

# Pachakuti: Indigenous Perspectives on Degrowth

## Towards a Universal Declaration of the Common Good of the Earth and Humanity

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**Bolivia - Living Well, Not Better**  
[http://www.boliviaun.org/cms/?page\\_id=621](http://www.boliviaun.org/cms/?page_id=621)

Bolivia's Living Well proposal means living a sovereign and communal life in harmony with nature, working together for our families and for society, sharing, singing, dancing, producing for the community. It means living a modest life that reduces our addiction to consumption and maintains a balanced production.

The protection and preservation of balance in the natural world, including all its living beings, is a primary goal and need of our proposal. Mother nature has inherent rights to exist on the Earth in an undiminished healthy condition.

Faced with so much disproportion and wealth concentration in the world, so many wars and famine, Bolivia proposes Living Well, not as a way to live better at the expense of others, but an idea of Living Well based on the experience of our peoples. In the words of President Evo Morales Ayma, Living Well means living within a community, a brotherhood, and particularly completing each other, without exploiters or exploited, without people being excluded or people who exclude, without people being segregated or people who segregate.

Living Well is not the same as living better - because in order to live better than others, it is necessary to exploit, to embark upon serious competition, concentrating wealth in few hands. Trying to live better is selfish, and shows apathy, individualism. Some want to live better, whilst others, the majority, continue living poorly. Not taking an interest in other people's lives, means caring only for the individual's own life, at most in the life of their family.

Within the framework of Living Well, what matters the most is not the individual. What matters the most is the community, where all the families live together. We form part of the community as the leaf forms part of the plant. Nobody says: I will just take care of myself; I don't care about my community. It is as preposterous as if the leaf were to tell the plant: I do not care about you, I will only take care of myself.

Development has proven to be a failure, as evidenced by the crisis of nature and the severe effects of climate change. It is now the leading cause of global crisis and the destroyer of planet Earth, because of the exaggerated industrialization of some countries, addicted consumerism and irresponsible exploitation of human and natural resources.

Thus Living Well means redesigning urban and non-urban living environments, the restitution of the local, regional and national communal goods, and a quick transition toward renewable energy at a small scale, that must be oriented to the locality and owned by the local community, without hampering the natural balance, and including wind, solar, small scale hydro and wave and local biofuels, not global agrofuels. Living Well means reallocating the trillions destined for war in order to heal Mother Earth.

Living Well means promoting an orderly reconstruction of the countryside and the revitalization of communities by way of agrarian reform, education and application of eco-agricultural microfarming methods, based on our cultural and communal practices, the wealth of our communities, fertile land, clean water and air. All of these approaches are in preparation for the inevitable de-industrialization of agriculture as cheap energy supply declines.

Comments

### PACHAKUTI

"Pachakuti" is a term taken from the Quechua "pacha", meaning time and space or the world, and "kuti", meaning upheaval or revolution. Put together, Pachakuti can be interpreted to symbolize a re-balancing of the world through a tumultuous turn of events that could be a catastrophe or a renovation

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See my bibliography at [http://www.web.ca/~bthomson/degrowth/draft\\_degrowth\\_bibliography.html](http://www.web.ca/~bthomson/degrowth/draft_degrowth_bibliography.html) for links to these references



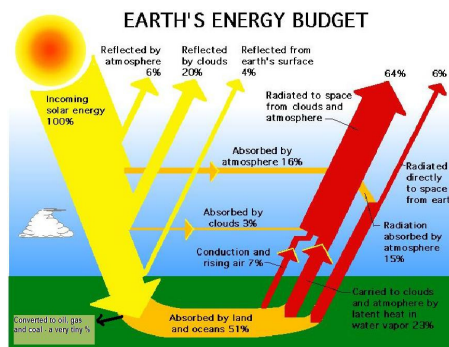
### A synthesis of indigenous and western paradigms is necessary

To the extent that the nascent international degrowth movement wishes to exert some political influence on solutions to the current world financial and climate crises, it should seek ways to synthesize the western degrowth discourse with a growing Latin American indigenous discourse that is making exciting progress, albeit in fits and starts, toward an international charter for the protection of the planet, Mother Earth, and all forms of life on it. Put less academically, we have to talk to, learn from and support the indigenous movements which have inserted degrowth like concepts into the formal constitutions of the Bolivian and Ecuadorian states and have convened a "Peoples World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth's Rights" to be held in Cochabamba, Bolivia from April 19-22, 2010.

This sketchy overview of indigenous perspectives on degrowth is my modest contribution to this dialogue.



THE SAME BOAT



Millions of years of solar energy are stored underground from plants which have absorbed incoming solar energy, carbon and hydrogen, died, and been compressed into fossil fuel deposits of oil, gas and coal. This "stock" of solar energy, accumulated from millions of years of incoming solar energy "revenue" which arrives in a more or less fixed flow from the sun (at a rate that cannot be changed), is being used up by our industrial societies at a speed which will deplete these millions (billions?) of years of accumulation within the next few decades.

