. In so doing they include particular groups and exclude other groups of people. Second, they intertwine the ideas of ancestors and roots with notions of development restating in this way, not only the things they are supposed to be thinking outside of (development), but also restating historical ideas and power dynamics that define who is (under)developed and what is the life people should aspire to. This section will explore the first way, the making of the ideal citizen.

In SK is important to ask what does it mean that the *indígena* is the ancestor and s/he has ancestral knowledge to be passed on? How did that idea become possible as a governmental discourse? The first obvious thought is that the discourse of the *indígena* ancestor would not work because there is not one *indígena* group of people in Ecuador, there are many, and among groups and within them there are different ideas about what a good life is and how to lead it. However, if we historicize the categories that this good life relies on, and using Ian Hacking’s language, the kinds of people they made, we see that the people inhabiting what today is Ecuador have affected one another and their thought within certain relations which have shaped what can be thought as *indígena*, good life, and alternative lifestyle. Trying to “get back” to the “ancestral” knowledge is a problematic claim because it relies on the idea of distinct groups of people with clear boundaries in their history, thought, and way of being, and in categories that ultimately can be traced to a colonial encounter.

The category of the *indio/indígena* of course has changed and been mobilized in different ways since it emerged but it is still weaved into the power relationships of Ecuador’s society to name a kind of person that needs to change to be fully included in society. For example, in the 1920s the fiction of the peasant *indio* became stronger when the *indigenistas* (mostly anthropologists, medics and sociologists) biologized and psychologized the *indio*. This group of scholars, in their effort to redeem the kind, accentuated their difference and reinforced their abjection (Clark, 1999, p. 123). Several characteristics were attributed to the *indio*. They were passive, so involved with nature that they had forgotten how to relate in society and become

“vegetative” (Clark, 1999, p. 115). Their psychology was not individual but communitarian or collective due to their culture and biology. *Indigenistas* argued the *indio* needed help because their lifestyle did not allow them to speak for themselves as they lacked education and the right intellectual tools to do so (Clark, 1999; Quiroga, 1999).

In response to these discourses – *they* were poor peasants, ignorant, could not efficiently take care of themselves, the *indio* as an administrative, biological and psychological kind migrates also to what Hackings calls a self-ascriptive kind. Those who were targets of measurement and description identified themselves with the kind to become the knowers too (Hackings, 1999, pp. 380-381). For example, in 1973, ECUARUNARI was funded as the first *indigenous* national organization. This organization’s agenda is until today fighting against racism, gaining greater political autonomy, and demanding historical rights. In the late 1970s after many *levantamientos* (uprisings) by *indígena* movements the *indígenas* are recognized as citizens of the country. The *levantamientos* of the 1990s is perhaps the clearest point where the ideas of a life “vegetative, poor, ignorant,” change in official discourses into an alternative lifestyle in harmony with nature and contempt which, in the last decade, is described as wise, ancestral, beautiful good life. Nevertheless, the categories of people SK relies upon and how these are talked about within SK places the *indígenas*, their lifestyle and knowledge in a time-line where the *indígena* is again at the bottom/past while an unnamed “we” is at the top/future. As long as this staircase, or the idea of going back to find our past wisdom in the *indígena* is there, there is not a real effort to think differently or outside of developmental logics. Moreover, there is not an acknowledgement of the multiple modernities from which it would be possible to enrich the way of thinking about a good life in education and other subjects.

Something similar happens with SE in so far as it makes virtue to be measured by thainess and a particular knowledge and lifestyle are produced as traditional wisdom and good life. SE relies in at least one major assumption which has to do with the possibility of defining what is enough under a same worldview. This is, it is assumed that every person in Thailand is Thai and participates of the same kind of belonging to the “Thai nation” and “Thai Buddhist” ideas. However, Thai is not simply a nationality, it is a category historically related to a “cultured” group of people from the lowlands that was opposed to the “uncultured” people from the hills and opposed to other groups of people like Malay, Lao, Khmer, which are also categories with longer histories than nations. Thailand’s border over time has crossed

several groups of people and has even become part of their own body.¹ In consequence not everyone in what is now Thailand is considered to be Thai either by the state, society or themselves.

The notion of the Thai person tied to Buddhism and to citizenship and belonging to a national territory, is an invention of the 1900s (Renard, 2006), which applies only to some people born in Thailand until today. In the 1900s, King Vajiravudh discursively made of Thai a race and a nationality *chat Thai*. In his discourses, he used the word Thai (formerly just used for the language of a *tai* ethnicity) to refer to people, and *chat* a word derived from *jati*, Sanskrit for “birth” and caste, to refer to nationality (Turton, 2012, p. 78). With that one move the King merged a certain kind of people and culture with the idea of belonging and citizenship by (re)birth.² In this way saying that Buddhism is an ancestral wisdom to guide the proper way of living and behaving for everyone born in Thailand restates ongoing hierarchical notions of who is Thai and who is not, what religion, ethnicity, language a Thai should feel belonging to, and how a Thai person should live.

After the 1932 revolution that changed the government into a constitutional monarchy “thainess” (*khwampenthai*), as a spirit of those who born in Thailand and “perform duties to the ‘Thai nation’, became an inherited spirit that came with the responsibility of upholding the virtue of the nation, the religion and the monarchy. This national character was later described as being innately about entrepreneurship and love for progress. All this has made possible for the current curriculum to describe the Thai character and proper behavior as aligned with the principles of SE. Similarly, to SK, SE relies on categories or particular kinds of people through which a narrative of ‘improvement’ comes about. There are those who know what is enough and those who do not, those who love progress and those who hinder it. Through this narrative people who live in the hills, who do not speak Thai, who do not follow Buddhist ideas and or faith, have to improve/change in order to become fully Thai. As Tongchai Winachakul (1999) has said before, this group of people is inside of the geography of Thailand but outside of the body of the nation. SE, a *life guiding* principle, can be read as a way to digest particular groups of people into the body of the nation through the management of life.

1. See Hyun (2012).

2. It is a common understanding that the kind of life one has or born into is due to accumulation of spiritual merit. Under this logic being or not being Thai is also a matter of merit.

To summarize this section, SK and SE have produced cultural theses of who good citizens are and what their lives should look like. In a similar way to myths or tales, these stories are a way to talk about the truth that draws upon characters with clean cut cultural baggage and straight ancestry lines, that are supposed to embody a particular “local” goodness or beauty and are relational to those who do not.

III. Traveling as translation and the idea of progress

SK and SE, which have been praised internationally as “local” alternatives to “Western” development, have in fact a developmental logic stemming from their own historically produced ideas of hierarchy. Thinking about the traveling of development in this context thence is not thinking about the movement of ideas from a place to another, but thinking about translations: transformations and transferences in meaning that arise with fluxes, movement and intersections (Kim, 2017). Traveling thus is the “creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some extent modifies two elements” (Latour, 1994, p. 32). That “changeability” allows us to think about how ideas seep into particular places of different societies and become part of cultural understandings³ (for the concern of this paper) of what are good ways of living (Kim, 2017, Popkewitz, 2005). Stemming from Edward Said’s *Traveling Theory* and Barbara Czarniawaska ideas of translation, traveling as translation speaks of what happens when ideas are used again in different circumstances and for different reasons (Kim, 2017). However, the processes Said outlines for the traveling of ideas across times, cultures and places – an origin, distance crossed, reception with negotiations, acceptance or rejection, and finally a new position of a transformed idea or theory (Said, 1983, pp. 226-247; Clifford, 1985), talk of immigration or a host domesticating an idea which is not what is meant in this text by translation. By talking about the travel of ideas I try to avoid both, a comparative logic that renders theories, practices and events as the same for different places and cultures, and assuming a linear process of “reception and dissemination” of ideas. To that extent, the attempt of this paper is making evident the travel of ideas and the history with which they intertwine to better understand the connections, disconnections, and loops that arise, what they say and what they silence.

3. Culture is taken to be a body of historical transmitted ideas that make particular ways of knowledge (and knowing), beliefs, art, morals, law and customs, all of which lead to particular ideas of what is reasonable and good, or unreasonable and bad.

SK and SE have connections with the idea of progress, which transforms as it is picked up intellectually and travels into discourses of social reform. In order to see those transformations and movements it is necessary to assume a point of departure, which is not the same than a birthplace or origin. For SK and SE the departure place of the notion of progress, as the linear advancement towards something better (Nisbet, 1979), can be traced to European theories through either contact, vicinity or (indirect) colonization.

Robert Nisbet describes the “Western” modern notion of progress as the idea that humankind has advanced, is advancing in the present and will presumably do so in the future. Even though improvement is an ideal of many civilizations, Nisbet argues that, it is peculiar of “Western” thought that advancement is due to humanity improving itself, stage by stage and imagining the future as a place closer to perfection than the past. This linearity is more evident in Aristotle’s conception of history and it is accentuated with the Christian contribution, specially through Saint Augustine’s writings, of a sense of unity to “humankind history” that can be divided in periods (before Christ, after Christ, before the final judgment day and after it) that portray humankind as walking away from torments towards a promised perfect happiness in the future.

The secularization of advancement towards a better future makes it possible in the 16th and 17th Centuries to see humans as perfecting knowledge and art to both unveil a Divine design and to be able to divide history into “ancient” and “modern”, attaching primitiveness to the first and superiority to the latter. In the 18th century, Rousseau and Condorcet refine the division of history by shaping stages of progress. Rousseau’s *Second Discourse* elaborates his argument inside the panorama of an evolution from a state of being with nature and ascending towards higher stages of culture, morality and knowledge. Condorcet’s *Progress of the Human Mind* outlines ten stages of societal development from hordes and the primitive pastoral stage passing through the agricultural, and culminating in the republic and the kinds of societies of Western Europe. The tenth stage is again a time of more equality and freedom situated in the future. By the 19th Century, progress becomes a common-sense notion on which thinkers like Comte, Marx and Darwin will build upon to create their theories. Their thought in turn consolidated the idea of progress, giving a directionality to history and society. That directionality describes improvement, development and evolution that still carries a moral valuation where the time ‘closer’ to the future is what is superior and desirable.

Briefly juxtaposing this notion of progress with Buddhist and Kichwa ideas of improvement and the future, it is fair to say that the two latter do not

conform to a single directionality. Common Theravadin Buddhist ideas of a better future are often related with the accumulation of spiritual merit. As such, demerit of a being or nation can (according to its gravity) produce a future that are not necessarily and advancement towards something better or with more moral value. Moreover, it is unknown when the fruits of demerit will come as they are and not necessarily consecutive to a period or lifetime of unmeritorious actions. The passing of time is closer to an “endless wandering” (*samsara*) characterized by unsatisfactoriness and impermanence than to a path of progress towards something better and happier. Similarly, in Kichwa thought the future is not superior to the past. The future is a place that continuously emerges due to relationships. There is not one single future to be able to think of or talk about in the present but multiple futures according to networks of relationships and how they change moment to moment. Thence future cannot be valued as better, worse or closer to perfection.

This is not to argue that in Euro-American thought the goodness of the future is always already determined, and that it is linear, is not relational and intrinsically linked to progress. Rather it is to argue that many theories, philosophies and forms of management articulate the rationalities of progress Nisbet talks about, build upon “the assumption of slow, gradual, continuous change-cumulative, purposive, and self-driven” (Nisbet, 1974), and that this travel together with notions of increasing virtue. Moreover, ideas and philosophies that carry the rationality of progress, like liberalism, democracy, legal equality, social Darwinism and nationalism traveled widely together with the reasoning of human and national progress. Similarly, under the logic of individual progress, human cultural advancement through education in “Western” sciences, art and sense of morality became a common-sensical way of being for the *desired* kind of people. Being educated presupposes an individual who is an agent of change (Nisbet, 1974, Popkewitz 2005). Those assumptions of cumulative and gradual advancement towards something superior or better and more virtuous are what will travel and become translated within the kind of thought in Ecuador and Thailand that makes SK and SE possible as social reform proposals and guiding values for education.

III.1. Sumak Kawsay and Sufficiency Economy development logics within Education

Within SK and SE right values, right knowledge and good-life, are the language to talk about the “betterment of society” in the future through human agency. The aspired better future is to be built through the participation of the right kind of citizen. This desire and reasoning has a link with Robert

Nisbet's argument about progress. What is peculiar of "Western" progress, Nisbet says, is the thought that advancement is due to humanity improving itself, stage by stage, and imagining the future as a place closer to perfection than the past (Nisbet, 1979). Within education SK and SE are ways of organizing the behavior of people to fabricate that right citizen. These narratives divide the population of Ecuador and Thailand into those who embody desired values and knowledge and those who do not, those who can develop the nation and those who drag it backwards. In this way SK and SE have a link with the production of kinds of people, which as Ian Hacking's and Thomas Popkewitz have argued, are ways to talk about things in the ontic world in such a way as to create categories that need attention and intervention (Hackings, 1987; Popkewitz and Lindblad, 1996). Thus, SK and SE are more than responses to Western development, and more than national guiding principles for economic development, they are in themselves narratives that follow a logic which links ideas of development in education with the development of people in relation to (or for) the nation.

These links articulate a logic that seeps into policy, curriculum and thus classrooms. The two proposals do not have specific educational practices but they (re)produce a way of thinking about education, students and the citizens in the making through education which becomes part of the 'common sense' of society regarding what is a good life. The analysis in this section is centered on the logic promoted by the respective ministries of education through the notions of SK and SE in the national curriculum and policy. In both countries the descriptions of how SK or SE relate to education are telling. For example, the ministry of education of Ecuador asserts that:

Education and *Buen Vivir* interact in two ways. On the one hand, the right to education is an essential component of *Buen Vivir* because it allows the development of the human potentialities and in this sense guaranties equality in opportunities to all.

On the other hand, *Buen Vivir* is a central axis of education in so far as the educative process must contemplate the preparation of future citizens with values and knowledge of how to develop the country. (official website of the Ecuadorian Education Ministry, 2016)

How BV “relates to education” reminds one of the capability approaches to development elaborated by Amartya Sen.⁴ A traveling discourse of development based on notions of “Western” progress can be seen in the assertion of the objective of “developing human potentialities”, expanding “equality in opportunity” and the need of educated citizens to “develop the country.” This could be read as the “localization” of “global” discourses of development in education. However, if we think of it as an intellectual trip, a traveling and translation of the discourse of development, then it is the mingling of theories of development with historical concerns about sectors of the population lacking the right values, education and knowledge to develop the country. Perhaps a “reformed” way of talking about the *problema indígena* (indigenous population problem), which has for so long been in the discourses of progress in Latin America (Lopez, 2017). SK or BV then follows a logic not only, as Nisbet says, of self-driven advancement to something better, but also a logic that relies on the assumption of a particular social ontology where there are kinds of people that have the values and knowledge to bring about progress and people who do not. Who is the citizen of the future is an open question insofar as it taps in historical questions of population management: how to educate people in order to make citizens who can have the kind of life that can be considered a “good life.”

In Thailand too, SE in education is a *guiding* principle for a good life that builds upon historical ideas of (un)virtuous people. In the curriculum, understanding and “observing” SE is one of the main goals and “desirable characteristics” (ONEC, 1999) to be developed by students. It is described as a principle that stresses the middle path understood as cultivating reasonableness, moderation and self-immunity (NESDB, 2011). As the sociologist Darren Noy (2011) explains, in SE, moderation requires spiritual restraint of desires, reasonableness or awareness requires realizing the ethical content of actions, and self-immunity is a way of protecting oneself through wise decision-making. SE has a logic of self-driven moral progress and it is also a way of conducting the conduct of people. The way in which the Board of Social Development (2004) described SE is as an “overriding principle for appropriate conduct” and a “guide for the way of living/behaving of people.” Individual moral progress is linked with the well-being of the population, particularly “Thai population.” To that extent the notion of SE (re)produces ideas of “virtuous” subjects and lifestyles and uses them as a way for governing. SE promotes molding oneself to be the kind of person historically

4. See for example Sen (1990).

desired, who is integrant of the body of the nation, and who has the “right” knowledge to adjust to a modern society of progress and prevent economic crisis. SE depends on both the Thai kind (virtuous) and the un-Thai kind (lacking in virtue) to talk and think about the well-being of the nation. Thai well-being is maintained by the merit of well-behaved or “Thai-behaved” people.

The logic of both SK and SE produces cultural theses of who good citizens are and what their lives should look like which are relational to those who have to develop into a good citizen who has a good life. These stories draw in characters that are supposed to embody or not particular cultural values and knowledge for proper development. The ideals or “models” provide a vision of what should be aspired for and the non-ideal an explanation of the necessity to “adjust” the direction of society. These narratives become materialized in educational policies and the curriculum but also are a way to think about progress and categorize students. The insertion of SK and SE in their respective national curricula shows an effort to produce people that carry the (fabricated) character of the nation and hopes of the country. This kind of reasoning attempts to organize the behavior of people by “reminding” them who they “really” are, their “roots” and the “right” values and knowledge to participate of the making of the desired society. Claiming one mindset, one ‘spirit’ and one image of the future, this logic purports, facilitates happiness and a better life for all. In this way different worldviews, ways of knowing and imagining the future are disregarded in the pursuit of the desired kind of progress. The desired and undesired, the developed and underdeveloped are produced simultaneously.

The translation of progress into ideas of achieving wellbeing through “cultural” values and a particular knowledge carries the assumption that living a good-life is *becoming* who one *should* be. Responding this call to be a “good” Ecuadorian or Thai citizen makes available an identity through which the self can be represented and ‘valued’ by others and by one-self within a particular system of thought (Butler, 1997; Hackings, 1987; Rose, 1999, p. 19). These relations to the self, reify the distinctions created among groups of people and become part of the techniques of population government and self-government. To ‘fully’ become citizens people have to learn the knowledge and values that lead to “wellbeing”. They have to *develop* the virtues that will make them a member of society. In other words, the stories of virtuous and ideal citizens in education opens avenues for institutions and people to operate on their behavior and views to pursue a particular life which confers a state of full citizenship and its benefits (Foucault, 1988, p. 18; Butler, 1997, p. 119).

The process of translation at work in SK and SE makes them more than responses to development. They participate in the making of “Western” progress as well as feed into a particular historically grounded way of thinking about human development in a particular place. This is to say that the logic and discourse of development is made in the movement across places as well as in them. The flow of ideas between what often is categorized as the “West,” “East,” “South” provokes connections and disconnections that increasingly shape the way development and progress is thought and talked about. In this sense “Western” development does not belong to the “West,” and responses to it do not necessarily *come from* a different intellectual place. Thus, it is important to carefully think about what do responses to, alternatives to, or localizations of ideas of development mean. It is questionable whether proposals to think differently about a good life need or not to be responses to the same ideas they want to get away of. It is also questionable whether or not there is the *need* to achieve development in a “safe way.” Nevertheless, when disengagement with the logics of development does not come about one cannot simply say “new” proposals like SK and SE in education are empty, have failed or do not measure up to their purpose. Instead it is necessary to ask what the logic of conversations and productions allows for, what their dangers are and how do they intertwine with the ongoing social questions of a place.

IV. Conclusion

This paper has explored how notions of progress are articulated within the historically and culturally constructed ideas of good citizens and their life in Ecuador and Thailand. Drawing parallels between these two nations opens space for better understanding projects that seem to be responses to “Western” notions of development, which on the one hand are part of the makeup of what is considered Western development and on the other hand build upon notions of development that stem from their own history and ideas of social hierarchy. Historicizing notions of good-life and the categories they rely on throws light on the ways to think about difference and the fears and hopes that imply the anticipation of a good life in the future. The notions of good-life, and the role of education in producing them, embody a way of organizing the behavior of people to maintain the governance of difference. Stories about who people are and how they should live carve paths for possibilities of being and not being that that can perpetuate the making of problematic difference.

Making virtuous people is a way of arranging population or producing groups of people referential to each other, which are evaluated and governed through that reference. The virtuous and the non-virtuous, the national and the alien, the educated and the non-educated, are categories that can be thought of only in reference to each other. To that extent, the production of knowledge and language to talk about the ideal citizen and lifestyle always produces that which is not ideal, and vice versa. Belonging to the same system of thought, the same field of knowledge and “speech community” (Rose, 1999, p. 19) intertwines opposite categories. The kinds and their attributes appear as natural because they make sense within their own system of thought. What is ‘naturally’ desired articulates within that system the need of intervention over what is thought as deviant. That intervention carries a double trait, what Popkewitz calls the double gesture of fear and hopes (Popkewitz and Lindblad, 2016). There is the hope that ‘deviant’ people can be ‘fixed’ or ‘managed.’ Simultaneously, there is the fear that without management “those” people will put social order and progress under threat. Within SK and SE, the groups that do not have the characteristics thought to be decisive to achieve well-being, prosperity and a good-life can easily become the target of education projects for developing the “right” values and knowledge. The production of “ideal” citizens and their lifestyle is a way to prevent (certain) people from compromising the “national” wellbeing or “wellbeing for all”.

Particularly, in SK this comparative reasoning divides the population into those who have “the values and knowledge to develop the country” (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2017) and those who do not. In SE it divides the population into those who show “appropriate conduct,” moderation, reasonableness, and self-immunity (Thailand’s NESDB, 2008) and those who do not. Knowledge and virtues defined by particular systems of thought create a profile of the virtuous and educated or those who know how to participate correctly in society (Popkewitz and Lindblad, 2016). The groups who do not fit that model become the target of the plans for raising the quality of education, ensuring equity, and “strengthening capabilities.” In that sense, SK and SE inside the curriculum are a call and a strategy for people to become part of a “better” society by answering to the ideal of virtue and social participation reasonable for a particular worldview.

The author hopes to have contributed to questioning the assumption of the goodness of progress, of virtue and the givenness of the global/local and transnational/national. It is important to analyze what it is meant by progress, what virtue intersects with in educational projects and how theories get constructed in the middle of flows of ideas and discourses that often seem “progressive” yet give continuation to dangerous social and educational

projects. Seeing flows of ideas and their mingling can contribute unpicking what is naturalized as desirable and certain for the future and in projects of education for the future. Even though it is not its focus, this paper also questions how the global, local, national and transnational are made and what sort of projects do they make visible or invisible in analyzing discourses in education.

V. References

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Grupo de Estudios de Asia y América Latina
Instituto de Estudios sobre América Latina y el Caribe
Universidad de Buenos Aires