



The Future of Sustainable Development Goals and Culture: Addressing Missing Dimensions from Four Cosmovisions African Ubuntu, Latin-American Buen Vivir, Buddhist Happiness and Nordic Sami Arbediehtu

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Abstract

The SDGs miss crucial dimensions when viewed from the cosmovisions of Ubuntu, Buen Vivir, Buddhist Happiness and Sami Arbediehtu. What principles can be derived from these cosmovisions to guide discussions after 2030? As methodology we use a dialogical intercultural philosophical reflection and a decolonial stance addressing planetary survival instead of sustainable development, to develop principles for after 2030, for example to be included in a Culture Goal using the transformative power of culture. After analysing and comparing the four cosmovisions, we suggest ‘Harmony with Nature’ as an umbrella planetary wellbeing concept. Other principles could be: (**social SDGs:**) harmony with oneself, others and nature; interculturality and epistemic diversity; community flourishing; balance of masculine and feminine values; intertwining of spiritual, emotional, physical, communal health; serving others as educational goal; (**green SDGs:**) intrinsic value of nature as part of the community; recognizing ancestral legacy and future generations’ needs; (**economic SDGs:**) economics of collective well-being, earth governance and society-oriented businesses; (**SDG16:**) participatory, ‘deep’ consensus oriented democracy; collective dignity, restorative justice; (**SDG17 global partnership:**) interdependence of all life.

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Résumé

Les ODD omettent de dimensions cruciales lorsqu'ils sont considérés à partir des cosmovisions de l'Ubuntu, du Buen Vivir, du Bonheur Bouddhiste et du Sami Arbediehtu. Quels principes peuvent être dérivés de ces cosmovisions pour guider les discussions après 2030? Comme méthodologie, nous utilisons une réflexion philosophique interculturelle dialogique et une position décoloniale qui aborde la survie planétaire plutôt que le développement durable par exemple à inclure dans un objectif culturel en utilisant le pouvoir de transformation de la culture. Après avoir analysé et comparé les quatre cosmovisions, nous suggérons 'l'harmonie avec la nature' comme concept général de bien-être planétaire. D'autres principes pourraient être: **(ODD sociaux)**: harmonie avec soi-même, les autres et la nature; interculturalité et diversité épistémique; épanouissement communautaire; équilibre des valeurs masculines et féminines; entrelacement de la santé spirituelle, émotionnelle, physique et communautaire; servir les autres en tant qu'objectif éducatif; **(ODD verts)**: valeur intrinsèque de la nature en tant que partie intégrante du développement durable; reconnaissance de l'héritage ancestral et des besoins des générations futures; **(ODD économiques)**: économie du bien-être collectif, gouvernance de la terre et entreprises orientées vers la société; **(ODD 16)**: démocratie participative, 'profonde' orientée vers le consensus; dignité collective, justice réparatrice **(ODD17 partenariat mondial)**: interdépendance de toute forme de vie.

Resumen

Los ODS omiten dimensiones cruciales cuando se observan desde las cosmovisiones de Ubuntu, Buen Vivir, Felicidad Budista y Arbediehtu Sami. ¿Qué principios pueden derivarse de estas cosmovisiones para orientar los debates después de 2030? Como metodología, utilizamos una reflexión filosófica intercultural dialógica, y una postura decolonial que aborda la supervivencia planetaria en lugar del desarrollo sostenible, para desarrollar principios, por ejemplo, para incluirlos en un Objetivo de Cultura utilizando el poder transformador de la cultura. Tras analizar y comparar las cuatro cosmovisiones, proponemos la 'Armonía con la Naturaleza' como concepto general de bienestar planetario. Otros principios podrían ser: **(ODS sociales)**: armonía con uno mismo, con los demás y con la naturaleza; interculturalidad y diversidad epistémica; florecimiento comunitario; equilibrio de valores masculinos y femeninos; entrelazamiento de la salud espiritual, emocional, física y comunitaria; servir a los demás como objetivo educativo; **(ODS verdes)**: valor intrínseco de la naturaleza como parte de la comunidad; reconocimiento del legado ancestral y de las necesidades de las generaciones futuras; **(ODS económicos)**: economía del bienestar colectivo, gobernanza de la Tierra y empresas orientadas hacia la sociedad; **(ODS 16)**: democracia participativa, y orientada al consenso 'profundo'; dignidad colectiva, justicia reparadora; **(ODS 17 alianza global)**: interdependencia de toda forma de vida.



Introduction

This article addresses the question what dimensions are missing in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) when viewed from the Global South and Nordic indigenous views and what principles could guide post-SDG discussions. We postulate these as ideals to strive for, alongside concepts such as human rights, human development, social, and ecological justice. The article first discusses the method of intercultural dialog and two-eyed seeing, including (neo-colonialist) opposition to indigenous worldviews. It then discusses four cosmologies related to Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Nordics, identifying principles that could replace or complement the current goals and target system. The comparative section identifies parallels, in philosophy and implementation, and obstacles in feasibility for global implementation, ending with a conclusion with a possible future culture goal. The suggestions are theoretical. They only limitedly address the feasibility due to possible obstacles for future sustainability negotiations emanating from political shifts to the far right in North America and Europe, though it does address criticism. The article does not discuss the specific problems related to each SDG goal as addressed in mainstream SDG literature. It adds to the theory in applying Two-Eyed Seeing methodology to sustainability discourses, comparing Global North and South indigeneness/endogenous-ness including implementation examples in the North, listing (indigenous) principles for (planetary) wellbeing, and including these in a 'culture as sustainable development' SDG. It argues that sustainable development should relate to communal relational interspecies wellbeing and compassion; including past generations, hence (mental) decolonization.

When the sustainable development goals (SDGs) became effective in 2015, they were intended to mark a radical shift in development thinking: different from the millennium development goals (MDGs) that had targeted only the 'developing world', now all nations became 'developing countries' working towards the same set of 17 universal sustainable development goals. Sustainability became the core and, contrary to previous goal schemes, all nations were consulted in drafting the goals (Van Norren 2020). However, critical analyses of the comprehensive consultation processes leading up to the SDGs have questioned the seeming universality and inclusiveness of the goals (Van Norren 2017, 2020; Sayed and Ahmed 2015; Seehawer and Breidlid 2021; Van Norren 2025d), including the marginalization of indigenous perspectives and Southern cosmologies and the marginalization of knowledge in general (Cummings et al. 2018). Generally, Indigenous People (IP) knowledge is only recognized within international (UN) frameworks in relation to management of ecosystems, as exemplified by the 2020 UNDP report (UNDP 2020, 33).

As missing gaps Van Norren (2017) mentions, amongst others, community orientation and general negligence of nature as a central part of community life. As the SDG summit report of September 2023 states knowledge and participation of local communities is key (UNDESA, IGS 2023). Other criticism on the SDGs relates to "the number of goals, the structure of the goal framework (for example, the non-hierarchical structure), the coherence between the goals, the specificity or



measurability of the targets, the language used in the text, and their reliance on neo-liberal economic development-oriented sustainable development as their core orientation” (Biermann et al. 2022, 161, citing van Norren 2020). Furthermore, the SDGs have only had limited transformative political impact and mostly discursive impact as countries favor socio-economic SDGs over environmental ones (Biermann et al. 2022). From the outset it was also clear that the SDGs contain many contradictions, such as 7% economic growth in goal 8 in the context of the green goals such as goals for life on land and in the water, as well as the fleeting reference to lifestyles in harmony with nature (target 12.8; sustainable consumption and production).

By the end of 2023, it was clear that COVID and geopolitical tensions caused a set-back for many countries in their journey towards achieving the SDGs (UNDESA, IGS 2023). This failure begs the question what should happen from 2030 onwards, when the SDGs are supposed to have been achieved. The question arises how useful target and indicator schemes are when the targets themselves are unfeasible. Furthermore, certain nations questioned during the drafting the ‘how’ of the goals: What strategy is envisioned in these result-based management schemes? The goals made a weak attempt to address this question (notably through the insertion of the sub-targets numbered a/b/c), mainly at the instigation of South Africa (Van Norren 2017). Some answers may be found in what (indigenous) cosmovisions from the Global South (and North) have to offer, not only for reviving their own societies but also in terms of lessons for the Global North and reviving memories of its own indigeneness.

Methodology

Methodologically, our analysis of cosmovisions is based on a philosophical reflection based on Two-Eyed Seeing and intercultural dialog in the form of dialog between epistemologies and ontologies (Sousa Santos et al. 2007, who is closely connected to Buen Vivir; Seehawer and Breidlid 2021; Breidlid, 2013). Two-Eyed Seeing has been advocated by elders from the Northern American Mi’kmaw nation. It ‘refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing and to using both of these eyes together’ (Hatcher et al. 2009, 146). This concurs with views of knowledge in Africa speaking about the analytical Warrior Mind and the intuitive Mother Mind; in Asia about balancing the feminine and the masculine view of life (yin and yang) and in Latin America on the concept of Tinkuy, harmonizing the opposites (similar to yin and yang) (Van Norren 2020).

While Two-Eyed seeing has mostly been applied to the integration of knowledge systems in education (Stein et al. 2024), we apply to conceptualizations of (planetary) wellbeing. Thereby, we do not understand the idea of Two-Eyed Seeing to be restricted to one indigenous and one Western eye, which, in the context of the article, would simplify and homogenize the analyzed cosmovisions. We rather suggest to view the world through many eyes, the Euro-Western eye being but one of them. Thereby, the Euro-Western eye loses the hegemonic position that it claimed through



(persisting) intellectual colonialism (Scott 1995). With this, we intend to address Stein et al.'s (2024) critique that Two-Eyed Seeing has been misused as a superficial feel-good approach to integrating knowledges and worldviews that fails to challenge the status quo of epistemological and ontological hierarchies. Such Multiple-Eyed Seeing allows for an intercultural dialog in which epistemological and ontological positions aspire to move beyond co-existence towards knowledge complementing, enriching and challenging one another. Applying dialog between epistemologies to the educational sphere, Seehawer and Breidliid (2021) argue that the ability “to make sense of, and apply, knowledge systems according to what fits best in the given context, provides students as (future) world citizens with a larger repository of strategies for sustainable livelihoods than drawing on so-called Western knowledge only” (p. 3). We suggest here that the same approach is useful for developing future sustainable development goals.

Critiques on indigenous worldviews can be explained from the colonial perspective of superiority of the western civilization; arguments and counterarguments are included in Table 1 (critical literature can be found in Van Norren 2014, 2022a table S4 which arguments we summarize below; Dei 2016).

The European Association of Development Institute (EADI) conference in Lisbon 2023 illustrated this debate perfectly. In both the SDG and the decolonization workshop, opposition was heard against including indigenous worldviews, referred to as “romanization of the past”, amongst others, in an elaborate critique of the EADI book “Towards Decoloniality and Social Justice” (Melber et al. 2023). After this one participant questioned the panel “why it is that the Global North first colonized us, and now wants to decolonize us and tell us what to think?” This article therefore builds on the arguments against criticism of indigenous knowledge systems, in showing the actual implementation in today's world, including its flaws and successes, its added value to conventional rights and economics debates, and its implementation and relevance for other parts of the world.

The Concept of Sustainability and Development in Four Cosmovisions

We now apply the concept of ‘Two-Eyed seeing’ in the above outlined form of Multiple-Eyed Seeing to the ideas of sustainability and development. To do so, we will examine what four cosmovisions may have to offer for future SDGs. Thereby, we will also briefly refer to specific SDGs and to how these were applied in the negotiations leading up to the 2015 SDGs. Amongst others, we demonstrate that the Brundtland definition “to meet the needs of the present without compromising future generations” is enlarged in Ubuntu with past generations, hence connected to decolonization; that sustainability in the Andes and Sami indigenous view is inherent in seeing oneself as an equal part of the community of the living; and that GNH does not focus on human needs only but extends compassion to all sentient beings.



Table 1 Critiques on indigenous worldviews and counterarguments

Critiques	Counterarguments
Indigenous worldviews as residues from the past, a so-called Romanization of the past	Indigenous peoples exist and still practice their way of life. The same counts for those people in the Global South that do not go by the name of indigenous but are endogenous to their continent such as Africa. Denying their worldview, is denying a people's existence
Lack of implementation in the countries where the theory originates from	Implementation always has flaws. European countries cherish human rights, yet indulged into slavery, and colonialism; they have often not realized socio-economic rights and still have flaws in their internal human rights policies. Africa formulated its (Ubuntu-related) aspirations in the Banjul Charter
Indigenous worldviews being communist (by which communalism is equated to communism)	Since communists generally do not readily embrace indigenous systems, it is hard to see how IP knowledge is equal to communism. One needs to understand the concept of communalism
Indigenous worldviews being against the communist power struggle between the classes, because holistic theories would be excluding conflict	Recognizing holism and interdependence is not the same as denying conflict and inequality as a component of society
Indigenous worldviews are superfluous, since human rights are universal and adequately represent and encompass other worldviews	Human rights are individualist and therefore cannot fully encompass collective worldview such as most of the original cosmovisions of the Global South
Indigenous worldviews are considered paternalistic and violating women's rights	Cultural practices that may be oppressive to women cannot be equated to cosmovisions. African feminists work on dismantling these practices. All societies continuously evolve and change. Western societies also have (had) practices that disadvantage and oppress women
Modern day Africans, Asians, Indigenous peoples etc. are no longer a homogenous group and have embraced modern capitalism, making their cosmovision irrelevant)	Global cultural elites may embrace and benefit from global capitalism but they still form the minority. The majority often adheres to traditional worldviews and even the elite cannot be said to have entirely relinquished their culture in favor of materialism
No relevance beyond own context	Rights of nature, Ubuntu truth and reconciliation and deep democracy, and Bhutan's multidimensional poverty index have worldwide resonance

Ubuntu: The African Worldview

Sustainability in the Sub-Saharan African worldview centers around the idea of interdependence of all that exists. That interdependence becomes apparent through the idea of the vital force (Placide Tempels 1959). The vital force is present in all that exists, both humans, animals and plants as well as mountains, earth, sky and all other so-called 'objects' in Western thought. The vital force is equally present in the spirits: Those who have come before us, or the living-dead, as well as those who will come after us, the yet-to-born. In this way, all are connected and influence



one-another. The forces interact and thereby impact on the other forces, i.e., the lives of other humans, other living entities and beings. The vital force is in Nguni languages symbolized by 'Ntu' which can also be translated as life force.

This interdependence is inherent in the very word Ubuntu, a word in Nguni-languages that resonates in other forms in other languages through grammar and proverbs. It signifies in its pure form the cosmic interaction, yet at the same time the human interaction of *compassion and humaneness* in the more popular understanding of 'I am because we are' (Ramose 1999/2005; Gade 2012; Eze 2010; Metz and Gaie 2010). The 'we' in this expression must be understood as the 'we' of all that exists. The cosmic interaction comes into being by the abstract or potential being Bu (masculine), meeting the life force being Ntu (feminine). Therefore, Ramose states that the African philosophy of Ubuntu (or Batho) can be defined as the continuous motion of the enfoldment of the universe (Ramose 1999/2005). The concept of *relatedness* is paramount in this collective ontology. This does not only express itself in the maxim 'life is mutual aid' (Mbiti 1990), empathy and relatedness between humans, but stretches to a field of interdependence or 'seriti' (or 'ntu'). Decolonization in Africa therefore means *restoring the place of the 'sharing community'* in life (Mbembe's 2021), not only for the wellbeing of people but also for the wellbeing of the community of life, replacing the idea of sustainable development with planetary survival.

Development is properly understood as the exercise of humaneness in human mutual relations (Ntibagirirwa 2012; Ramose 1999/2005; Metz 2007; Van Norren 2017). Humans in turn owe respect to the ancestors, another form of mutuality. These ancestors often dwell in nature. Nature itself is considered spirited. The ones that are yet to be born, in the African mindset also already dwell among us, are part of the community and thus deserve consideration in every decision.

Ubuntu in South Africa is expressed in national Batho Pele (People First) *policies* related to government conduct (GoSA 2007); in Ubuntu diplomacy related to human rights, African unity and development cooperation; and recently in biodiversity policies (since 2023). Furthermore, it features quite prominently in *constitutional jurisprudence* on restorative justice, family law, social, and housing law. Ubuntu was mentioned in the draft constitution, to enable the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission, alongside the rights of future generations in the constitution. Uganda adopted local forest protection based on indigenous concepts as well as a rights of nature law in 2019.¹ *Implementation issues* in South Africa around Batho Pele are numerous as service delivery remains a problem amongst others due to lacking education (Van Norren 2022a, b, 2025a). In other areas the court has been more active in developing policy incentives by giving concrete rights to housing and benefits for migrants for example.

South Africa did not specifically promote Ubuntu during the *SDG negotiations*, despite their Ubuntu diplomacy, nor did the Africa Group (OWG SDG).² South

¹ Uganda recognises rights of Nature, customary laws, sacred natural sites. Gaia Foundation. <https://gaiafoundation.org/uganda-recognises-rights-of-nature-customary-laws-sacred-natural-sites/>.

² All statements can be found on Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals. Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform (un.org). <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/owg.html>.



Africa followed the priorities of its own national development program. The Africa Group was more concerned with goals such as economic growth of 7%, industrialization and innovation. One could however say that notions such as equality, inclusion and partnership, generally promoted by the G77+China, align with Ubuntu (Van Norren 2017).

In terms of *SDGs*, Ubuntu relates mostly to the first five social goals, inclusion and partnership (Van Norren 2020). The core discussion needs to be about enhancing human relations as well as relations within the community of life rather than development. The concept of community has to become central, including the past generations (and history) as well as the future ones. With regard to gaps in *specific goals*, we refer to Van Norren (2017, 2025a) who points to among others to a refocusing on a sharing, redistributive economy with full employment (1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10), the lacking of a holistic approach to health (3) and education (4), a different understanding of gender in terms of values (5) reformulation of the sustainable use of natural resources, to first recognizing the intrinsic value (6, 14, 15), including restorative justice (16) and recognizing that individual dignity is tied to collective dignity (17).

Building upon Van Norren (2022a, b, 2025a), the new SDG framework could, therefore, include the *Ubuntu principles* in Table 2, which also lists core SDG values. Ubuntu can greatly contribute to restorative justice, rehabilitation into society and rethinking punitive justice concepts. Concepts like Ubuntu have inspired “Deep Democracy” methods in the West in over 35 countries; as well as truth and reconciliation processes in several (African) countries, and legal systems recognizing the importance of involving victims in criminal cases, as part of healing.

Buen Vivir or Sumak Kawsay, the Indigenous Latin American Worldview

Sustainability in the indigenous worldview is one that considers humans and all other non-human beings as equal subjects; it is an intersubjective relational worldview. In this perspective man is not dominant over nature, but considers all-natural phenomena including animals, plants, mountains, the sky etc. as spirited and deserving of respect and gratitude. It is a biocentric worldview ruled by the principles of integrality, relationality, complementarity (masculine–feminine) and reciprocity. In the Andes language of Quechua, good living is called Sumak Kawsay and it implies living in *harmony with Nature*. Mother Earth that brings forth all life, and Father Sky (metaphorically also denoting the analytical overview) are central components. The indigenous consider themselves to be part of the community of life. In some indigenous languages the word nature as something outside oneself does not exist, only words such as forest, trees etc. In order to exercise their way of life IP demand *plurinationality* (sovereign territories or nations within a state) as well as *interculturality* (respect for diverse cultures interacting on an equal footing) as well as legal pluralism, principles that both Ecuador and Bolivia adhere to. Culture and nature are closely intertwined in the indigenous worldview. The *community of life* comes first,



Table 2 Principles for a framework after 2030 derived from Ubuntu, Buen Vivir, Happiness and Arbediethu

SDG	Ubuntu principle	Buen Vivir principle	Happiness principle	Sami principles
Social SDGs 1–5 individual right/use	Sharing community	Wellbeing of the community including nature	Happiness in the sense of harmony as overarching principle Community vitality as essential pillar of society	Restoring the concept of community
Green SDGs ‘sustainable use’	Respect for (sacred) part of the past, present and future communities	Mother Earth and harmony with nature as first governance principle Intrinsic value of nature	Guardianship of nature, compassion with all life forms Respect for all sentient beings	Environmental stewardship, considering humans as nature
Economic SDGs ‘economic growth’	Economics of collective wellbeing and (employment) participation of all	Community participatory economic governance and social exchanges Food, energy, water sovereignty for communities	Economics benefiting the community wellbeing: GNH-Business	Livelihood: Recognizing that traditional IP lifestyles are linked to land, culture and community
Health SDG3 physical and mental	Spiritual, emotional, physical communal health	Balancing physical, emotional and spiritual health	Value of mental wellbeing and time balance to foster good health	Multilayered healthcare combining traditional (Shamanistic) nature based and modern
Education SDG4 mostly cognitive skills plus sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship’	Moral education on personhood serving the community and epistemic diversity	Intercultural education based on earth governance and hands, heart and mind	Green education consisting of nine dimensions (nature, social, cultural, intellectual, aesthetic, academic, spiritual and moral skills (Van Norren 2024; Powdyel 2014)	Multicultural education in local IP knowledge, languages and lifestyles, both for IP and non-IP
Culture SDG 4.7 “appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”	Holo-culturality; unity in diversity	Interculturality, plurinationality and indigenous rights and self-governance (United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP) Culture as way of life, tied to the land	Culture as the basis of development	Indigenous rights and self-governance or co-management of territories and natural resources Cultural heritage revitalization, linked to the land



Table 2 (continued)

SDG	Ubuntu principle	Buen Vivir principle	Happiness principle	Sami principles
Gender SDG5 individual identity and rights	Balance of masculine, feminine, transgender and community values (balance of masculine Ubu and feminine Ntu; the Ubu-Ntu principle)	Balancing of masculine and feminine values (Yanan-Tinkuy principle)	Balance of masculine and feminine values (yin yang principle)	Recognition of female and male traditional knowledge
Peaceful, inclusive societies SDG16 accountable institutions and rule of law	Nation-building, peace and restorative (healing) justice; people-first governance; deep consensus-oriented democracy; people empowering leadership	Participatory, deliberative and representative democracy; restorative justice; seven generation leadership	Value of mediation & restoration, local governance practices, Boddhisatva compassionate leadership	Recognizing IP parliamentary group representation and IP institutions pertaining all issues not merely culture or biodiversity
Partnership SDG17 solidarity in finance and technology to implement the SDGs	Collective dignity and interdependence	Respecting the community of life and interdependence	Principle of codependent origination implies interdependence and partnership on all levels	Interdependence, holism and mutual aid



then the individual. Therefore, collective rights, rights to cultural heritage and rights of nature are closely intertwined.

The modern-day version in Spanish is called *Buen Vivir* (Ecuador) or *Vivir Bien* (Bolivia), which has also taken over components of human development theory. There are, however, different schools of *Buen Vivir*: the bio-socialist version of the state, the intellectual environmentalist one, and the indigenous ‘pachamamist’ version that wants to stay close to *Sumak Kawsay* (Hidalgo-Capitán and Cubillo-Guevara 2014). Both Ecuador and Bolivia recognize, in their constitutions, *rights of Mother Earth* (Pachamama) and *rights of nature* (Van Norren 2022b), according intrinsic value to nature and a voice through legal representatives (for which all citizens can qualify) (see e.g., art 71–73 in the constitution of Ecuador). *Buen Vivir* centers around living in harmony with (and not at the cost of) others or nature and in balance between spiritual and material wealth (Acosta 2015; Akchurin 2015; Gudynas 2011; GoE 2013; Van Norren 2017). Partnership with the Earth is the first principle on which all legal and economic systems are based. The *community* is key and lives in partnership with nature (Van Norren 2017; Villalba 2013). Spirituality is part of nature and culture, and can be considered as a basic pillar of life; hence the importance of interculturality (de Sousa Santos 2008). *Sumak Kawsay* does not recognize a notion of *development*, since it is concerned with relationships (Acosta 2015; Thomson 2011; Van Norren 2017). In these relationships exercising *reciprocity* is a cardinal value, not only for fellow humans, but also for all natural phenomena, such as the sun (that receives energy back from humans in ceremonies), and the Earth that receives food and drinks from humans in libations (Villalba 2013; Acosta 2015; Van Norren 2017, 2025b).

Buen Vivir is one of the main principles of the *Ecuadorian and Bolivian constitution* (Gudynas 2009). Ecuador actively implemented it in *policy plans* in the period of 2008–2013 and 2014–2018 under president Correa (GoE 2009, 2013) and to some extent under his successor President Moreno. An extensive *jurisprudence* on rights of Nature (RoN) continues to grow (Van Norren 2025b). *Implementation issues* exist around reconciling harmony with nature with oil exploration and mining (the main government income), which expanded rather than shrank since 2008 creating huge opposition from indigenous groups. Thus, the social dimension of *Buen Vivir* (redistribution of wealth, multiple forms of participatory democracy, economic cooperatives) was given more prominence than the environmental one. However, since 2018 the constitutional court often rectifies the government in this regard, recognizing indigenous territories and their culture of living in harmony with nature as well as protected and biodiverse areas which generally have to be free from extraction (unless consent has been obtained by the IP for their area) according to the court.

Ecuador actively promoted Mother Earth and harmony with nature as an overarching goal during the *SDG negotiations*. However, Mother Earth was only alluded to in the preamble; harmony with nature made it into sub-target 12.8 (see OWG SDG).

Regarding *the SDGs*, *Buen Vivir* would advocate living in harmony with nature, rather than development and respecting all ‘relatives’ (humans and non-humans, animate, and so-called inanimate objects). Mother Earth as a physical and spiritual



entity is the guiding principle to be revered. The SDGs are considered a remnant of modernist neoliberal economic thinking by many Ecuadorians and IP. Dialog is considered more important than abstract frameworks (Van Norren 2017, 2020). That includes dialog with non-humans. Often times, Sumak Kawsay or Buen Vivir adherents reject the current concept of development, as having destroyed indigenous lands, their culture, their education, their identity and their access to water, food sovereignty and basic needs; in other words, it is considered a colonial residue. They also reject the concept of sustainability, as it is related to development and does not follow the principles of a cyclical natural way of living. Relational worldviews do not think in terms of goals, but in terms of processes. For many indigenous peoples, the climate and social crisis is not a new phenomenon. They are of the opinion that this crisis is their reality for the past 500 years, when most of their territories were expropriated, their culture was erased and the natural environment destroyed, leading to permanent unnecessary shortage for those no longer able to live their traditional lifestyle. Leadership in this context involves a critical revision of the seven generations past (roughly the past 400–500 years, factoring in the colonial legacy and its impact on today’s world) and its consequences for where the world is today. Decisions need to involve the projections for the seven generations to come (the coming 500 years), in order to be sound (Van Norren and Beehner 2021). Suggestions to *specific SDGs* follow similar lines as mentioned under Ubuntu, with the difference that harmony with Nature is even more central and an integrated part of the community and coupled with strong demands for recognizing (cultural) nations within the state and people’s (community) sovereignty over water, energy and food (Van Norren 2017).

Building upon SDG gaps identified in Van Norren 2025b, we have formulated *Buen Vivir principles* for a new framework post 2030, as included in Table 2. Buen Vivir has shown its relevance in, for example, rights of nature implemented in amongst others Bangladesh, Colombia, Peru, Spain, USA, New Zealand and the Netherlands (Van Norren 2022b).

Happiness and Harmony, the Buddhist Worldview

In Asia, Bhutan is known for its Gross National Happiness policies and constitution, steeped in Buddhist cultural values. A more appropriate word to represent the Buddhist view of happiness may be *balance and harmony*. This harmony concerns first of all one’s own mental health. Hence Bhutan’s insistence on mental health in SDG3 (health). The presupposition is that if one reaches inner balance, one is also more able to create harmony with the people surrounding you. This communal harmony then also resonates in the care of the natural environment. *Sustainability* in the Buddhist view is therefore how one relates to nature, the respect and reverence one extends and the observance of the sacred nature of all living beings. Like in Buen Vivir and Ubuntu, the surroundings are spirited and sacred. Not only because spirits live in nature, but also because everything in creation is interdependent. This is derived from the concept of *co-dependent origination*, everything arises



simultaneously and influences and influences one-an-other. Through the concept of *karma*, one is part of future generations oneself. The goal is to free oneself from delusion, from fear and from material craving which causes suffering, and to accept one's circumstances (also in order to ameliorate them) to ultimately not be reborn or reborn as *Boddhisatva* (Phuntsho 2013; Tideman 2004; Van Norren 2017).

Development is therefore deeply psychological and spiritual; one's state of mind influences the world (especially in meditation). One's deepest goal is *learning to see reality* in the proper way and then act from that point of view. When one does not understand the true nature of reality one cannot take the proper actions for one's own wellbeing, that of fellow living beings and the planet. Meditation is therefore far more than simply a relaxation technique, used in Western contexts.

The origin of GNH is a counter-movement against economic growth and accounting in terms of GNP (Ura et al. 2012; Ura 2004). This is why an index was devised (*GNH index*, as of 2010, conducted every 5 years), to also numerically express how multidimensional wellbeing can be measured, if one deems it important to measure (knowing is measuring is not necessarily a Buddhist concept). Buddhist knowledge systems, however, stress that knowing is controlling one's ('monkey') mind. This means not only one's own mind, but also the greater Mind that encompasses the world and everything in it.

Material wellbeing and spiritual development go hand in hand and mutually reinforce one another. One strives at harmony between 'inner skills' and 'outer circumstances', respect for nature, compassion, and balance and moderation and interdependence of all things (Ura et al. 2012; Phuntsho 2013; Tideman 2004; Van Norren 2017, 2025c).

Government policies take culture as a basic pillar on which all other development pillars rest: socio-economic development, environment care and good governance. The *constitution* is written on the basis of GNH, although it is a non-binding guiding concept. The GNH index includes nine dimensions: It enshrines values such as (1) psychological well-being, (2) time use (balance), (3) cultural diversity and resilience and (4) community vitality, as well as conventional human development and economic indicators on (5) living standards, (6) education, (7) health, (8) good governance as well as sustainability indicators in terms of (9) ecological diversity (Ura et al. 2012). Nevertheless, there are *issues with implementation* around, for example, high youth unemployment and rural-urban migration as well as out-migration abroad, farmer-wildlife confrontations due to conservation, hydro-dams causing biodiversity loss, and implementing GNH-education in hierarchical schools (Van Norren 2017; Schroeder 2014).

In the run up of the *SDG negotiations* Bhutan was very pro-active in promoting Happiness as an overarching goal for the SDGs, starting with proposing it as a ninth millennium development goal. After a change of government, however, Bhutan took a backseat and mostly lobbied for 'mental health' in SDG3 (SDG OWG position Bhutan) (Van Norren 2025c).

The take of Bhutanese on the *SDGs* is generally a pragmatic and optimistic one, the SDGs are a good starting point, but more important is to incorporate one's own cultural values and metric in such schemes. These value systems are the basis for change, not the metric in itself. Metrics simply keep track of which values are rising



and which one are declining. The GNH index is a good indicator of Bhutan's road to modernist development (one of the last countries to do so). Traditional values such as community vitality, cultural vibrancy and spirituality are declining (GNH index 2010–2022; Ura et al. 2023) though partially curbed by government measures. This decline also demonstrates that without a global change towards multidimensional wellbeing (indicators and attitudes), local change such as in Bhutan remains very challenging. Additions to *specific SDGs* follow similar lines like Ubuntu but additionally emphasize culture as basis for development (4), psychological and spiritual development (3), sacredness of nature (14, 15) and the codependent origination (relatedness) of life (17).

Building upon the SDG gaps identified in Van Norren 2025c, we formulated *Happiness principles* for a new framework post 2030 in Table 2. The Gross National Happiness Index was the first comprehensive multidimensional poverty index, based on an indigenous concept of wellbeing, serving as inspiration for the UN multidimensional poverty index developed by Oxford University.

The Indigenous Global North: The 'Round Life' in Arbediehtu, the Sami Worldview

Europe was once a continent of indigenous beliefs and was in itself colonized by different empires (amongst others the Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church). Without throwing away the benefits that modernization, industrialization and enlightenment brought, one may also want to revisit the indigenous history of the Global North and look at those examples that still exist. Instead of discarding such practices as primitive and in need of development, one may look at the opportunities they offer. One such example are the Sami people, living in territories (Sapmi) within Sweden, Norway, Finland and Russia.

Arbediehtu, or Sami traditional knowledge, is a term that was adopted in 2010 by the Samediggi, to capture the various Sami traditions in one term (Dahlström et al. 2021). The Sami worldview includes belief in *Mother Earth* and ecological use of natural resources as a survival strategy, adapting to the changing circumstances. The worldview can also be called '*the round life*', which symbolizes a holistic view, whereby everything is interconnected: People rely on mutual help and respect, and identify with all living beings. This means that all living beings are due respect and compassion. Their beliefs include spirits and divinities linked to nature (Boekraad and Hutzel 2016; Dahlström et al. 2021; Håkansson and Lundberg 2022). *Nature* is considered home; animals are considered equal to humans and natural phenomena possess a soul.³ Shamanism plays an important role (Tervo et al. 2003). The concept of *livelihood* ('birgejupmi') is closely linked to both the community and individual's way of living, which consists of spiritual, social and economic aspects. It "necessitates maintaining a balance between the natural environment and society

³ Barclay, Emily. The Sámi Traditional World View through Decline and Ascent (utexas.edu). *Dieda* <https://www.laits.utexas.edu/sami/dieda/anthro/worldview.htm#:~:text=In%20this%20respect%2C%20the%20S%C3%A1mi,of%20physical%20and%20metaphysical%20parts>.



and attending to people's physical, mental and social health" (Porsanger and Gutorm 2011, 14) and "having enough to live off of– which demands gratitude and humility towards nature" (Moss 2025, 74).

There is no word for nature, religion, culture or modernity in Sami language (Porsanger 2011). Sami consider the *sustainability discourse* as alien to them, creating a separation between nature and culture, which is incongruent with their worldview (Dahlström et al. 2021; Håkansson and Lundberg 2022). Sustainability, green infrastructure and green transition policies go at the expense of their ecological lifestyle and force them to live more unsustainably. One could call this '*green colonialism*' (Håkansson and Lundberg 2022, 13–14). However, to stop resource extraction in Sami territory, including hydropower, wind power, forestry and mining, a country like Sweden would have to give up extraction rights over 50% of their territory (Dahlström et al. 2021, 13). Finland equally justifies similar activities in Sami territory in the name of sustainable development (Håkansson and Lundberg 2022, 13). The mentioned authors thereby rightfully ask: Sustainability for whom? What is sustainable?

Implementation of Sami lifestyle has been very hard for the Sami lately. For example, after over two centuries of infringement on their territories, forced migration and restrictions on reindeer herding, Sweden recognized the Sami as Indigenous People in 1977 and 2006, but did not ratify the legal instruments recognizing their rights as indigenous, the ILO Convention 169 and the UNDRIP, arguing that they are an internally colonized people (within the state) and only one of four minorities (Dahlström et al. 2021) (however, all IP are colonized within a state). In Sweden, the Sami have obtained a special (constitutional) position in 1993 through the Sami parliament (Samediggi), administering culture, language and (reindeer) industry (Dahlström et al. 2021, 2). The Norwegian legislation is equally 'an expression of the state's lack of understanding and respect for the Sami's rights to culture, land and resources' (Henriksen 2011). In Norway Sami are organized in the Sameting, the Sami Assembly since 1989, with administrative responsibility in language, culture, and education, though the East Sami (and, in practice, their interests) are not represented here.⁴ Finland has a Sami parliament since 1995 (preceded by a delegation since 1973) concerned with language, culture, and education.⁵ The *Sami Council* (1992) unites Sami in international representation under the principle that they are one people with their own language, culture, history and traditions, claiming rights over their territory, water and economic activities (herding) and a right to self-development.

Only the Swedish court case of Girjas in 2020 recognized some *land use rights* for a specific area and a specific group, but no territorial sovereignty and refraining from calling these rights indigenous. After years of adaptation strategies, the Sami are now asserting themselves in terms of rights, going beyond asking for consultation (in resource extraction) and co-management of their lands. Current policies and rights have also divided the Sami into those who still live their traditional reindeer herding lifestyle who get some recognition, and those who are not (as they were

⁴ Minority Rights Group, Sami in Norway, <https://minorityrights.org/communities/sami-2/>.

⁵ The Sámi Parliament of Finland, <https://samediggi.fi/en/>.



mainly forced out of their lifestyle), dividing the community in ways that Sami do not acknowledge (Dahlström et al. 2021; Håkansson and Lundberg 2022).

In terms of the Sami *stance on the SDGs*, one can refer to the several statements of indigenous people made during the SDG negotiations (see OWG position IP): “Culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development; ensuring a holistic, identity and culturally sensitive approach and differential development; recognition of collective rights; local territorial management with local economies; recognition of UNDRIP and the participation of IP in the implementation of SDGs” (Van Norren 2017, 220; Van Norren 2025b). The words green transition and sustainable development generate negative reactions among Sami (Håkansson and Lundberg 2022, 31). There is no analysis of Sami views on the *specific SDGs*, but one may assume that it is close to indigenous Buen Vivir.

Based upon this analysis we formulated *Sami principles* for a new framework post 2030 in Table 2. These are complementary to core SDG principles, such as individual use (and rights) of social services, sustainable use of resources (rather than intrinsic value), economic growth, accountability and rule of law.

Comparative Analysis

When comparing the four worldviews they all represent a *biocentric view of life* in different degrees and interdependence of all life rather than an anthropocentric worldview. Furthermore, they emphasize collective flourishing and dignity rather than individual rights; a holistic view on education, health and gender values (including the emotional, spiritual and practical); restorative justice rather than punitive justice; and the importance of reciprocity and interculturality and interdependence.

Hence, we suggest a different concept of wellbeing namely *‘Harmony with Nature’* as an umbrella concept. Other principles could be: (social SDGs:) Harmony with oneself, others and nature; interculturality and epistemic diversity; community flourishing; balance of masculine and feminine values; intertwining of spiritual, emotional, physical, communal health; serving others as educational goal; (green SDGs:) intrinsic value of nature, as part of the community; recognizing ancestral legacy and future generations’ needs; (economic SDGs:) economics of collective well-being, earth governance and society-oriented businesses; (SDG16:) participatory, ‘deep’ consensus oriented democracy; collective dignity, restorative justice; (global partnership:) interdependence of all life.

There has been little to no exchange between worldviews on governmental level (except within the OWG SDG negotiations and a 2015 meeting between Bhutan and Ecuador, Bamat 2015) with Van Norren 2017 being the first academic comparison.

In policy *implementation* Bhutan has been the most comprehensive (most outspokenly between 2008 and 2013) regardless of the successive governments’ outlook (due to institutionalizing an index, policy and project screening tools) but struggles with youth employment and emigration; followed by Ecuador between 2007 and 2021 (leftwing governments) with considerable redistribution of wealth. South Africa focused mainly on proper government behavior with limited success, flanked



by socio-economic and black empowerment policies, but hampered by apartheid legacies and corruption. Nordic countries hardly implemented (or embraced) Sami principles except limitedly for Sami territory.

Living in harmony with nature was relatively successful in Bhutan, but not in most prominent advocates Ecuador (and Bolivia), and ignored in the Nordics (limited to Sami cultural rights enforcement) and South Africa (limited to Ubuntu biodiversity policies since 2023 and cultural rights lawsuits, but virtually no enforcement of constitutional future generations rights). *Jurisprudence* on especially the constitutions of South Africa and Ecuador shows that enforcement of respectively socio-economic rights and rights of nature can be effective (Van Norren 2022b, 2025a, b). Tensions between development and environment prove hard to solve without changes at global level.

Derived from our Multiple-Eyes Seeing analysis, we conclude that *development and sustainability are contested concepts*. Scholarly discourses include different approaches to tackle these controversies. These range from embracing:

- Sustainability, rather than development only (Rio process);
- Participation, rather than top-down-approaches (inclusive development literature);
- Decolonizing development to emphasize humans, rather than abstract economic growth (Ubuntu, GNH, planetary survival);
- Rejecting the concept of development and sustainability, seeking out alternatives to development (degrowth, Buen Vivir).

Political obstacles to embracing the latter two *globally* are numerous. The 2007 UNDRIP formulating indigenous principles and rights was opposed by developed nations for over 20 years, notably by the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand who voted against it (and only later supported it), even though it is normative and not legally binding.⁶ Colonization brought exploitation of nature, peoples and erasure of their cultures including knowledge systems (epistemics) over centuries; thus, decolonization of the mindset in the North and South is a long-term process. However, epistemic justice is not only a moral imperative (Mungwini 2018), but indispensable to achieve planetary survival, as the logic of economic growth—necessary to pay-off interests on state debts—is untenable. Hence a transformation towards the principles mentioned above entails a new financial architecture, a new logic to recyclable production and consumption, to food and energy systems and the idea of what generates value and what should be remunerated. Hence an entire rethink of society, which starts at the conceptual level. Current trends of democratic backsliding, increasing authoritarianism, exploding inequalities, trade protection and wars, increasing indebtedness of nations, an aging world population (except in Africa), periodic withdrawals from the Paris Climate accord by some nations, deconstruction of communities, exploding urbanization, increasing energy consumption, rapid technological

⁶ Karunanidhi, Mira. 2023. What would pulling out of the UNDRIP mean for New Zealand? The Spinoff. <https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/14-12-2023/what-would-pulling-out-of-the-undrip-mean-for-new-zealand>



Table 3 Proposals for a future Culture Goal after 2030

SDG 18 Culture as the basis for sustainable development (SD)

Culture in SD: culture, as a sector of activity, can be understood as a self-sustaining pillar in sustainable development

Culture for SD: culture, as a system of shared meanings within a community, has an impact on how sustainable development measures are assessed by that community and, subsequently, is a driver for sustainable development that can mediate between different environmental, social and economic concerns

Culture as SD or Harmony with Nature: as the defining characteristic of humanity, cultures, in all their diversity and richness, embody values and are sources of identity, by virtue of which culture can have a transformative role as a creator of sustainability, promoting sustainable lifestyles and societies while enhancing quality of life

Domain

Principles of (cultural) wellbeing

Measurement examples

Culture

Recognize the intrinsic value of culture and of (bio) diversity of being (ontology) and knowing (epistem- ics) as basis of sustainable development, driver of transformation, and as an integral part of the unity and harmony of humankind and respect for all sentient beings

Measure space for intercultural philosophy, diversity in cultural expression, cultural rights and indigenous knowledge, heritage preservation and (cultural interac- tion with) nature as part of heritage; cultural policies contribution to SD; sustainability of cultural sector

Recognize the basic need of humans for preservation and revitalization of (intangible) cultural heritage, interculturality and plurinationality as well as the interconnection of nature as part of (indigenous) culture

Community identity and culture

Recognize that people are social beings tied to their community and culture and cater for the needs of the collective, including the past and future generations and needs for community autonomy to attain sustain- able lifestyles (such as food and energy sovereignty). Reaffirm indigenous rights as laid down in UNDRIP and intertwining of IP culture, land and nature (and related rights)

Measure community vitality, redress for past cultural wrongs, and upholding of IP rights

Nature and culture

Recognize the (traditions regarding) intrinsic value of nature, worldwide traditions of respect for and gratitude to (Mother) Earth, living in harmony with nature and rights of nature and nature as part of the community and hence stewardship for the Earth

Measure RoN development and harmony with nature practices



Table 3 (continued)

Wellbeing economics	Collective wellbeing of communities and individuals, culture and nature is the overall aim of economic development, including meaningful employment and livelihood, society oriented businesses, cultural agricultural practices in harmony with nature and ethical, culturally sensitive digital transformation	Measure community wellbeing alongside individual wellbeing and employment, and (legal) space for the commons; contribution of creativity to economics; ethics of digital transformation
Integral health	Recognize the intertwining of physical health with emotional, mental, spiritual and communal health, time balance and happiness (inner balance); and need for multilayered healthcare	Measure the development of integral health, balanced time use and influence of spiritual practices and 'alter-native' medicine practices on health
Moral Education	Epistemic justice and diversity of knowledge fosters education for moral personhood, the principle aim of education, including care for the Earth. Dimensions include nature, social, cultural, intellectual, aesthetic, academic, spiritual and moral skills	Measure other than cognitive skills; cultural education; and space for diverse cultural knowledge systems
Equal gender values	Balance of masculine, feminine and community values fosters even development	Measure economics of care; upholding of community values
Peaceful governance and cultural practices	Peaceful governance includes restorative justice (alongside punitive justice), intergenerational healing, compassionate leadership considering multiple generations, (cultural) local governance practices; participatory, deliberative and representative democracy and valuing consensus-oriented politics (alongside oppositional politics)	Measure restorative justice practices and diverse participative democracy development and space for 7 generation leadership
Global cultural partnership	Partnership strives at collective dignity for the community of life, mutual aid, cultural exchange and the recognition of interdependence of all (human) species	Measure legal developments in upholding collective dignity, community rights, cultural exchange and respect for the principle of interdependence



advancements (including AI), increasing natural disasters, environmental degradation and food insecurity are making the task ever more complex (TWI2050 2018; 35–67; UNDESA, IGS 2023). TWI 2050 stresses the need to invest in human capacities and capabilities for change, alongside decarbonization, ethical digital transformation, (biological) food efficiency and smart cities.

Therefore, it is time to take *culture* seriously, as a driver of sustainable development. Countries around the globe recognize the value of intangible heritage next to tangible cultural and natural world heritage, as laid down in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) convention of 2005 and numerous UNESCO development and culture conferences (starting in Stockholm 1998⁷ and lastly in Mondiacult 2022 and 2025). The value of culture in sustainable development has been also reaffirmed by the European countries, albeit after the adoption of the SDGs (EU Council resolution 2019, see especially ad 12 and 13 (see also table 3 second, third and fourth row)⁸; and in May 2020, adding ‘Culture as a driver of sustainable development’ as a priority to its 2019–2022 work plan for culture (Council of the EU 2020)⁹; and two reports on Culture and SD in 2022).¹⁰

Conclusion

In the context of *post colonialism*, we plead for an intercultural dialog on development and sustainability concepts. Preferably, this should not take place only in the context of UNESCO, but in a wider UN context. Worldviews do not only concern heritage and cultural expressions, but they embody clear principles on economic, legal and leadership theory (Van Norren 2017, 2020; Van Norren and Beehner 2021). Due to (neo) colonial processes these have too long been relegated to the world of primitiveness, anthropology and western concepts of culture (as performing arts and crafts). When discussing future development schemes, one should first consider if our concept of sustainability and development are still optimal to face the *planetary crisis*. One also needs to consider social sciences discussions on power relations and root causes of inequality.

This article does not give a blueprint on new development goals. First of all, the *use of goals and indicators is not universal* and just one way of enhancing dialog on sustainability, namely the Western result-based management one.

⁷ Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development.

⁸ Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on the Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development (2019/C 410/01). [eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42019Y1206\(01\)&qid=1610484078516&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:42019Y1206(01)&qid=1610484078516&from=EN).

⁹ Council of the EU (2020), Council conclusions amending the Work Plan for Culture (2019–2022), 2020/C 193/05.

¹⁰ EU. 2022a. Commission publishes new report on culture for sustainable development in EU actions. Culture and Creativity, <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-publishes-new-report-on-culture-for-sustainable-development-in-eu-actions>; see EUR-Lex—52022DC0709—EN—EUR-Lex;

EU. 2022b. Stormy times. Publications Office of the EU, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/0380f31c-37c9-11ed-9c68-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>.



It does not give a strategy for achievement of the goals, nor the solution for the planetary crisis.

From a functional point of view, one may want to *extend the current SDGs*, since they will most likely not be reached. SDGs have been widely communicated and were agreed upon by all UN member states. Setting up national implementation strategies has taken years. Yet at the same time the complementary global and national strategies how to achieve these goals will need to be discussed again. Indigenen theory may offer guiding principles in this regard.

One way of reconciling the different views may be to incorporate a *Culture Goal* in the current SDGs (instead of controversial adaptation of current SDGs), stipulating the importance of culture to achieve sustainable development and outlining the strategic principles. Combining the above-mentioned EU statement with four indigenous views in Five Eyes Seeing, these principles could be as formulated in the Table 3.

Whether such a discussion is feasible and possible to a large extent depends on attitudes of more affluent countries, nowadays both located in the Global North and South, and global elites, both still deeply engrained into the neo-liberal logic of development and modernism. One may conclude that perhaps the problem is not lack of knowledge to solve the current social and environmental crisis, but the willingness to give up (material) privileges for a different concept of wellbeing.

We call for the integration of cosmovisions into any future ‘development’ or ‘sustainability’ scheme, not on the instrumental, but on the conceptual level. We do so not in order to safeguard global elite’s futurities (Eva Mendoza 2018), but pleading for true learning, unlearning and collaboration for the survival of our shared planet.

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Declarations

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethical Approval This study does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

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