Number 17, May 2009

International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth
Poverty Practice, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP

Poverty in Focus

Indigenising Development

FROM THE EDITORS

*Poverty in Focus is a regular publication of the **International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth** (IPC-IG). Its purpose is to present the results of research on poverty and inequality in the developing world. Support is provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida).*

Editors
Alcida Rita Ramos, Rafael Guerreiro Osório and José Pimenta

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Front page: Suruí men in the indigenous land Sete de Setembro, Brazilian Amazonia (Cacoal, RO). Capacity building course on the use of new technologies by the Equipe de Conservação da Amazônia, ACT Brasil, www.actbrasil.org.br. Photo by Fernando Bizerra. ©ACT Brasil. IPC-IG and the Editors thank ACT Brasil and the photographer for granting permission of use.

Editors' note: IPC-IG and the editors gratefully acknowledge the generous contributions, without any monetary or material remuneration, by all the authors of this issue.

IPC-IG is a joint project between the United Nations Development Programme and Brazil to promote South-South Cooperation on applied poverty research. It specialises in analysing poverty and inequality and offering research-based policy recommendations on how to reduce them. IPC-IG is directly linked to the Poverty Group of the Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP and the Government of Brazil.

IPC-IG Director (a.i.)
Degol Hailu

International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), Poverty Practice, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP

Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco O, 7º andar
70052-900 Brasilia, DF Brazil

ipc@ipc-undp.org
www.ipc-undp.org

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Among the many social groups that have been historically excluded, indigenous peoples comprise one that offers great challenges to development. Although their assimilation has been a goal of the national societies that engulfed them, it is disputable whether indigenous peoples desire the type of social inclusion that development, in its many forms, can produce. At the same time, development seems irreversible, and resistance to it might have consequences far more adverse than those brought by acceptance. The best way to overcome the challenges seems to be to indigenise development: to put it to work on behalf of indigenous peoples instead of putting them to work for a model of development that is not only alien to them but that frequently does violence to their culture. With this in mind:

Alcida Rita Ramos, Rafael Guerreiro Osorio and José Pimenta introduce the theme and the challenges to indigenising development, considering points raised by the other contributors.

Gersem Baniwa writes about the dilemmas that development poses to indigenous peoples in Brazil, who simultaneously want to enjoy its benefits, particularly the material and technological resources of the modern world, and to also keep their traditions.

Myrna Cunningham and Dennis Mairena explain that the very concept of development is inimical to some core values of many indigenous cultures of Nicaragua, such as collective labour and property, egalitarian distribution, and holistic world views.

Jaime Urrutia Cerutti presents his thoughts on why in Peru, unlike Bolivia and Ecuador, there is no massive and strong social movement of indigenous peoples. The indigenous population comprises the majority in these three Andean countries, and is already integrated into their modern national societies.

Stuart Kirsch departs from the concept of human development to show how a mining project in Suriname might enhance the economic freedom of some indigenous groups at the expense of some other important freedoms associated with being indigenous.

José Pimenta tells the success story of an Ashaninka group in Brazil who became an archetype of the ecological indian, running sustainable development projects, and managing and protecting the environment. This success was context-specific, however, and was not without cost to their way of life.

Charles R. Hale recalls the dramatic impacts of the civil war on the indigenous peoples of Guatemala. Caught between the state and the guerrillas, they have been through genocide, and modest advancements achieved earlier were reversed. A re-emerging Maya social movement now faces the resistance of the country's elite.

Bruce Grant takes us back to the Soviet Union and pinpoints some of the differences of socialist development, showing how it affected indigenous peoples in Siberia who were paradoxically seen as both a model of primitive communism and of backwardness. It was a dear goal of Soviet planners to make them leap forward as an example of the benefits of socialism.

David G. Anderson considers how the dismantling of the Soviet Union affected indigenous peoples in Siberia. Current Russian models of indigenous development are worth considering because they are not purely capitalist: private corporations that take over projects assume many of the roles of the former socialist state in welfare provision, and the overall repercussions are both favourable and otherwise.

Bernard Saladin d'Anglure and Françoise Morin discuss the impact of the colonisation and development of the Arctic on the Inuit. Charged by the Soviet Union for neglecting the human development of the Inuit, Canada devised a policy that succeeded in raising their material standards of living while culturally impoverishing them.

Carolina Sánchez, José del Val, and Carlos Zolla emphasise the importance of monitoring the welfare and development of indigenous peoples by devising culturally adequate information systems. They summarise the state-of-the-art proposals, outline the main demands of indigenous leaders and experts as regards such systems, and present the successful experience of their programme in Guerrero, Mexico.

We hope that the articles in this issue of *Poverty in Focus* help raise awareness in the development community about problems that do not have immediate and easy solutions, but that are crucial to shaping the present and future of indigenous peoples.

The Editors

Indigenising Development

by Alcida Rita Ramos, University of Brasilia; Rafael Guerreiro Osório, International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth; and José Pimenta, University of Brasilia, Brazil

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples estimates that throughout the world there are 370 million indigenous people in about 70 countries who "*have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live*".*

Retaining such characteristics, however, has been very difficult because most nation-states have sought to assimilate indigenous people. Blunt statements to that effect are no longer acceptable in many political arenas, as shown by the fact that 144 countries voted for approval of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Nevertheless, in actual practice, dominant societies continue to follow assimilationist policies in different ways, mostly in the name of development for all. But it is clear that, more often than not, development has had dreadful consequences for indigenous peoples, pushing entire societies into new conditions of poverty and even extinction.

The concept of development has a number of different connotations. Although one might regard the whole history of mankind within the framework of development, contemporary conceptions of development are actually a Western product that was perfected, most particularly, during the Cold War.

Following World War Two, development was conceived in strictly economic terms. Attendant on the quest for GDP growth was the general belief that economic development would yield development in other spheres of life. Development in any society was thought to follow an evolutionary process: from basic commodity suppliers, through capital accumulation to industrialisation, in turn leading to urbanisation and "modernisation". According to liberal theorists, the final product of development would be the establishment of meritocratic democracies with market economies, social protection and mild socioeconomic inequality. Marxist theorists went further and posited egalitarian stateless societies with collective ownership of the means of production.

Involuntarily, indigenous peoples have played a contradictory role in this process. While they revealed alternative ways of life and thus inspired notable Western thinkers whose social philosophies helped shape the modern world, they were also regarded as crude, primitive and uncivilised. Two of our contributors remind us of this.

David Anderson recalls how native societies inspired the accounts of the highly mobile and egalitarian societies imagined by both Marxist and liberal theorists as the ultimate outcome of development. *Bruce Grant* shows how Soviet planners regarded Siberian native people as both the prototype of primitive communism and exemplars of the backwardness that socialist development should and would eradicate.

The development of indigenous peoples, ethnocentrically understood as their assimilation into the civilised world, became an international concern in the Cold War years. As *Bernard Saladin d'Anglure* and *Françoise Morin* tell us, the Soviet Union accused Canada of ignoring the human development of the Inuit.

In response, the Canadian government devised a strategy for Inuit development which, apart from its ideological slant, resembled that of socialist planners for their own indigenous peoples. According

Sovereignty, self-government and self-determination are core values in the Western world, but they are seldom contemplated in relation to indigenous peoples.

To indigenise development is to take into account the indigenous version of these values.

Above all, indigenising development requires a drastic change in attitude on the part of development planners. It is crucial that they recognise their ignorance about things indigenous, and admit from the start that they do not know what is best for indigenous peoples.

It is imperative that indigenous people participate and, most importantly, that their opinions are heard and heeded, including their right to say no.

* United Nations website: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/history.html>.

to these authors, the Inuit achieved a certain Western standard of living, as did the Siberian groups discussed by *David Anderson* and *Bruce Grant* before the dismantling of the Soviet Union. But material improvement brought about various degrees of assimilation that resulted in the loss of intangible goods and cultural impoverishment, especially for the Inuit.

Whether in the Marxist or liberal mode, development always entails the exploitation of natural resources, which makes indigenous people an "obstacle" to progress. They occupy lands often rich in resources that are coveted by the dominant societies. To assimilate indigenous peoples, therefore, or simply to usurp their lands, has been considered a necessary step in fostering development.

National interest, often translated as that of particular economic groups, has always taken precedence over indigenous interests, as *Jaime Urrutia* reminds us. For most of the twentieth century, regardless of ideological changes, the treatment accorded to indigenous peoples was very similar to their treatment during the centuries of European expansion and colonialism.

Critiques of purely economic development have led to the concept's further elaboration into enlarged versions, such as "human development", "sustainable development" and "development with identity". The latter two are most often applied to indigenous people, albeit in terms of discourse rather than action, as *Jaime Urrutia* and *José Pimenta* point out. In the case of "sustainable development" there is the added risk of equating indigenous peoples with nature—for instance, as a species of the rain forest.

From the Western point of view, indigenous development has mostly revolved around the issue of land rights: how to exploit indigenous natural resources without confronting contemporary ethical sensibilities?

Land-grabbing has had a major impact on indigenous lives. Consequently, the struggle for land recognition and territorial autonomy has been a constant concern. This issue is discussed by almost all the contributors. *Myrna Cunningham and Dennis Mairena* report some advances in this respect among the indigenous peoples of Nicaragua's Atlantic coast, as do *Bernard Saladin d'Anglure* and *Françoise Morin* in their discussion of the Canadian Inuit. However, these are exceptions rather than the rule.

Indigenous land problems range from limited rights to no rights at all. The Ashaninka of the Amônia River in the Brazilian Amazonia have recently had their land demarcated, as *José Pimenta* describes, but under Brazilian law they have no rights over the subsoil. *Stuart Kirsch* adds that the Lokono and the Trio of Suriname, with untitled lands, are forced to endorse development projects on the grounds that this is the only way to secure some benefit from mining operations on their territory.

The recognition and demarcation of indigenous land is crucial. As *Gersem Baniwa* states, without land rights it is impossible for indigenous peoples even to think of development. Unlike the standard Western views of development,

What is this about development?

In my homeland I used to calmly wake up in the morning. I didn't have to worry about clothing because my house was isolated, surrounded by my gardens and the forest. I would quietly admire the immense nature of the Santiago River while my wife lit the fire. I would bathe in the river and at daybreak go off in the canoe to bring some *cunchis* or catch some *mojarras*. Without worrying about time, I would return home. My wife would joyfully welcome me, cook the fish, and give me my *cuñashca* as I warmed myself by the fire. We would chat, my wife, my children and I till we had no more to say. Then she would go to the garden and my son and I to the forest. While walking in the bush I would teach my son about nature, about our history, everything according to my taste and the teachings of our ancestors. We would hunt and cheerfully go back home with the game. My wife would happily welcome us, having just bathed and combed her hair, with her new *tarache*. We would eat until we were full. I would rest if I wished, otherwise, I would visit my neighbours and make crafts; soon my relatives would arrive and we would drink *masato*, tell tales and, if everything was all right, we would end up dancing all night.

Now with development things have changed. There are morning hours for labor. We work the rice fields till late and return home with nothing. My wife, grumpy, con *las justas*, gives me a dish of yucca with salt. We hardly talk; my son goes to school where they teach him things about Lima. After harvest, a thousand squabbles to earn a pittance. Everything goes to the truck driver, to the shopkeepers. All I take home are some little cans of tuna fish, a few packages of noodles, but what is worse is that this type of agriculture eats up communal land and soon there will be none left. I can see all my fellow countrymen rummaging all the garbage dumps in Lima.

When I was in Bogotá I wanted to know how the millionaires lived and they told me that the millionaires have their isolated houses amidst beautiful landscapes; they calmly get up in the morning to admire the landscape, bathe and return with breakfast ready waiting for them, and as there is no hurry, they chat leisurely with their wives and children. The children go to a select school where they learn according to their fathers' tastes. The man strolls through his property and shoots at some birds or goes fishing, and on his return he finds the table set and the lady well groomed for lunch. He sleeps after the meal or does some painting or any other hobby such as carpentry. Then he goes out for a drink with friends and, if they want, they can dance as much as they feel like.

Then I ask myself: does this all mean that I and all my fellow countrymen will end up in the garbage dumps so that one or two millionaires can have the life we used to have? What is this about development?

Andrés Nuningo Sesén, a Huambisa Indian from Peru

Source: *Ramos, A. R. (1998).* Indigenism: ethnic politics in Brazil. *Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin Press. p.195.*

for many indigenous peoples, nature is not—to paraphrase *Cunningham* and *Mairena*—a grocery store at the service of men. Land and resources are not reduced to mere economic assets; they are pillars of a life in which the economic sphere is but one among many and quite often subsumed under others, including belief systems. Development planners, however, have systematically ignored the cultural dimensions that distinguish indigenous logic from Western logic.

Indigenous people have felt and resisted the negative impacts of development. Bewildered and distressed, many indigenous leaders have questioned the principles and logic of development, and have spoken, usually to deaf ears, against the abuses committed in its name. There are plenty of testimonial reports by indigenous persons to that effect. How better could we sketch the traps of development for indigenous peoples than to present the compelling message by *Andrés Nuningo Sesén*, a Huambisa man from Peru, which is reproduced in the box?

His message underscores the fact that development generates poverty and severe inequality where there were none before, that it confronts indigenous peoples with programmes that are alien to their way of life, a point much stressed in the contributions to this issue.

Even among the rare cases in which native people escaped material deprivation, one finds alcoholism, prostitution, obesity and alarming rates of suicide among young people.

Though development has not been so beneficial to indigenous peoples, it has brought about undeniable gains. As Sen (1999) has stated, never in history have so many lived so well and so long as today.

Indigenous peoples are aware of this and want to share in the benefits of the modern world. As *Gersem Baniwa* notes, it is not a matter of demonising and rejecting development unreservedly. Stepping aside is not a feasible option in this day and age. Either indigenous peoples master development, or they are overrun by it. The key issue, then, is how to indigenise development.

But to convert development into an indigenous enterprise is not so easy. As development necessarily brings about change, it is imperative that indigenous persons acquire the skills to "dominate the dominating system", as *Gersem Baniwa* puts it. Furthermore, there is the risk that those equipped to deal with Western politics and bureaucracy may be viewed with suspicion by their fellows.

A major obstacle to indigenising development is racism. Nation-state elites ignore or deny the capacity of indigenous peoples to forward their own view of development and devise strategies to carry it out. *Charles Hale* gives an account of the Maya of Guatemala. Though perfectly able to construct their own forms of development, and having survived a genocidal war, they find themselves encumbered by racism.

The idea that indigenous peoples cannot learn the ways of the West is still widespread, despite the presence of outstanding indigenous intellectuals and politicians.

There are no ready and easy ways to bring acceptable development to indigenous peoples. Besides the central issue of land rights, two other key problems must be tackled: information and participation. Development makes wide use of statistics and socioeconomic indicators. As *Carolina Sánchez, José del Val* and *Carlos Zolla* assert, access to information is still the Achilles heel of indigenous development. The traditional indicators of development are mute about spheres of life that are important for indigenous peoples.

A new set of indicators is needed to measure and monitor how indigenous peoples are faring. This involves major methodological challenges, starting with how to properly identify indigenous peoples in primary data collection.

Finally we come to the issue of participation. Sovereignty, self-government and self-determination are core values in the Western world, but they are seldom contemplated in relation to indigenous peoples. To indigenise development is to take into account the indigenous version of these values. If indigenous peoples are to participate in development processes, they must participate actively in them. Not all of them may be prepared to do so, just as not all Westerners are. To fully understand what is involved in development processes, particularly the long-term outcome of some projects, indigenous peoples should be trained specifically for this purpose.

Bewildered and distressed, many indigenous leaders have questioned the principles and logic of development, and have spoken, usually to deaf ears, against the abuses committed in its name.

Above all, indigenising development requires a drastic change in attitude on the part of development planners. It is crucial that they recognise their ignorance about things indigenous, and admit from the start that they do not know what is best for indigenous peoples. Without an exercise of humility, a necessary condition for proper learning, developers will continue to make the traditional mistakes regarding development among indigenous peoples.

Hence it is imperative that indigenous people participate and, most importantly, that their opinions are heard and heeded, including their right to say no. In short, no one knows better than indigenous people themselves what sort of development is most appropriate for them, and, being appropriate, has the best chance of success.

■

Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. New York, Random House.

by Gersem Baniwa
Centro Indígena de Estudos e Pesquisas (CINEP) and Ministry of Education, Brasilia, Brazil

To Dominate the System and Not to be Dominated by it

Contemporary indigenous peoples do want access to the material and technological resources of the modern world.

It is difficult to imagine the state implementing policies, programmes and actions that follow a pure indigenous logic.

The economy for indigenous peoples is part of a whole that cannot be split. It should be understood in its relationships and interdependencies with the natural, social, cultural and supernatural environments.

Thinking about policies for indigenous development in Brazil requires some knowledge of the historical processes of economic, political and cultural domination suffered by indigenous peoples. Any new proposals for changing the relationship between the Brazilian state and indigenous peoples will have to involve the deconstruction of the many forms of exploitation that were historically imposed on those peoples. Brazilian public policies have always sought to integrate and assimilate them into the national society, with a disregard for indigenous forms of economic and sociocultural organisation. The first step towards change is the dismantling of the current policy framework, marked by what are termed "assistentialist" practices and by political patronage.

If change is to be made, some key issues should be tackled. One is the territorial question. Unless indigenous peoples enjoy guaranteed land rights, it is not possible to think of their economic and sociocultural development. In Brazil today, more than 600 indigenous lands are awaiting regularisation. A second issue is the need for effective recognition—political, administrative and juridical—of indigenous peoples as autonomous social units endowed with specific collective rights, as stipulated in the Brazilian constitution. The third issue is the need to devise policies, programmes and actions that give priority to the advancement and realisation of local and ethnic capacities, building on human and natural resources, as well as on traditional knowledge.

Current policy formulas, even if successful in other settings, cannot be unthinkingly transposed and applied to indigenous peoples. This has been the main sin of the so-called project culture or "*projetismo*", wherein development projects are considered as ready-made panaceas with universal application (Verdum, 2006). Indigenous peoples have different needs for which provision should be made, notably their cultural specificities and particularly those regarding their own representations of time, space and rhythm, their economic logic, and their means of production, distribution and consumption. Moreover, programmes and actions for indigenous peoples cannot be simple components of generic policies. They must be guided by appropriate principles and criteria, and they should have their own safe, efficient and sufficient funding sources and their own administrative structures.

In Brazil there are some innovative experiences based on conceptual and methodological advances. These include three programmes of indigenous or ethno-development that are worth mentioning. The Ministry of the Environment oversees the Projeto Demonstrativo dos Povos Indígenas and the Carteira Indígena. The former aims to fund local sustainable development projects, as well as to promote the institutional strengthening and leadership building of indigenous organisations. The latter programme finances small projects related to food production and handicrafts. The Brazilian Department for Indigenous Affairs (FUNAI) runs the Programa de Proteção das Terras Indígenas da Amazônia Legal, which promotes enforcement of land rights.

Despite the innovative aspects of these experiences, some problems have not been overcome. In light of current processes of social and economic development, the impact that such programmes have on indigenous communities yield some lessons to be learned (Baniwa, 2006).

The first is that these programmes are demanded because they are often seen as means of fitting into Western standards, of achieving higher socio-political status, of gaining access to technology and of enjoying the benefits of development.

The second lesson is that these programmes become instruments of power, status and privilege for new indigenous leaders and their organisations.

The third is that the management logic of such programmes overtly contradicts the social, political and economic logic of indigenous peoples. Indigenous leaders who become involved in managing these programmes can be persecuted, mobbed and even subject to death threats, since their activity is often taken as a disregard for tradition. Nonetheless, indigenous peoples are not willing to give up the programmes, because they are the only means of bringing the technological and material benefits of the modern world to their tribes.

Contemporary indigenous peoples do want access to the material and technological resources of the modern world. They take this as a legitimate and lawful right, since they are aware that contact with the surrounding world, whether the relationship is symmetrical or asymmetrical, is irreversible. This leads them to re-think their conditions of existence and ethnic continuity—not to renounce or deny their culture but to update it according to their own wishes and goals.

Development projects, once they are framed in terms of indigenous sociocultural horizons, even in a limited way, may help reshape the battlefield of political and economic forces in a way that favours the true coexistence of cultures in a single nation-state. In a dynamic, plural coexistence of distinct lifestyles and worldviews, indigenous peoples ably manoeuvre and have shown that they do consciously something that Westerners seem incapable of doing: instead of excluding, they put together the diverse knowledge and technologies found in the inter-ethnic arena.

Given the social and historical context in which indigenous peoples live, scrutiny of the feasible alternatives available to them shows how partial is the naïve idea that development projects are necessarily harmful and unilaterally imposed. They indeed have many negative consequences, since they seek to offer instructions for integration into the modern world, but they should not be demonised.

As Sahlins (1978) has observed about the Pacific Basin, indigenous peoples fight for development projects, willing to be the protagonists of their own history, just as they did throughout the process of European colonisation, to which they did not succumb. And they do not stand by passively when faced with the perversity of the modern capitalist world, even when their local leaders are victimised (Baines, 1991).

The main point is not whether to accept or deny the current model of development projects imposed by the state, but to transform it into what contemporary indigenous peoples want; not to get rid of development, but to indigenise it. It is difficult to imagine the state implementing policies, programmes and actions that follow a pure indigenous logic. Money, equipment, technologies and everything that is identified with development can hardly be incorporated without causing change and even breaks with tradition.

Indigenous peoples thus have to dominate the dominating system so as not to be dominated by it. Their resistance is not merely defensive, but also offensive: appropriation of the dominating system is a proactive way of maintaining their otherness and ethnic autonomy.

The major challenge, therefore, is to enable indigenous peoples to establish for themselves the dynamics of their interaction with the surrounding world and its limits. This is the political task that ethno-development projects, theoretically, should accomplish in order to minimise the adverse impacts of integration processes.

Conflicts and contradictions happen because indigenous peoples cannot pierce the bureaucratic and administrative shield that prevents them from being part of decision-making processes, and thus their efforts to dominate the dominant system are frustrated. Since they still face many obstacles to exerting their right to have their voices heard and to have decision-making power over projects that affect them, they have to rely on non-indigenous advisors to help them find a path through the bureaucratic jungle.

The major challenge, therefore, is to enable indigenous peoples to establish for themselves the dynamics of their interaction with the surrounding world and its limits.

The commitment of those advisors is positive in the sense that it helps to lessen the likelihood that menacing projects will be implemented. But if the relationship with outside advisors is vertical, and the capacity to deal with the state and donors is not transferred, dependency is created, hindering the advance of indigenous peoples' protagonism.

To conclude, in order to put development at the service of indigenous peoples instead of at the service of those who stand to prosper from their exploitation, some points must be considered. One concerns the participation of indigenous peoples in all stages of policymaking: design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Participation, however, will not suffice if they do not fully understand in what they are being involved. Heavy investment in capacity building among indigenous peoples is thus essential. Non-indigenous professionals and advisors should be gradually replaced by indigenous professionals, who will take over projects, programmes and actions.

Services such as education, health and social assistance should be increasingly

provided by indigenous teachers, doctors, nurses and social assistants. Indigenous rights should be championed by indigenous lawyers. Technical assistance in rural activities, as well as in biodiversity management and preservation, should also be provided by trained indigenous people. These professionals will be better prepared to serve their communities, allying western knowledge and practices to those of their own culture in order to satisfy their demands. Furthermore, they will solve the problem of intermittent support, since they will be permanently available in the communities.

Indigenising development also implies having ethno-sustainability as a principle, means and goal of development. A holistic view of the complex indigenous reality is thus required. This is needed in order to go beyond the hegemonic logic that puts the economic dimension of life as an overwhelming determinant of all others.

Monetary income, for example, is something that indigenous people can use only to acquire food, goods and technology from the outside world and, though needed, it can come to weaken indigenous cultures' ways of using natural resources to produce the goods on which they have traditionally relied, creating or raising external dependency. Such impacts should be carefully considered.

The economy for indigenous peoples is part of a whole that cannot be split. It should be understood in its relationships and interdependencies with the natural, social, cultural and supernatural environments. Without such a change in approach, development policies for indigenous peoples will be doomed to a contradiction between their means and goals. ■

Baines, S. G. (1991). *É a FUNAI que sabe: A Frente de Atração Waimiri-Atroari*. Belém, Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi/ CNPq/SCT/PA.

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by Myrna Cunningham K. and Dennis Mairena A., Center for Indigenous People's Autonomy and Development (CIPAD), Nicaragua

Laman Laka: If I Have It You Have It, If You Have It I Have It

For the indigenous peoples of Nicaragua, development—as a tool for survival and well-being—is based on the rational and sustainable exploitation of the natural resources available in their lands.

This model of development is being threatened from the outside by logging in the river heads and basins.

It is a common mistake to define development in terms of increased productivity, modernisation, technology and wealth accumulation. Wealth is seen as the possession and accumulation of material goods. Such a concept of development is exogenous to indigenous peoples.

For the indigenous peoples of Nicaragua, development—as a tool for survival and well-being—is based on the rational and sustainable exploitation of the natural resources available in their lands. They do this following ancestral principles that express a holistic view of the interaction between humanity and the environment; collective labour and ownership; and the implementation and transmission of traditional knowledge. The soil, water, flora and fauna are among the resources used in their territories, where humans are just another interacting element.

In the case of the Mískitu peoples, development is linked to what is called *laman laka*, which can be interpreted as the rules of coexistence, offering harmony within the family regardless of age or gender. It might be taken as what some sociologists and anthropologists term "social fabric". *Laman laka* establishes economic norms on land use, signifying "if I have you have it, if you have it I have it". This involves labour exchange or *pana pana*, which allows interaction between people and which is marked by the value of the word, respect for the family, trust, ethnic loyalty and the commonwealth.

Such a framework produces tacit agreements on the use of the ecosystem, whereby everyone knows where individual crops are to be sown, where the areas of collective use are located, where to hunt and fish, and where relations with the spiritual world are established.

In Nicaragua, indigenous peoples have had their rights to ownership of ancestral lands protected by autonomy statutes that created autonomous regions in the country's Caribbean area. Significant steps were taken towards demarcating and titling the territories of many indigenous peoples. All this is tied to a system of ancestral communitarian institutions, which in turn are linked to the territorial government at the municipal and regional levels. Currently, efforts are being made to establish interactions in the provision of health care, education, communitarian justice and the election of authorities. All of this can be regarded as an inward-oriented framework of governance.

There is another, outward-oriented sphere of development that focuses on relations with the state and other actors. In this sphere, indigenous peoples have to take into account collective interests, and have to manage and negotiate, for instance, the granting of concessions or the massive use of natural resources by the community or outsiders. After the destruction caused by Hurricane Felix in September 2007, for example, communities and regional authorities set provisions for the use of fallen timber in building individual houses and communal infrastructure. Surpluses of fallen timber were sold to outsiders, to non-members of the communities and to people from other regions.

Both inward- and outward-oriented relationships have become part of the Nicaraguan constitution, which stipulates that development is the result of balanced, multiethnic and multicultural interrelations marked by the right to self-determination and guided by the regional autonomy statutes. This opened the doors to citizenship rights, and today indigenous peoples have access to power and the right to make their own decisions.

Some examples illustrate this concept of development and how it works. The products of hunting or fishing are usually distributed or exchanged between members of the community, as are grains, tubercles and timber. Hunting and fishing within the territory are divided in time and space.

These activities are not always carried out in the same place and they are not frequent. Remote places are chosen, which might entail several days of travel from the community. This practice involves a collective effort among several men, strengthening communitarian unity and allowing the intergenerational transmission of knowledge of the management of nature. Among the Rama people, the extraction of oyster shells in the Bluefields Lagoon is something done mostly by children, teenagers and women, and it takes place very close to the community. So too does the collection of coconuts in coastal indigenous communities. Regardless of the differences, all these activities are marked by a high sense of the collective aspect of labour and of the distribution of its fruits.

The rainforest and the pine plains, the lagoons and the shores, the keys and the reefs, do not consist only of the wealth inherent in their high biodiversity content, which from the outside could be viewed as a mega-supermarket. For indigenous peoples they are something more far-reaching. In principle, they represent the survival and development of culture, of spirituality, and they are also a source of food, housing, health, education, and the instruments of labour and of households. They provide for everyone and for everything.

This model of development is being threatened from the outside by logging in the river heads and basins, a result of the advancing agricultural frontiers and the presence of invading settlers; and by chemical pollution due to the misuse of pesticides in the highlands, the residues of which are drawn to the coastal lagoons and reefs, poisoning everything in their path.

The effects of climate change are already being felt in the territories, in the form of larger and more frequent hurricanes and floods that menace the biodiversity and the crops. Hence the life and welfare of indigenous peoples are jeopardised. ■

Ethnic Identity and Development in Peru

by Jaime Urrutia Ceruti
Centro Regional para la Salvaguardia del Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial de América Latina (CRESPIAL), Cusco, Peru

Except for small isolated communities, the indigenous peoples of the Andean countries, particularly in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, are large demographic groups fully connected to the modern national societies in which they live. The social movement of indigenous peoples in Peru, in contrast to those in Bolivia and in Ecuador, has not been an important political actor. This difference between the three countries has been the subject of a number of analyses based on various hypotheses. The lack of political mobilisation among Peru's indigenous peoples makes it harder for them to have a voice in policymaking and development planning, as well as to resist development projects that are culturally threatening. It also makes them more prone to succumb to efforts at cultural homogenisation.

In Peru, the Aymara and Quechua peoples of the Sierra highlands have chosen the "peasant" identity in their quest for citizenship. To be incorporated into Peruvian society, they renounced their indigenous identities and cultural expressions.

The weakness of indigenous peoples' organisations in Peru stems partly from the absence of indigenous elites, which hinders the formation of an "identitarian" discourse to foster political mobilisation. For that reason, many of those who deal with indigenous issues in the country have an essentialist, exotic and superficial view of the "native peoples". Identity building entails the creation and strengthening of indigenous peoples' leadership and organisations. In Peru, there are virtually no indigenous organisations except in the Amazonia region.

In Ecuador and Bolivia, the indigenous movement has been a major player on the political scene for several decades. This is due to the presence of a strong indigenous identity rooted in deep symbolic references, as well as to identitarian discourses, which are used to foster mobilisation and give cohesion to political action. In Peru, by contrast, the Aymara and Quechua peoples of the Sierra highlands have chosen the "peasant" identity in their quest for citizenship. To be incorporated into Peruvian society, they renounced their indigenous identities and cultural expressions.

This might be because Peruvian society is more permeable than Ecuadorean or Bolivian society. Hence the choice of a peasant identity might serve as a means to upward mobility. In Ecuador and Bolivia, ethnic leaders and organisations point to the existence of a "fixed identity" that prevents those indigenous peoples living in poverty from accessing channels for upward mobility, and thus from having greater income and higher living standards.

A common feature of these three countries is that their current constitutions and official statements stress that they are multilingual and multicultural societies. Recently, the term "multiculturalism" has been used increasingly to affirm a purported positive dialogue between different cultures, although it does so misleadingly. Moreover, thanks to the intervention of international financial agencies, a paradox of globalisation these days is that there is great interest in building and strengthening indigenous organisations. This approach helps undermine the view, still prevalent in Peru, that regards indigenous peoples as peasants.

In the new and recently approved constitutions of Ecuador and, particularly, Bolivia, recognition of indigenous peoples is key to the political conception of both nations. Laws and norms, however, are in a realm far above practices on the ground, where in many public institutions, private enterprises and political parties, the concepts of multiculturalism and multilingualism are seldom applied and marginalisation of the "other" culture, which does not comply with the hegemonic one, is still the rule.

> *Since the establishment of nation-states in Latin America, the presence of indigenous peoples was almost always perceived as an "obstacle to development".*

Currently, in Peru, there is widespread awareness of the vital need to listen to the voices of those who allegedly are to be beneficiaries of social policies and development projects, as well as the need to decentralise public administration in order to implement programmes that are better tailored to their target groups. But it seems that much time will be needed before these ideas are put into practice, before concrete programmes and projects start to take account of the voices of the indigenous peoples that will be affected.

For these voices to be heard in policymaking and development planning, two key questions must be answered. What is meant by development? And how can it be achieved without disregarding the cultural characteristics of indigenous peoples?

Since the establishment of nation-states in Latin America, the presence of indigenous peoples was almost always perceived as an "obstacle to development". This ideological assessment led to the exclusion and marginalisation of indigenous peoples, not only from full citizenship but also from government policies that essentially sought to bring about the cultural standardisation of their nations following the patterns of the hegemonic culture, the one bequeathed by the European colonisers.

This objective, for instance, was clearly stated in Article 75 of the Peruvian constitution of 1828: "The duties of these [provincial] boards are … to endeavour to reduce and civilise the neighbouring indigenous tribes of the province, and attract them to our society by peaceful means".

These are not only nineteenth-century views. Mainstream conceptions of development still reflect the goal of cultural homogenisation, and they disregard indigenous rights and indigenous views of development. Recently, in Colombia, indigenous peoples refused a government proposal to establish a rural development policy on the grounds that it would affect their territorial rights and autonomy. Their protest was not an isolated one; there have been many more in the Andean countries.

In the past few decades, particularly in Bolivia and Ecuador, the political participation of indigenous peoples has intensified and they have gradually started to devise and present their own development proposals. Some of these proposals call into question the very concept of development.

In this regard it is worth quoting Carlos Viteri, an Ecuadorean indigenous intellectual, who once said:

"In the *weltanschauung* of indigenous societies, in their understanding of the purpose and meaning that the lives of people have and should have, there is not a concept of development. That is, there is no conception of life in a linear process, establishing a before and an

after stage, namely, sub-developed and developed; dichotomy through which peoples must pass to achieve a desirable life, as in the Western world. Nor there are any notions of wealth and poverty determined by the accumulation or lack of material goods".*

Even without wishing, in so few lines, to engage in a discussion of this radical questioning of the concept of development, one must recognise that the expectations of indigenous peoples are divorced from the development proposals made by the public apparatus. "Development with identity" requires that the two be reconciled.

Albeit slowly, increasing awareness of the need for this reconciliation has given strength to some sustainable development proposals based on initiatives arising from indigenous organisations. These proposals bring together territorial development and cultural identity under the umbrella concept of "development with identity". Governments that want their policies and development programmes to meet some of the prime expectations of indigenous peoples can learn some important lessons from these proposals.

Essentially, they involve three significant issues for indigenous peoples: recognition of land and territory, of language, and of collective rights.

Recognition of their lands as territories that have some degree of autonomy is arguably the main claim made by indigenous peoples, but it is a claim that politicians and bureaucrats are unwilling to address. The state, by reserving the right to underground resources, prioritises what it regards as the "national interest" (that is, investment from large corporations that will exploit natural resources) at the expense of indigenous people's rights to their ancestral lands. Additionally, settlers and enterprises routinely occupy land.

A recent mobilisation of indigenous peoples from Peruvian Amazonia sought the state's full recognition of the communities' lands, rejecting what they called, ironically, "the law of the jungle", which was a government attempt to ease private access to communal lands and foster "development". Any such development proposal will be doomed to failure and will cause unnecessary conflict if it does not recognise and delimit the ancestral lands of indigenous peoples in line with their expectations. Resistance to menacing development proposals, however, depends on the level of political mobilisation, which in Peru is higher among Amazonian indigenous peoples.

The second issue is the defence and strengthening of indigenous languages, including full recognition of the right to basic education in those languages. From an intercultural perspective, this is important in order to reinforce identities and raise the self-esteem of indigenous individuals. Identity and self-esteem are crucial for political mobilisation, as well as for building the leadership and organisations that can make viable development proposals in line with indigenous peoples' expectations and offer resistance to proposals that are threatening.

The third issue is recognition of collective rights, including the rights to land, territory and to basic education in indigenous languages. Collective rights also encompass knowledge, skills, techniques and diverse cultural practices.

"Development with identity" refers to initiatives that seek to combine the needs of indigenous peoples, as they themselves see them, with the needs of development seen through western eyes. On the one hand, no matter how well intended, no development proposal formulated in a western mould will succeed without consultation and adaptation to the needs of the indigenous peoples involved. On the other hand, no development proposal advanced by indigenous peoples will be viable if it does not seek harmonious relations with national society and take account of their insertion into that society.

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* Speech at the symposium on "Indigenous Rights and Development in Latin America", Germany, 2004.

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by Stuart Kirsch,
University of Michigan,
Ann Arbor, United States

Freedom and Development in Suriname

For indigenous peoples, the balance between freedom and development is always delicate, as can be learned from the case of a bauxite mining project in west Suriname.

Even witnessing the impacts of decades of bauxite mining in east Suriname was not enough to dissuade the Lokono and Trio from supporting the Bakhuis project, because the mining company assured them that the new project would be different.

At present they expect the development of the mine to provide them with new forms of economic freedom, but it may also reduce other important freedoms associated with being indigenous.

When Amartya Sen (1999) redefined development in terms of freedom, he argued that political freedoms are required along with security, opportunity and transparency to realise economic development. Central to his perspective is the recognition that the goal of development is to enhance human freedom, including people's ability to shape their own destiny. Sen's work also promotes the values and institutions of the liberal democratic state. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000), however, has argued against the identification of the modern state with freedom, an identity achieved through projects of reform, progress and development that may be coercive or violent. Also at risk in development projects are other freedoms that may not be acknowledged or protected by liberal states.

For indigenous peoples, the balance between freedom and development is always delicate, as can be learned from the case of a bauxite mining project in west Suriname.* The author visited the Ok Tedi copper and gold mines in Papua New Guinea and seen firsthand the devastating consequences of the project (see Kirsch, 2006) the experience encouraged the author to move back in the production cycle to collaborate with indigenous communities that were at risk from new mining projects.

A key challenge of this work is the difficulty in conveying the stakes of these development projects to people who lack previous experience of negotiating with mining companies. Even witnessing the impacts of decades of bauxite mining in east Suriname was not enough to dissuade the Lokono and Trio from supporting the Bakhuis project, because the mining company assured them that the new project would be different. The purpose of the author's trip was to assist these communities by contributing to an independent review of the corporate-sponsored environmental and social impact assessment of the bauxite mine.

The Lokono and Trio peoples living along the Corantijn River generally support the mining project in the Bakhuis Mountains because of the economic benefits they hope it will bring them, though they also express concerns about its social and environmental impacts.

But their ability to consent to the project is compromised by Suriname's refusal to recognise indigenous land rights, which contravenes its international obligations. Suriname approved the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, but in 2008 the Inter-American Court criticised the country for ignoring indigenous and Maroon land rights. For the Lokono and Trio, their lack of legal title to their land creates a double bind: they must endorse the project if they wish to influence it or benefit from its operation. The result is a coercive form of participation that bears little resemblance to the standard of free, prior and informed consent.

Attitudes towards the project have also been influenced by the lack of independent information about the social and environmental impacts of the bauxite mine, which is expected to strip-mine at least 5 per cent of its 3,000 km2 concession during a period of 50 years. Even with the promise of progressive reforestation, the effects of the project are likely to be extensive and long-lasting, including potential impacts on the three major watersheds of the region: the Corantijn, Nickerie and Coppename Rivers. The bauxite mine may also affect

* The work of the author in Suriname was supported by the International Development Research Centre, the North-South Institute and the Association of Indigenous Village Leaders in Suriname (Bureau VIDS). Acknowledgements go to the Lokono and Trio captains for their assistance, and to Carla Madsian for her insight and translations.

Maroon communities living on the Nickerie River and indigenous communities located on the Guyanese banks of the Corantijn River.

Central to indigenous identity in Suriname are practices of hunting and fishing in the rain forest. The Lokono and Trio value their freedom of movement and are able to use the resources of other indigenous peoples once they have secured their permission. Paul Riesman once described the importance that the Fulani attach to independence, suggesting that the principle of freedom is "founded on the possibility of each person's entering into a direct relation with … nature without the mediation of another person or any social institution" (Riesman, 1998, p. 257). Something similar might be said about the Lokono and Trio, who equate freedom with being able to leave the village on hunting and fishing trips to the rain forest.

The Lokono, however, have already observed a decline in certain fish species and game animals, and the mining project will certainly have further impacts on local wildlife. The mining concession was off-limits to local use during the exploration phase of the project.
A proposed conservation area would not prohibit indigenous hunting and fishing, but neither would it guarantee the Lokono and Trio future access to these lands. In response to a question about the potential effects of the mine on the environment, one of the indigenous leaders declared that if hunting and fishing were no longer possible in the vicinity of their villages, they would ask the mining company to provide them with transport to better hunting and fishing grounds. It is difficult for them to imagine a world in which they would no longer have free access to the forest for hunting and fishing, a circumstance that would contravene one of their strongest cultural values, yet the mining project may hasten its materialisation.

Specialised knowledge about the rain forest, including traditional medicines, is decreasing across generational lines. More fundamentally, their underlying relationship to the forests and the animals that live there are also vulnerable to change. These interactions include making libations and direct invocations to the animals hunted or the trees cut down as a way of asking permission, as one must ask the owners of the land before using their resources. There are also rules to guide interactions with animals and trees, rules that favour conservation over accumulation. A sacred relationship connects these people to the landscape in ways that transcend economic value, including compensation.

Despite their ties to place, the Lokono and Trio have become enchanted by the prospect of economic development. Although the men recognise that modern mining projects provide relatively few jobs, they hope the mine will have a trickle-down effect on the local economy. Comparative evidence, however, suggests that when economic opportunities arise, people with greater social capital will be better placed to exploit them. The main economic concerns of the women in these communities are related to the ways in which gender roles have already been affected by the cash economy. In the past, there was a complement to their sexual division of labour.

For example, both men and women contributed labour to making gardens, with men clearing the forest and women planting, weeding and harvesting the plots. In contrast, men now have greater control over financial resources and women object to their increasing dependence on them. The women hope the mining project will stimulate the local economy, creating opportunities for them to become more directly involved in the cash economy and independent of men. Finally, young men support the mining project because of their desire for vocational training, job opportunities and university education.

With the development of the mine, the region will become more densely populated. People will open businesses to provide supplies to the mine. The town will become a magnet for people seeking employment, many of whom will stay even if they do not find jobs. Members of the indigenous communities expressed concerns about the influence that people with different cultural "manners" and practices will have on

Specialised knowledge about the rain forest, including traditional medicines, is decreasing across generational lines ... relationship to the forests and the animals that live there are also vulnerable to change.

their lives, especially on local women. Currently, outsiders tend to be assimilated into local modes of interaction, such as asking permission before using local resources, but this dynamic is likely to change along with regional demography. The very thing the indigenous communities are trying to safeguard through new economic activity—good life in the villages—is vulnerable to elimination by an influx of outsiders.

In the wake of the global economic downturn, the primary developer has withdrawn from the bauxite project in west Suriname, although the government continues to search for an alternative corporate partner.
The resulting hiatus provides the Lokono and Trio with an opportunity to consider whether the proposed mining project is compatible with their most important cultural values, including their freedom to hunt and fish in the rain forest, the kinds of relationships they have with the trees and animals with which they share the landscape, and the kinds of social relations they have among themselves. At present they expect the development of the mine to provide them with new forms of economic freedom, but it may also reduce other important freedoms associated with being indigenous, freedoms that are not recognised or protected by the state. ■

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by José Pimenta,
University of Brasilia, Brazil

Twisting Development: the Ashaninka Way

Ashaninka leaders began to express their political and cultural claims using the environmental rhetoric of "sustainable development".

The Ashaninka of the Amônia River have attained an unprecedented level of political visibility and have become archetypical examples of the "ecological indian".

The same people who once destroyed the forest and polluted the rivers now purport to show the Ashaninka the right way to fish, hunt and plant with due regard for the environment.

"Development" is intimately related to the history and pretentious universalism of western thought (Rist, 1997), which makes it hard for those socialised under it to understand and accept other visions of the world. In the West itself this notion has been challenged, adapted and renewed in order to overcome the negative connotations that have become attached to it over time and to ensure that it continues to spread. This has led to an expansion of the definition, yielding concepts such as "eco-development", "ethno-development", "endogenous development" and "development with identity". Among these enlarged definitions, that of "sustainable development" became the overarching policy framework for the Brazilian Amazonia. The move towards sustainable development called attention to the environmental consequences of classic "development" and its negative impact on the welfare of indigenous peoples. Conceptual changes, however, were not enough to overcome all the drawbacks of the approach. This article addresses the paradoxes and challenges of sustainable development through a case study of the Ashaninka of the Amônia River, who enjoyed relative success in fitting into this framework.

The Ashaninka people live in a wide and discontinuous territory that extends from Peru's Selva Central region to the head of the Juruá River in Acre, Brazil. Only a fraction of them, about 1,000 people, live in Brazilian territory, half of these in the vicinity of the Amônia River. In four centuries of contact with the western world, the Ashaninka experienced different kinds of "development". Historically, "development" and colonisation were intertwined leading to their exploitation and forced integration into the dominant society. "Civilization" and "development" were brought about by various agents: missionaries, settlers, rubber tappers, ranchers, politicians, private companies, guerrilla movements and so on. Contact with the bearers of "development" had dramatic consequences, such as epidemics, slavery and forced acculturation.

In the first half of the 1980s, the Ashaninka were particularly affected by the policy of the military dictatorship (1964–1985) to colonise the Brazilian Amazonia. This policy was marked by the traditional approach to "development" and an effort to "integrate" indigenous peoples into the dominant society. Their territory became prey to loggers, and wood extraction rates skyrocketed to feed the ever hungry saw mills. Great harm was done to the environment: deforestation, pollution of rivers and loss of biodiversity. The native way of living was jeopardised by environmental deterioration that hindered vital activities such as hunting and fishing. During this period, Ashaninka families were obliged to work for loggers in the semi-slavery system of debt peonage. The situation began to change in the early 1990s. With the support of several partners, the Ashaninka organised to expel the loggers and to demand the demarcation of their land from the Department for Indigenous Affairs (FUNAI), a demand that was met in 1992.

Thereafter, Ashaninka leaders began to express their political and cultural claims using the environmental rhetoric of "sustainable development". By doing so they were able to implement several projects: handicraft production and trade, reforestation of areas degraded by logging, and wildlife management. In the last 15 years, thanks to the successful outcomes of these projects, the Ashaninka of the Amônia River have attained an unprecedented level of political visibility and have become archetypical examples of the "ecological indian". Although politically efficient in the current historical context, there are caveats about this image of "ecological

indians", since the notion might reignite the old "myth of the good savage". This is a form of prejudice that reduces indigenous peoples to an animalised status, part of nature instead of culture.

While the Ashaninka see representatives of the western world, essentially, as nature predators, many sustainable development projects, despite their new clothes, retain the old discourse of bringing civilization to the savages and have embedded the paternalism that has long marked interethnic relations. Several good initiatives that claim to value indigenous culture and lifestyle culminate in asymmetrical relationships in which white people play the role of instructors. The same people who once destroyed the forest and polluted the rivers now purport to show the Ashaninka the right way to fish, hunt and plant with due regard for the environment. Sustainable development planners view Ashaninka culture in a stereotyped way that does not reflect reality but rather the fantasies of western societies about what indigenous peoples and cultures are and how they behave. Hence the people involved in these projects end up trying to teach the Ashaninka their own culture. Fully aware of this and many other paradoxes, the Ashaninka react with irony and perplexity to such attempts to teach them to be themselves.

Generally speaking, the problem of the "new" ideology of sustainable development is that it continues to prioritise economic matters rather than social, cultural and environmental issues, even though it seeks to diminish the negative impacts of traditional conceptions of "development". Furthermore, sustainable development has not managed to overcome the western worldview's historical lack of capacity to deal with cultural diversity. Since nature is still considered an economic resource, albeit one that should be carefully explored so as not to exhaust it, sustainable development projects retain a vision of integrating indigenous societies into the market economy. This commodity logic is alien to the Ashaninka culture, in which trade is guided by a gift logic.

The Ashaninka have a pragmatic view of sustainable development projects. They see them as a way of acquiring essential western goods on which they have become dependent, such as salt, soap and ammunition. They have "indigenised" sustainable development, thinking of "projects" as a semantic equivalent of "commodity". Their desire for projects has become analogous to their desire for other plain goods from white people. Sustainable development became a new means of trading with outsiders, interpreted from the perspective of their traditional trade logic (Pimenta, 2006).

However, when they try to adapt the rules of a commodity economy to their gift system, the Ashaninka pose new challenges for themselves. Insertion into a "project market", for instance, has led to the concentration of political and economic power among them. The increasing trend towards wealth accumulation threatens their egalitarian tradition. Bringing about their participation in the market economy without introducing social inequality has become a source of significant concern. Living through the period of "sustainable development" is, perhaps, the major challenge for the Ashaninka, as it is for some other indigenous peoples in Amazonia.

Some projects, though limited and biased, arise from a real concern for and commitment to the environment and the future of indigenous peoples. But the generality of the multiple meanings surrounding the idea of sustainable development have made an umbrella of the concept, under which vested interests gather. Stamped as sustainable development, some projects receive funding from multilateral development agencies even though they foster the colonisation of indigenous lands and the predatory exploitation of the environment, thereby spreading the maladies they should be fighting and in many cases resulting in ethnocide.

Intense wood extraction in the Peruvian Amazonia, for example, impacts the Ashaninka of the Amônia River and other indigenous peoples, including the remaining isolated groups that are not in contact with the modern world in the Peru-Brazil border areas. On the other side of the border, the Brazilian government's current development strategy (the Growth Acceleration Programme or PAC), though tinged by greenish rhetoric, has also been regularly accused by indigenous and environmentalist organisations of disregarding indigenous rights and threatening the environment.

To the Ashaninka, sustainable development presents itself as productive "misunderstanding" (Sahlins, 1981). It allows them to acquire much-desired western goods without losing their particular identity. Notwithstanding its enormous challenges, for them sustainable development is an economic alternative to predatory logging. Despite that, it is important to bear in mind that the relative success of the Ashaninka of the Amônia River as archetypes of the "ecological indian" is due to a specific historical context, which allowed them to value their "culture" in the inter-ethnic arena by making their territory productive in the eyes of the West.

Other Ashaninka groups in Brazil and in Peru, however, have not succeeded in taking advantage of sustainable development. They continue to suffer the consequences of the many versions of western development and green capitalism. Sustainable development can be promising, but it must not be reduced to the simple commoditisation of the indian (Ramos, 2006) and indigenous lands, nor serve as a cloak for the West's greed. To fulfil its promises, sustainable development must be thought of as "developments", the plural denoting true respect for diversity, which encompasses complex cultural settings and a variety of historical situations, different worldviews and long-term societal goals. ■

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by Charles R. Hale,
Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies,
University of Texas at Austin,
United States

From Genocide to Development:
the Mayas of Guatemala

It is now widely affirmed that during the internal armed conflict the Guatemalan state committed genocide against the Mayan people.

Persisting poverty and inequality amount to a continuation of that genocide by other means.

Widespread indigenous mobilisation in the 1970s had a strong economic dimension, which was overshadowed by the political violence that followed.

The government now acknowledges the racism of decades past and admits that vestiges persist, but affirms its declining importance and offers these very acknowledgements as evidence of the decline.

Indigenous poverty in Guatemala today is both scandalous and paradoxical. The scandal is rooted not just in the mind-numbing statistics but, more centrally, in the underlying relations of racial inequality. A large percentage of Guatemalans are poor; the gap between the poverty rates of indigenous people and the dominant-culture ladinos is wide (World Bank, 2004); and racism plays a major role in these disparities. It is now widely affirmed that during the internal armed conflict the Guatemalan state committed genocide against the Mayan people. Persisting poverty and inequality amount to a continuation of that genocide by other means.

The poverty scandal coexists, paradoxically, with a dramatic rise in indigenous organisations since the 1980s. These efforts have challenged racism, opened spaces for autonomous organisation and forced the state to recognise indigenous rights. However, such achievements have had two perverse effects: deeper socioeconomic divisions among the Maya; and a ready alibi for the state, which diverts attention from the root causes of social suffering.

Despite wide agreement that the situation is bleak, the details are subject to dispute. Official statistics report that 40 per cent of Guatemala's roughly 13 million people are indigenous, while many Maya intellectuals charge "statistical ethnocide" and place the figure much higher. Multilateral development organisations affirm the link between poverty and racism, but they portray racism as collections of aberrant attitudes rather than as relations structured into the very economic model that they uncritically endorse. Anti-poverty programmes focus on brute deprivation, less on inequality, and not at all on the genocidal consequences of the malign neglect that the system fosters. Dominant actors recognise Maya political-cultural rights, but discourage the extension of this discussion into the economic realm. Now that cultural rights have a place in the national political arena, the next challenge for Maya organisations is to re-centre economic well-being as a key component in their struggles.

Widespread indigenous mobilisation in the 1970s had a strong economic dimension, which was overshadowed by the political violence that followed. Green revolution technologies, combined with effective, cooperative organisation, generated prospects for sustenance and even modest economic advancement, without the need for labour to migrate to the plantations. At the same time, those who continued as semi-proletarians began to clamour for higher wages and better working conditions.

These economic demands, combined with modest political and cultural affirmation, were too much for the powers-that-be to tolerate. State repression and guerrilla organisation grew in tandem, each feeding on the other. When the state unleashed its counterinsurgency campaign in full force, rural Mayas—whether they had been organising autonomously, joined the guerrilla, or simply had been caught in the sweep—bore the brunt without distinction.

Their economic advances succumbed to genocidal ruin: 200,000 dead and disappeared; 626 villages razed; 1.5 million refugees and internally displaced (CEH, 1999). Not until the mid 1980s, when the armed conflict had mostly subsided and the trappings of democracy were reinstated, could the Maya begin to pick up the pieces.

With the late 1980s as a dismal baseline, and comparatively favourable overall economic conditions over the next decade, it is shocking how little progress was made towards the elimination of indigenous poverty. Overall economic growth between 1990 and 2000 was a respectable 2–3 per cent a year.

A recent World Bank study (2004), however, reported a paltry overall decline in indigenous poverty over that period (14 per cent), and marshalled data to show that Mayas had "fallen behind" ladinos both in absolute poverty and in the rate of poverty reduction. In 2000, 74 per cent of indigenous households were poor, and a third of these suffered from extreme poverty. An astounding 93 per cent earned income from the "informal sector", which made them acutely vulnerable to the global economic volatility that followed.

Yet these were the same years when Maya activists and intellectuals burst onto the political scene, forming hundreds of non-governmental organisations, agitating for rights, gaining higher education and making modest gains towards political empowerment. In the absence of this effervescence, the 25 per cent of Mayas who were counted as "non-poor" in 2000 would certainly have been fewer still; yet this sector also surely benefited much more from the cultural-political rights gained than did the other three-quarters, who were barely scraping by.

Since the early years of the new millennium, Maya rights organisations have faced an impasse. Generalised racism persists and the full range of collective rights is far from secured, yet these overall problems affect the Maya population differently according to their socioeconomic status.

The state seems prepared to continue opening spaces for the 25 per cent, as long as these beneficiaries de-emphasise demands that would address the desperate economic conditions of the rest. An especially perverse feature of this Faustian bargain is the assertion that the modest advancement of a few "proves" that racism no longer operates to keep the majority in their place. Ladinos of left and right often concur in endorsing this underlying premise, which makes Maya organisations wary of both sides. With some exceptions, however, these organisations find it difficult to bridge the intracultural divide. This troubling contradiction sums up the impasse: the newly achieved cultural rights are salutary, yet they bolster a politics that perpetuates anti-Maya racism.

In 1978, many would surely have objected to the assertion that racism was a fundamental cause of indigenous poverty. But the idea would meet little resistance today, as long as key verbs remain in the past tense.

The government now acknowledges the racism of decades past and admits that vestiges persist, but affirms its declining importance and offers these very acknowledgements as evidence of the decline. Beneath this reasoning lies an understanding of racism as largely attitudinal: person A believes that person B, by virtue of his or her race, to be congenitally inferior. As those attitudes decline, racism diminishes. Although recent polls suggest that significant numbers of ladinos and Euro-Guatemalans still harbour such attitudes, the downward trend is clear.

If this attitude-based understanding of racial inequality were indeed sufficient, we might join Guatemala's power-holders in their self-congratulation.

The challenge on the horizon is to understand and combat the new racism, which has no flagrant perpetrators and which generates scandalous consequences while disavowing the premises of racial inferiority. To document its workings, we must look first at statistics and structural conditions rather than at attitudes and ideologies.

Geographer Ruth Gilmore (2002) offers a parsimonious definition: "differential propensities for premature death." In addition to poverty, relevant data are racially differentiated rates of life expectancy, disease, education, incarceration and ill-distributed state expenditures that would affect these basic life conditions. When acknowledged at all, these disparities

The challenge on the horizon is to understand and combat the new racism, which has no flagrant perpetrators ... to document its workings, we must look first at statistics and structural conditions.

are explained as an inherited feature of the system, reproduced by indigenous peoples themselves, whose culture has left them ill-equipped to meet the challenges of economic modernity.

In 1988, a group of intellectuals from the Maya organisation Coordinadora Cackchiquel para el Desarollo Indígena (COCADI) addressed the poverty scandal directly, and staked out a position called "la via maya del desarrollo" (the Maya road to development). They argued that the Maya people have their own culturally-specific understanding of "development", which is in stark contrast to Western definitions, and their own millenarian experience and wisdom to draw on for its implementation.

According to this view, the main obstacles to "development" were racism, which denigrates Maya culture, and material inequality, which deprives Mayas of the resources necessary to put their cultural principles to work. Twenty years later, this article stands as a clarion call on which few have elaborated. There are two main reasons for this reticence.

The first is continuing state repression. In the mid 1980s, when the government began to seem receptive to cultural rights demands (approving, for example, the Academy of Maya Languages), public discourse on the highly skewed nationwide distribution of landed property was still taboo. Ten years later, the peace accords between the government and the guerrilla codified this contrast, affirming new principles of indigenous cultural-political rights, but adamantly endorsing the status quo in the country's agrarian structure.

In 1994, when the Maya intellectual Demetrio Cojtí teamed up with the Consejo de Organizaciones Mayas de Guatemala (COMG) to make an audacious proposal for state recognition of Maya rights to autonomy, dominant sectors responded with hostility, which thwarted serious discussion of the issue. If the document had gone on to spell out the need for wealth redistribution in order for these political rights to be achieved, it could well have put Cojtí's life in danger.

As a slogan guiding top-down institutional initiatives, "development with identity" is barely tolerable. As a Maya-initiated demand for control over half of the country's resources to use as they see fit, the "via maya de Desarrollo" remains paramount to the "subversion" that justified the army's genocidal campaign.

The second reason for the reticence is that many Maya intellectuals affirm the dichotomy as necessary, if not appropriate. Although it is hard to separate the draconian influence of state repression from the intrinsic vision of Maya leaders, two factors merit attention. The Maya movement emerged in response to deep alienation from the authoritarian tendencies and racism of the ladino-controlled Left, both guerrilla and civilian.

Since wealth redistribution was a mainstay of leftist discourse, it was logical that Maya activist-intellectuals would distance themselves from this demand. Additionally, given that middling Maya benefit more directly from cultural-political rights, they have an incentive to concentrate their energies in this realm.

Some prominent Maya organisations and have attempted to bridge this divide between cultural-political rights and economic empowerment; and many Maya individuals and families strive for this combination in everyday practice.

In general, however, Maya leaders have not yet drawn on these initiatives to fashion a fully-fledged blueprint for a "via maya de desarrollo", and broader political conditions remain hostile to the emergence of such a plan. Memories of the genocide of the early 1980s are very much alive, and they induce a deeply ingrained ethos of oblique resistance and cautious pragmatism. To rename the poverty scandal as the continuation of genocide by other means is to break with that ethos. But to leave this connection unaddressed runs an equally serious risk.

The risk includes a vibrant Maya movement, which achieves ample recognition of cultural-political rights but has little ability to help three-quarters of the Maya people. They will inevitably face continued pressure to assimilate and suffer from an array of endemic socioeconomic maladies. ■

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by Bruce Grant,
New York University, United States

The Nivkhi under Soviet Rule

Nivkhi are just one of many indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Russian Far East. Yet their experience is emblematic of what "development" came to mean in the context of twentieth-century socialism, and how significantly this differed from the varied contemporary Western understandings.

The Nivkhi are a Siberian people numbering some 5,000 who live on Sakhalin Island off the Russian Pacific coast, just north of Japan, and along the banks of the nearby Amur River delta. For centuries they lived and traded in the cosmopolitan world of East Asia, engaging the Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and Russians who travelled through, and who sometimes laid claim to their lands. It was not until 1925, however, when the October Revolution had travelled far enough east to firmly establish the Soviet government in the furthest reaches of the former Russian empire, that their lives changed so fundamentally and dramatically.

Though few in numbers, the Nivkhi (or Giliaki, in the prerevolutionary nomenclature) came to occupy a significant place in the early Soviet imagination. No matter that they were often bilingual or trilingual, or that many of them had travelled extensively: in early Soviet scholarly and popular record they appeared as the quintessential primitives of pre-communist life. Renowned nineteenth-century accounts of Nivkhi by Anton Chekhov and Friedrich Engels lamented what the authors perceived as their degraded state. But it was their particular practice of what Engels called "group marriage"—marking a complex kinship system that ensured a good deal of internal property transfer—that caused them to be heralded as some of the Soviet Union's earliest communists.

Whereas prerevolutionary Russian Orthodox missionaries had hounded Nivkhi for their pagan ways, the new Leninist reformers praised their forbearance and cultivated a syncretism between new Soviet political organs and native autonomy. Many Nivkhi look back on the late 1920s as a golden period: the State founded hospitals, schools, cultural centres and small enterprises in the most remote areas, and sought out the most promising young men and women for education in Vladivostok, Moscow and Leningrad.

As early as 1930, however, these fledgling freedoms faded. The Nivkhi were not exempt from the Stalinist juggernaut: in 1937 alone, the state "liquidated" one third of all Nivkh men in a single district, according to one source (personal communication) in the state security agency, the NKVD (KGB). World War II saw the widespread integration of Nivkh men and women into the workforce, and the relative prosperity of the decades that followed were marred only by the slow decline of the Soviet economy under Brezhnev in the 1970s.

Indeed, until the end of the Soviet period, Nivkhi remained a fixture of such evolutionist discourse. Interviewed on Soviet television in July 1990, one Russian official looked back on the history of the Soviet Union and said: "You have to understand the difficulties posed by a country as diverse as ours. In 1917, Nivkhi were living in caves and Russians were in palaces." Nivkhi, in fact, never lived the lives of prosaic penury or purity that generations of scribes assigned to them, but their image as the most famous primitives who gave up cave life for communism is one that they encounter to this day.

The Nivkhi are just one of many indigenous peoples of Siberia and the Russian Far East. Yet their experience is emblematic of what "development" came to mean in the context of twentieth-century socialism, and how significantly this differed from the varied contemporary Western understandings. Early Soviet officials insisted that in one generation, Nivkhi would "stride across a thousand years". This meant that they would repeat the evolutionary journey along the famously imagined Marxist trajectory once travelled by Western Europeans over an entire millennium—beginning with primitive modes of production and ending with the wage-based agro-industrial projects and low-grade Bauhaus housing projects of Soviet realism. In this ideology the Nivkhi, like other indigenous peoples of the communist state, were the jewels in the crown of the Soviet modernization project, since their transformations were seen as the most dramatic.

In reality, indigenous peoples of the Soviet Union encountered many problems of the kind faced by all Soviet citizens, such as chronic food and housing shortages, and remarkably advanced forms of government corruption. The promise of their transformation, however, never lost its lustre.

As one scholar has pointed out about the Siberian Evenki people's experiences with the Soviet state, nearly every Soviet expedition to Evenk lands, even through to the 1950s, was described as "the first" of its kind: the "first" to recapture the dream of bringing mature economic development to willing Siberian children of nature. In this light, we find Siberian indigenous peoples not at the conventional "periphery" of the juggernaut of Soviet state designs, but at the vortex of an almost "vanishing centre" of Soviet state power. If the perfect transformation of indigenous life was never fully delivered, it could still inspire hope through its promise.

Fishing dominated Nivkh life beyond well up until the arrival of the Soviets, and even to the close of the Soviet period it continued to play a major role. While Nivkhi once crafted their nets from nettle fibres, most now participate in the larger mechanized fishing collectives (kolkhozes) that survived into the post-Soviet age. Soviet cultural planners took pains to diminish traditional Nivkh fishing practices as backward, but the irony of the disarray of the post-Soviet period has been that many such traditions are now being revived for want of alternatives.

Greater numbers of younger Nivkhi have taken to drying winter supplies of pink and chum salmon (known in Nivkh as *ma* and in Russian as *iukola*) in order to support their families. There has been a substantial resurgence in sea mammal hunting and the use of derivative products such as seal fat, in particular. On a smaller scale, many Nivkhi have established small family fishing enterprises on ancestral clan grounds.

In the immediate post-Soviet period, the collapse of industries and social services, coupled to stunning rises in corruption at all levels, contributed to the impoverishment of once relatively stable communities. In an atmosphere where salaries were frequently not dispensed for months at a time, most people were cast into a cycle of moneyless exchange and barter to maintain the most modest of subsistence lifestyles. Many Nivkhi look again to their Asian neighbours as possible sponsors for economic development, but for now their fate remains tied to that of the Russian state that has overseen them for so long.

When I last visited Sakhalin Island a few years after the Soviet Union's collapse, a Nivkh journalist of modest means came to see me. Sakhalin Island was on the verge of massive oil investment from an array of international oil consortia, an initiative that has since become one of the world's biggest oil and gas projects. "These people from Exxon keep calling us. They are quite insistent about holding public meetings," she said. "What do they want from us?" she asked. She had lived her life outside a political system in which economic development presumed the imagined consent of local populations. Since then, she has become accustomed to a very different form of public relations, one that views indigenous peoples as an ornament on the edifice of new capital investments rather than as symbols of a social system promising equity for all.

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by David G. Anderson,
University of Aberdeen, Scotland

A Strange Hybrid of Socialism and Capitalism in Siberia

In its crudest form, the "non-capitalist path" assumed that the egalitarian social relationships present among many hunters and small-scale reindeer herders could simply be made more comfortable with the addition of electricity and the building of a local library.

The map of Northern Russia is divided up by certain "oligarchic" companies created by the privatisation of Soviet state assets. These privatised mini-states begin their portfolios with mining and drilling infrastructure, and end them with company-constructed airports, housing complexes and schools.

Political philosophers and development planners owe a special debt to indigenous Siberians. The highly mobile and egalitarian social structures of Evenki-Tungus and Ket-Samoeds have been cited prominently by both Marxist and Liberal thinkers when they have encouraged us to imagine what a "developed" society should look like. If decentralised indigenous political networks served as the model for constitutional democracies in North America and Western Europe, in Russia both before and after the Revolution the "propertyless" societies of Siberian peoples served as a model for a so-called "non-capitalist path of development".

In its crudest form, the "non-capitalist path" assumed that the egalitarian social relationships present among many hunters and small-scale reindeer herders could simply be made more comfortable with the addition of electricity and the building of a local library. Under this model, several generations of indigenous cadres in the former Soviet Union represented their peoples at special party conferences and oversaw the construction of new settlements and educational opportunities for their kin.

As many still remember, the heavily centralised and industrialised model for indigenous participation in the former Soviet Union did not create happy communities. Overly formal rules of recruitment into complex bureaucratic structures often created a paternalist system in which outsiders with the proper paper qualifications were paid to design development for their less qualified wards.

The architecture of Russian peasant villages built into the design of new state farms was often ecologically unstable, creating large zones in the taiga and tundra that were devoid of firewood for heat and animals for subsistence.

By the start of perestroika it had become clear that centrally planned development for indigenous people was not the same as development in an indigenous idiom.

The very first public associations, which were later to grow into the federated non-governmental organisation (NGO) known in English as the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples of the North, Siberia and Far East (RAIPON), gathered under the banner of "culture".

They hoped to draw attention to local ways of building communities, which often involved decentralised or nomadic versions of centralised schooling, or new institutional contexts in which indigenous language use would be valued. At the time, nobody expected that the relaxing of state control over local activities would be accompanied by state indifference to the fate of indigenous peoples.

Today, the period of perestroika is remembered as the time when central subsidies to state farms were eliminated, when electricity and food were rationed, and when all forms of public transport ceased to exist.

The recent rise in oil prices worldwide, and the increasing wealth of the Russian federal treasury, has given new life to the issue of indigenised development in Siberia. The neoliberal capitalist state no longer wishes to dictate a certain cultural form for development. But neither does it want to draw attention to the vast disparities of wealth between indigenous communities, on the one hand, and on the other the shining resource outposts often built from the proceeds taken from the non-renewable resources lying under

reindeer pastures. Furthermore, international institutions such as the World Bank and the Global Environmental Facility have created new "targets" for the participation of indigenous people in resource-extraction projects.

As in circumpolar states worldwide, certain revenues from the sale of oil and other resources now return to indigenous communities in the form of direct social welfare payments, and more often than not in the form of buildings and infrastructure erected by large mineral conglomerates. The question now is whether a neoliberal welfare state can create a better model for local development than the Soviet redistributive state.

At first sight, post-Soviet rural development looks like a strange hybrid of socialism and capitalism. From one perspective, the map of Northern Russia is divided up by certain "oligarchic" companies created by the privatisation of Soviet state assets. These privatised mini-states begin their portfolios with mining and drilling infrastructure, and end them with company-constructed airports, housing complexes and schools.

Miners and oil workers find it more convenient to have friends with an easy supply of fresh meat and prestigious furs than to have to rely on the services available in shops.

It is not uncommon to hear representatives of indigenous rights organisations praise the wealthy businesses that provide direct capital subsidies to local communities.

To those with some experience of aboriginal rights movements in Canada or the United States, the nesting of indigenous development into a vertically integrated corporation may seem odd. In the context of northern Russian development, however, it is unsurprising. In a place where vertical chains of command are seen as the most efficient way of organising social life, it is to be expected that social needs are still placed on the balance books of regional corporations.

Moreover, in a place where consumer capitalism is still poorly developed, most miners and oil workers find it more convenient to have friends with an easy supply of fresh meat and prestigious furs than to have to rely on the services available in shops.

It is often forgotten that the Russian North, unlike North America, is heavily populated and has a large local "market" for locally produced goods. To some degree, market liberalism has served as a better short-term support for indigenous peoples there than it has in other parts of the world.

On the other hand, unbridled resource development has raised the stakes of environmental entitlements. Pipelines, which bring oil to markets in China and Western Europe, have carved up landscapes to such an extent that subsistence hunting and herding are no longer possible.

Recent warming trends have opened the prospect of an extended season of northern shipping through the Northern Sea Route, without having to rely on nuclear powered icebreakers. This access to markets through the Polar Sea would only increase the impact on local environments.

The language of indigenous rights has also been streamlined with the recent merging of local political districts that were created originally as special territorial districts for Evenki, Buriat or Nenets development. Instead, social entitlements are no longer seen as territorial and can be more easily compensated with one-off payments of cash or in kind.

After 10 years of oil-fuelled corporate development, it is an open question as to how one can best express a sense of entitlement to a way of life. Russia's brief experience of global capitalism has shown that the most efficient way of nurturing a sense of respect for local indigenous cultures is to copy the environmental and indigenising protocols of multinational corporations worldwide. To that end, it sometimes seems that the struggle lies with public opinion in Europe or the Americas.

Do Europeans know the environmental and social cost of the oil that flows to them through Eastern European pipelines?

Would the European Union liberalise restrictions on the trade in animal furs so as to better the lives of indigenous people?

Do consumers know that 90 per cent of the heavy metals used in the construction of catalytic convertors in modern automobiles come from open pit mines in the traditional lands of the Dolgan, Evenki and Enets peoples?

Do Europeans know the environmental and social cost of the oil that flows to them through Eastern European pipelines? Would the European Union liberalise restrictions on the trade in animal furs so as to better the lives of indigenous people at the cost of alienating urban-based animal rights activists?

Russian models of indigenous development have always involved hybrid models of state and society that mix entitlements with the supply of goods and services. In a debate where indigenised development is often expressed as type of autochthony, these complex models offer an interesting avenue for debate.

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by Bernard Saladin d'Anglure, University of Laval, Canada and Françoise Morin, University of Lyon 2, France

The Inuit: Assimilation and Cultural Impoverishment

What no one has realised in Canada or elsewhere is that the new Inuit leaders have subtly adopted the heritage of the colonial period in the way the Western world sees moral, economic, social and political progress.

At white schools, even those that are Inuit-run, the students' minds are being alienated by educational programmes that have been designed mainly in the South, with a minimum of emphasis on Inuit cultural traditions.

Although the Inuit have reached a standard of living that is the envy of most other aboriginal peoples, their fragile lifestyle has made them easy prey for drug traffickers who have recently invaded their territory, or for Christian fundamentalists who wish to evangelise the Arctic.

To understand both the benefits and problems that Arctic "development" has brought to the Inuit, who now manage their territories, we need to understand the historical setting and its different stages. We would see how Western colonisers initiated development first for military reasons (from 1941) and then for strategic, economic and social reasons (from 1950), without any real consultation of the local Inuit. Finally, there were ethnic reasons (from 1970), when Inuit leaders understood they could benefit from the new political affirmation of aboriginal peoples. In doing so, however, they unwittingly picked up neocolonial values that came with the idea of development, to the detriment of spiritual values that had supported their culture.

With the onset of the Second World War, the Arctic became strategically important. In 1941, the Germans occupied Denmark and Norway, and then sought to establish submarine bases in Danish-controlled Greenland to disrupt Allied shipping. The Americans decided to take over Greenland and establish military bases there. They reached an agreement with Canada to build and operate air bases in the Canadian Arctic. In 1942, the Japanese took the Alaskan islands of Attu and Kiska, which the Americans took back a year later. Several other air bases were built by the Americans, as well as a land route, with Canadian help, linking Alaska to the rest of the continent. Thus began the development of Arctic North America.

The North was again militarised in the 1950s because of the Cold War between the Eastern and Western blocs. As a strategic military zone, it attracted renewed scientific, economic and social interest. To protect against attack from the north, the United States and Canada set up radar lines, including the Distant Early Warning (DEW) line stretching across the High Arctic from Alaska to Greenland, where an agreement with Denmark allowed the United States to reopen its bases and establish new ones (in Thule, for example).

The Cold War also sparked verbal confrontations, such as the Soviet Union's virulent criticism of Canada for neglecting the "human development" of the Inuit. Canada was taken aback and decided to create the Department of Northern Development (1953). The goal was human development in the North, to be measured by three indicators: longevity, education and standard of living. The so-called "developed" countries provided a benchmark for the degree of underdevelopment, poverty and illiteracy.

Families were encouraged to move to villages of prefabricated homes with community services (school, nursing station, place of worship, store). Financial assistance was offered to needy families. Jobs were created and stores imported consumer goods from the south. Meanwhile, mineral exploration developed. This period saw two key events: the colony of Greenland became an integral part of Denmark (1953) and the Territory of Alaska—where non-natives were now the majority—became the 49th US state (1959). Discovery of new resources was not unrelated to these changes, which made it easier to expropriate Inuit land.

The Inuit of Greenland and Alaska realised the dangers of normalisation based on the Western model and made claims based on ethnic criteria and aboriginal rights. In 1967, eight Alaskan aboriginal associations joined forces to lobby the US government for ownership of their ancestral lands. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) of 1971 offered them 16 million hectares and nearly a billion dollars to compensate for extinction of their land rights. It was the

first in a series of agreements that settled land rights in Inuit territories where the oil and gas boom had caused much upheaval since 1968.

This agreement was influential among some Canadian Inuit when in 1971 a hydroelectric mega-project was announced for northern Quebec. The project was contested in the courts by the Inuit and Cree Indians of northern Quebec, and they won their case. Assisted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and lawyers, they then negotiated with the government to cede their land rights in exchange for financial compensation and regional administrative self-government, including control of "human development".

The signing of the James Bay Agreement (1976–1977) brought major administrative, legal and political change to the region. It was also a better deal than the ANCSA, offering control over education, health care, culture and aboriginal languages. Already, going to school and learning the coloniser's language had become mandatory everywhere, and the market economy had spread throughout the Arctic.

The Inuit elders of Nunavik (Arctic Quebec) were impressed by their negotiators' promises and believed that their children would have better job opportunities and a higher standard of living. But they are still waiting for the rest of Canada to agree to the teaching of Inuktitut (the Inuit language) as the first language. In 1999, part of Canada's former Northwest Territories, where the Inuit were the majority, became the Territory of Nunavut with territorial self-government.

In 2004, regional government was also established for Nunatsiavut (the northernmost part of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador). Meanwhile, Greenland's Inuit leaders, who had been largely educated in Denmark, in the 1970s began to demand more power. In 1979, the Danish parliament gave Greenland home rule, which similarly included the human development of the population. Over the years, new agreements have recognised more rights for the Inuit. A recent referendum (2008) confirmed their unhindered control of natural resources, their right to political self-determination and the primacy of the Inuit language for Greenlanders.

What no one has realised in Canada or elsewhere is that the new Inuit leaders have subtly adopted the heritage of the colonial period in the way the Western world sees moral, economic, social and political progress. Such progress has gone hand in hand with an alienation of souls, minds and bodies. When Inuit leaders came to power, their people had been completely Christianised for at least a generation in Nunavut, and for longer elsewhere. Gone is the traditional cosmology of animism and shamanism that was key to social bonding, as well as to relations with the environment and the invisible spirit world. De facto, it has been devalued and even demonised, its memory kept alive only by a few artists. Today, Inuit villages allow only the invisible spirit world of Christianity.

Also disappearing is the system of personal names that was associated with animism and that united generations and families to each other. It has given way to Christian first names and to new family names, previously nonexistent, that have been progressively imposed since 1970 by the administration at the urging of an Inuit leader who wished to make his people like other Canadians.

Gone forever is the soul-name of individuals and its traditional components. At white schools, even those that are Inuit-run, the students' minds are being alienated by educational programmes that have been designed mainly in the South, with a minimum of emphasis on Inuit cultural traditions. All that remains is their Inuit bodies, which are suffering from sedentary living, imported food and excessive consumption of sugar, alcohol and drugs. Obesity and diabetes have risen to disturbing levels.

Infant mortality has fallen to the same level as elsewhere in Canada (unlike the 1950s, when one in two children died in their first year of life) and the Inuit population is growing fast, but the rate of youth suicide, which was virtually absent before the 1970s, is now eleven times higher than in southern Canada.

The quality of life has also declined for the elderly because of family violence due to drug abuse, a high cost of living and lack of communication between the generations. The schools have promoted individualism and thus have broken the old networks of solidarity and sharing. Although the Inuit have reached a standard of living that is the envy of most other aboriginal peoples, their fragile lifestyle has made them easy prey for drug traffickers who have recently invaded their territory, or for Christian fundamentalists who wish to evangelise the Arctic.

But the Inuit have another option. They can show resilience and rediscover their culture and their elders. Some have chosen this way out. In 1994, when Inuit students at Arctic College (Iqaluit) attended an anthropological conference, they realised how much of their culture had been lost through development. They asked for a course on Inuit cosmology and shamanism, to be taught by elders and an anthropologist. The course was not taught until 1998 and was not published in the Inuit language until 2001.

Artwork is another way to rediscover Inuit culture. There are now many artistic projects and cultural activities, which are locally popular in Nunavut and elsewhere. There is the teaching museum of Sanikiluaq, which has given new life to Inuit personal names. There is Isuma in Igloolik: with elders, it has produced and directed films like the internationally renowned Atanarjuat and, with women, Before Tomorrow.

Among young people, there is the talented circus troupe Artcirq, which has been warmly applauded wherever it has performed. This is probably how the Inuit will find their own style of "development"—by better appreciating their non-material heritage. Indeed, this is an area in which the Western world still has much to learn from them. ■

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by Carolina Sánchez, José del Val and Carlos Zolla, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico

Monitoring the Development of Indigenous People

The problem is not only the absence of information, but that the very lack of data relegates indigenous people to a state of "invisibility".

National population censuses, which are the basic demographic tool in devising population policies, are still marked by incomplete information on indigenous peoples.

The most frequent case in Latin America is the assumption that individuals are indigenous if they know and use a native language.

If they lack such knowledge, they are included under the generic heading of "Mexican", "Chilean" and so on.

In most countries where indigenous people comprise a large share of the population, there is often a lack of disaggregated data in censuses and administrative records to reveal how native people live. The problem is not only the absence of information, but that the very lack of data relegates indigenous people to a state of "invisibility". The most critical commentators have termed this phenomenon "statistical ethnocide".*

Despite the recommendations and proposals on which there has been consensus in many meetings of experts (many of whom are senior officials of national statistical institutes), national population censuses, which are the basic demographic tool in devising population policies, are still marked by incomplete information on indigenous peoples. These gaps almost always stem from the use of restrictive categories.

The most frequent case in Latin America is the assumption that individuals are indigenous if they know and use a native language. In other words, it is inferred that if interviewees speak some indigenous language they are indigenous; if they lack such knowledge, they are included under the generic heading of "Mexican", "Chilean" and so on. The problem of indicators, particularly those concerning the development and well-being of indigenous people, is closely related to this practice in censuses.

In recent years, the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues has been a venue where leaders, intellectuals and representatives of indigenous organisations have linked the current situation and the prospects for development and well-being to the problem of information gaps. Above all, they have identified the need for reliable, up-to-date and—to use a term mentioned recurrently at the Forum—"culturally adequate" indicators.

An analysis of the documents produced in meetings, forums and workshops about indicators, attended by indigenous and non-indigenous experts, reveals that the demand refers not only to the task of defining methodological instruments but also to a set of factors that should be identified and distinguished.

What is being demanded, implicitly or explicitly, can be summarised as follows.

- Indicators (of well-being, development, environment and culture) must identify indigenous populations and must objectively state their situation in a systematic and regular way.
- Indicators should be not only an instrument of registration but also a fundamental tool for evaluating and protecting communities, as well as their territorial and cultural resources.
- Indicators of and for indigenous peoples, as well as their results, must be essential inputs for public policymaking, government programmes and actions, the design of projects that involve international cooperation, and other activities related to indigenous development and well-being.
- Indicators must provide information on circumstances and issues that are important to indigenous people and that are not always considered in national information systems, such as identity, spirituality, traditional knowledge, indigenous forms of social organisation, collective rights and, chiefly, intangible assets.

* This expression was used for over two decades by important Mexican researchers such as Luz Maria Valdés, Gustavo Cabrera and Rodolfo Stavenhagen (former Special Rapporteur for the United Nations on Human Rights and Fundamental Liberties for Indigenous People). On this matter, see Valdés (1986).

- Indicators must be conceived of as part of a strategy to position indigenous peoples as stakeholders in forums for negotiation, as well as to heighten the visibility of indigenous peoples, communities and individuals.
- Participation and consultation are crucial to building and applying indicators. Indigenous peoples must fully and effectively participate in the whole process at the grassroots level.
- Along with the measurement of traditional knowledge, indigenous people must be empowered to keep it, develop it and promote it.
- Countries and organisations must develop systems of information on indigenous peoples with data from censuses, surveys, registries, statistical studies or other conventional instruments. They should also produce special reports on matters of interest to indigenous peoples and communities.
- Governments, the United Nations, universities and cooperation organisations should develop training programmes to build capacity among indigenous people on the use of the information systems, with special attention to the interpretation and application of conventional or specific indicators.
- Schemes of indicators that are of the interest to indigenous people should be used systematically in consultations or any strategies, such as those of prior, free and informed consent.
- Special importance may be given to multidimensional indicators or similar instruments in order to take into account the entirety of the processes in which indigenous peoples and communities are involved, thus avoiding unilateral, biased and partial approaches.
- Member governments of the United Nations that take part in initiatives of global or regional scope (such as the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs) should identify indigenous populations in their information on goals and indicators.
- Appropriate indicators (conventional ones with ethnic disaggregation or new, "culturally adequate" indicators) should be designed and used, with particular attention to the main elements of the mandate of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues: economic and social development, the environment, health, education, culture and human rights.

Indigenous Peoples and the Millennium Development Goals

A major concern regarding the MDG and indigenous peoples is that the goals and their related indicators do not reflect the specific needs and concerns of indigenous peoples and do not allow for specific monitoring of progress concerning indigenous peoples.

Even from a strictly economic viewpoint, the MDG targets and indicators are inadequate for a number of indigenous peoples as they give prominence to monetary income over the informal, subsistence economies that are so important for the fulfilment of many of the basic needs of indigenous peoples.

As presently defined, the MDG do not take into account alternative ways of life and their importance to indigenous peoples, not only in the economic sense, but also as the underpinnings for social solidarity and cultural identity. The MDG carry the risk of guiding development action towards an increasing involvement of indigenous peoples in wage labour and market economies where there is no use for their sophisticated traditional knowledge and governance systems.

Considering the importance of having reliable disaggregated data about indigenous peoples, it has been identified as a methodological priority by the Forum, which has adopted a number of recommendations at its annual sessions.

The workshop also noted that an increasing number of countries, international agencies and academic institutions collect disaggregated data and there are a number of ongoing and planned initiatives to further data collection and the establishment of indicators.

At the international level efforts are made by, inter alia, ECLAC, UNESCO, UNIFEM, IFAD, the secretariat of the UNPFII and the United Nations Statistics Division. At the national level, research initiatives are undertaken by a variety of academic institutions.

Report of the International Expert Group Meeting on the MDG, Indigenous Participation and Good Governance, presented at the Fifth session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, May 2006, United Nations, Economic and Social Council (E/C.19/2006/7), Paragraphs 30-31.

The research conducted by the Mexico Multicultural Nation University Programme (*Programa Universitario México Nación Multicultural*, PUMC), using national and international documentation on the subject, convinced us of the need to work simultaneously on two complementary plans with a view to developing information systems that are suited to the needs and desires of indigenous peoples.

One plan concerns the information system itself, and in this regard we developed the Information System on the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (SIPIA).

The other plan consists of advancing proposals to make widely available five groups of indicators that we consider adequate in providing an account of the status and prospects of indigenous development and well-being.

The first group comprises conventional indicators with ethnic disaggregation—for instance, demographics, health, work and employment, education, land ownership, production, gender and so on.

The second group consists of the 48 indicators proposed to monitor progress towards the MDGs that are not usually disaggregated by ethnicity.

In the third group are those indicators that are both culturally adequate and

general, meaning that they apply to many indigenous peoples.

The fourth group comprises non-generalisable indicators that provide an account of particular situations regarding the well-being and development of specific indigenous people or communities.

The fifth group consists of multidimensional indicators, such as those devised by authors like Enrique Leff (1995) or Giuseppe Munda (2008).

An experience in Guerrero, Mexico

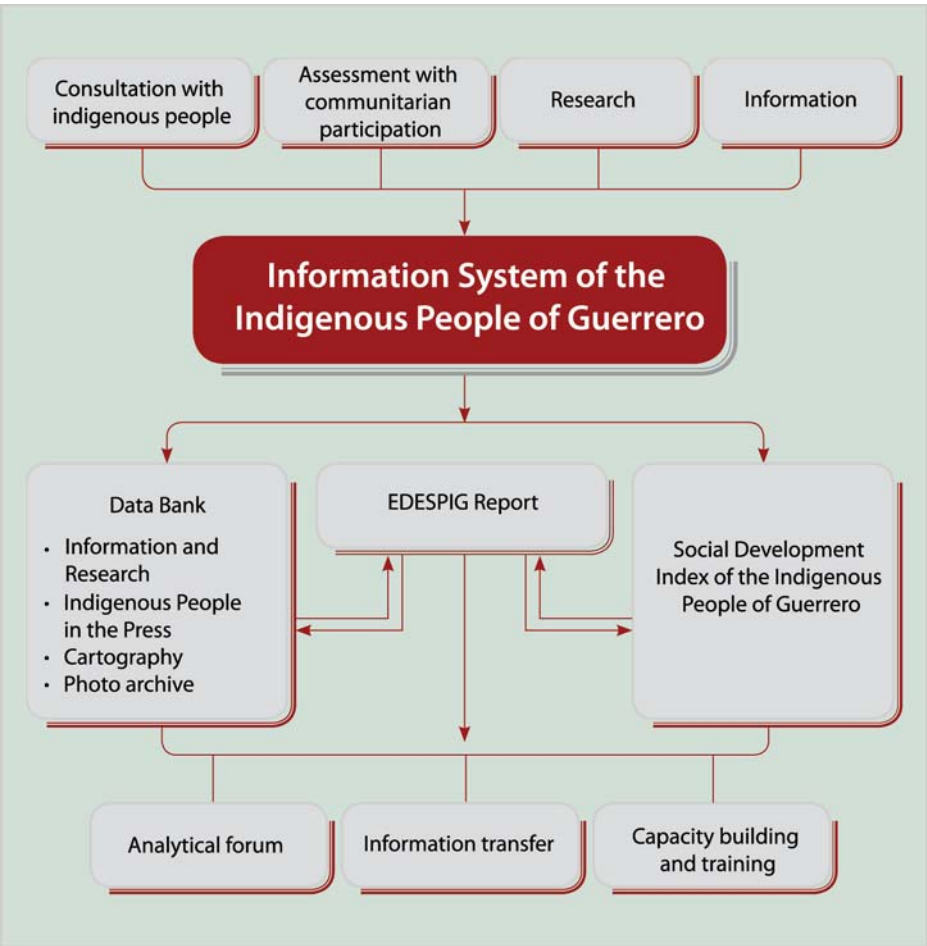
A PUMC research experiment sought to develop an information system as described above, in order to monitor the welfare and the economic and social development of the indigenous people of Guerrero.

PUMC's mandate is to promote and guide discussions on the multiculturalism of Mexico, which has a large and varied indigenous population, Afro-descendants, and a wide range of ethnic groups that settled in the country (Lebanese, Jewish, Spanish, Italian, German, French, North American, Central American, South American, Japanese, Chinese and so on), as well as the people of mixed race that comprise the majority of the population.

To meet its goals, PUMC carries out research that links the intellectual, methodological and technical efforts of experts in indigenous issues and of individuals working directly in the communities. It shares the knowledge produced and the experiences gained with academia and society at large.

In this context, PUMC developed a project entitled *Estado del Desarrollo Económico y Social de los Pueblos Indígenas de Mexico, Estudios Estatales*, with a view to meeting the demand for qualitative, quantitative, systemised and organised information on the many indigenous peoples spread throughout Mexico's states.

In particular, the project seeks to produce studies containing in-depth analysis of



current conditions among this part of the population, covering its economic, social, political and cultural reproduction and development. The goal is to adopt a forward-looking perspective in order to support the design of public policies and social assistance programmes.

The project springs from two previous initiatives, the first carried out in coordination with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which in 2000 sponsored the First Report on the Development Level of the Indigenous Peoples of Mexico.

The report brought together the experiences of about 80 researchers working on indigenous issues in Mexico.

The second initiative was the inter-institutional cooperation policy established for the production of information and the promotion of indigenous development.

This made it possible to define a model for collaboration on the analysis of nine fundamental issues related to the current situation of indigenous people at the national level, involving the preparation of indicators on the report's main thematic pillars, systematised and arranged specifically for the indigenous population.

These initiatives conceived of the project as a tool geared to identifying, gathering, producing, systemising and promoting general and specialised information on the current circumstances of Mexico's indigenous peoples.

The project also endeavoured to suggest new approaches to the discussion of some subjects, to introduce issues that were new or to which little attention had been paid, and to systematise qualitative and quantitative data in such a way as to allow specific indicators to be built in the future.

On the basis of these experiences, in 2006 PUMC initiated a project to assess and monitor the development of the indigenous peoples of Guerrero. Known by its Spanish abbreviation

EDESPIG, this project was conducted in coordination with the local government's Indigenous Affairs Department.

The model of collaboration used in previous experiences was established for research, emphasising the importance of transferring information to organisations that can develop programmes in indigenous regions and communities.

The new project, besides focusing on a single state, was innovative in creating an information system on the indigenous population of Guerrero.

The system includes a report, a dissemination document, both available in print and electronically, a specialised database, the results of a forum in which the main problems of the indigenous people of Guerrero were discussed, participatory community assessments, and capacity building courses and workshops to foster ownership of the information produced by the state's four indigenous groups.

For the research, data systematisation and information transfer, the EDESPIG project rested on thirteen thematic pillars: multiculturalism, demography, linguistic diversity, economy and social reproduction, natural resources and sustainable development, agrarian issues, health, education, migration, social conflicts, normative systems and justice, women and identity, and world vision.

We invite readers to familiarise themselves with the results of this project, which can be found on our website: <http://www.nacionmulticultural.unam.mx/>.

The development of the project confirmed the importance of linking institutional efforts to those of the organisations working on indigenous issues, as well as to those of researchers in this field, so as to provide useful and up-to-date information.

This information should reach development practitioners in the local and national governments, international cooperation agencies and non-governmental organisations, to be used as inputs in the making of policies geared to the development of indigenous peoples. It should also reach other sectors of society.

Another notable aspect of the EDESPIG project is that it encourages the participation of indigenous peoples throughout the process, including their proposals and their opinions about the problems they face and their own paths to development.

PUMC now aims to extend the work to other Mexican states where an interest has been expressed—either by government agencies or by international cooperation organisations—in the implementation of a similar project, one that can provide them with updated and reliable information and can strengthen their work programmes.

In the medium term, plans are underway to implement the project in the states of Sonora, Chiapas, Michoacan and Oaxaca. It will be linked to the Network of Macro-universities of Latin America and the Caribbean, which UNAM (*Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México*), through PUMC, is using to promote the project "Social Processes and Intercultural Relations in Latin America and the Caribbean", with a view to producing a report on the indigenous peoples of the region.

To achieve these goals, and because of the scale of the project, it became necessary to extend it beyond the university sphere. This will give it a clearer definition and strengthen its implementation by including the participation of other institutions, given the importance of indigenous issues for the current work programmes of many national and international organisations.

Efforts at linkage will prevent duplication and help create an enabling environment for the development of the indigenous people of Mexico.

Leff, E. (1995). *Green Production: Toward an Environmental Rationality*. New York, Guilford Press.

Munda, G. (2008). *Social Multi-Criteria Evaluation for a Sustainable Economy*. New York, Springer-Verlag.

Valdés L. M. (1986). *¿Existe demografía étnica*? Mexico, UNAM.

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International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC - IG)
Poverty Practice, Bureau for Development Policy, UNDP
Esplanada dos Ministérios, Bloco O, 7º andar
70052-900 Brasilia, DF - Brazil
Telephone: +55 61 2105 5000

E-mail: ipc@ipc-undp.org ▪ URL: www.ipc-undp.org

May 2009