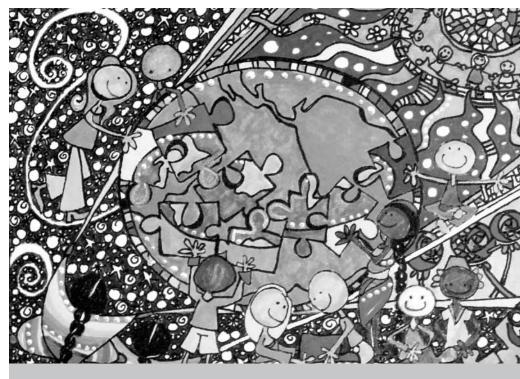ALBOAN

The alternative development we work for
Learnings from experience

The alternative development we work for
Learnings from experience

Table of contents

Foreword

After many years of a prevailing understanding of development, we witness a debate like no other before which considers that view inadequate to face current challenges. Its key feature was the stress on the economic growth as a priority goal, taking for granted that, once it had been achieved, the remaining goals of welfare would we reached as well. It is true that some critical voices could be heard then, but they had a secondary role in the practice of development. Right now, the debate is in full gear and it looks much deeper, wider and opener and many answers are offered from the most diverse sectors.

This review of development has not arisen as a spontaneous initiative of the international institutions, but due to reality itself. There is no need to roll call the deep change processes that our world has experienced to state that new answers are needed. There are two central references: the prominence of global challenges (among which the climate change could be emblematic), and the growing interdependence among countries. All that makes up a panorama of growing complexity and uncertainty in the face of the new processes which surprise us and which we still do not know how to tackle. However, these are not hidden forces of nature that appear unsuspectedly and to which we should yield. The new times are the consequence of the processes started by human institutions which have, in turn, unchained other unforeseen processes which require us to react and answer. In other words, this reality is different from the previous one and requires new categories to understand it and work upon it. When the world changes, our minds and attitudes must also change.

How can we face that change? It is not about accommodating but, rather, about offering a proposal which encourages to think of and create a liveable world. Furthermore, for those of us who believe that justice must be an inherent part of any concept of development, it is essential that the desirable and possible future meets the goals of equity and dignity for all people. The previous proposals are no longer of use, either because they are not feasible or because they have already proved inefficient, or because they are unable to face the new challenges or, specially, because they do not have justice as their reference.

Though there is a wide consensus on the need to react, the range of stances is wide. Not all of them consider it necessary to review the fundamentals of development. Those nearer to power are reluctant and only propose certain changes to the goals, which reduce the task to abandoning certain obsolete policies and elaborating more efficient ones to continue growing. A wide part of the public discourse still considers the crisis as a temporary phenomenon, which may last more or less and does not require deep revisions; they assure that we shall return to the old path. It is just the old way of those who resist the possibility of seeing their hegemony weakened: they want to make all the necessary changes so everything may remain the same.

However, at the same time, there is a widely shared opinion that the current economical order cannot continue and has to change. The unsustainability of the growth model has already been reported by social movements and institutions related to development and the environment; but the novelty is the opening of a space for answers which includes, albeit with less intensity, some of the instances of the current power structures. A UN agency, for instance, stated that we are living new times which demand the reorientation of development paradigms since the current world economic crisis has unfurled new reactions which have led to the reassessment of conventional theories. (DAES, 2010). UNCTAD, another UN agency, elaborates a yearly report about the situation of the so called "less advanced countries" (an euphemism to designate the poorest ones); in its latest report stated a very explicit diagnosis: "… it is no longer possible to go on 'as if nothing had happened'. It is necessary to reconsider the development paradigm; it will be necessary to find new approaches which ensure that, after the crisis, development shall be more solid and inclusive." (UNCTAD, 2009).

One of the interesting aspects of this debate is the appearance of well-being as the new reference for development. The concern about climate change and the depletion of natural resources has raised the need to reconsider the goals of well-

being which, at the same time, forces us to reformulate the priorities of development. The criterion to assess well-being can no longer be economic growth by itself: it is necessary to find other indicators. On the other hand, the criticism to western conceptions of development from other cultures has opened interesting and creative perspectives on the contents which are desirable and important to welfare. Especially meaningful has been the significant strength of native proposals in Latin America, which reclaim new ways of life formulated from social and political movements. There has been a change from the monotony of a development focused on income to a plural range of ideas on what well-being should be.

We find ourselves, then, in a context where, in addition to the weakening of the dominant economic model, we face the central challenge of designing new and functional answers in order to achieve a better scenario. This is the challenge to people, organizations, movements, etc., whose purpose is based on solidarity and justice. What role are they prepared to accept? Do they want to be present and be the protagonists when it comes to drafting system's goals, ways of working, attitudes, etc., or are they contented with being minor agents whose influence does not reach beyond certain social policies with very specific goals? Our proposal/answer is that in this process there is not only space and opportunity for this ambitious task, but that it also implies a demand which tests the feasibility of our proposal as an alternative. Not assuming this responsibility would deprive our claims and actions of their legitimacy.

This paper gathers the work of a group of people and organizations who have accepted this challenge with conviction and courage. They have started a process with the strong commitment to create a community for reflection and searching, with a long-term vision, which implies a continuous learning, with a clear set of rules, and which gathers peoples who work in different cultures, countries, professions, etc. This is the best guarantee to face the complexity and uncertainty of these times: to trust the group and move forward oriented by principles, not by recipes; with people always as the main concern. Martin Luther King Jr. said: "Human progress never rolls on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work [...]. Without that hard work, time becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation" (PNUD, 2010).

Alfonso Dubois
Member of the Universidad del País Vasco (Basque Country University)

Introduction

We, in **ALBOAN**, confirm our commitment to working in the construction of a better world. We want to walk with the organizations of impoverished people in their social and political articulations so that they may regain control over the development processes and improve their living conditions. We have the conviction that the world can and must be changed; that is why we join to what other organizations believe and work to make it possible.

From that common mission, we verify that in order to advance in the construction of processes and logical alternatives it is necessary to share not only the field of work but also the reflection and analysis on the contexts, processes and strategies we promote. Once we verify that we share the essential part of our mission, sharing knowledge becomes possible.

ALBOAN has been supporting for many years the work of different social centers and NGOs in many countries of Central and South America. Thanks to that work, we are aware that, in spite of the many substantial differences among each country's reality, there arise certain concerns and perspectives in common which should be shared and coordinated.

As an answer to these concerns, we have been promoting some spaces, like the seminar "*Institucionalidad y Construcción de lo Público con Participación Popular*" (Institutionalism and Construction of Public Spaces with Popular Participation) held in Bilbao in March, 2008, with the goal of deepening the analysis of the

social and political processes experienced by Latin American countries and the region as a whole, in the light of our work for democratic governability.

At that moment, thirteen organizations gathered to create a space to be able to share our experiences, mainly about social participation and the strengthening of public institutionalism. Among the agreements of that seminar, one of the priorities was to consolidate those meetings in order to facilitate our shared analysis of the social, economic and political processes, which nurture our work.

In May, 2010, 18 organizations from Latin American and Spain met again with the objective to participate in the seminar "*Gobernanza democrática para el desarrollo local y regional sostenible, Experiencias y Aprendizajes*" ("Democratic Governance for Sustainable Local and Regional Development, Experiences and Learnings"), which picked up our previous reflection. We wanted to take a step forward in the discussion of the economic and productive dimension of sustainable local and regional development. One way or another, all participant organizations are working to build proposals for a development in which the perspectives and interests of the majorities are incorporated, the dignity of people is respected, and the plurality, the collective construction and the respect for the environment may be the values orienting the idea of development. With that goal, we commit ourselves to productive proposals, with an economic perspective, and we integrate them in a deep vision of construction of citizenship, social participation and coordination for democratic governance.

The goals of this seminar were to identify the features and characteristics of the inclusive, sustainable and feasible development which we want to promote, and to explore the possibilities of setting an agenda in common as a group of allied organizations, beyond the seminar itself.

That is how this paper came up. We have entitled it "*El desarrollo alternativo por el que trabajamos: aprendizajes desde la experiencia*" ("The Alternative Development we work for: Learnings out of Experience"), and it intends to summarize the debate generated by this group of allied organizations which, looking back on our practices, have reflected together upon them. The idea of development we share here is the consequence of the processes we are involved in and for which we work day to day.

The development we want implies breaking with the prevailing economic and social logic and, in addition, interweaving new approaches which allow us to define,

democratically agree on and try other ways of conceiving well-being and other ways to achieve a good life for all people. Our work allows us to know and accompany the experiences of communities and groups of people who refuse to believe that there is only one way to understand development or, better said, who defend their own visions of what is good for their lives and their communities. We feel compelled to share those experiences, to spread them and to reflect on how we can strengthen them, how we can move on and encourage more people to imagine and to create other logics and other "developments".

We believe we can contribute to the creation of knowledge out of the practice and reflect about what we do, how we do it, and which the conditions to carry out our mission are. We know that in order to have a greater impact with our actions, we need to take some distance, to reflect about them and to extract learnings and lessons which allow us to value what we have achieved so far and reorientate our actions in the future.

We have dared to ask ourselves which is our idea of development, how we resist the impositions of the hegemonic model in our days, and what proposals are we making. The discussion about the notion of development has been good, and we have decided to provide it with content from our practices and learnings. We understand that, in order to transform them into knowledge, they must be analyzed and summarized taking into account the contexts where they are developed, their main actors, and the strategies and conditions we start from. We know that this text may have limitations, but it has the merit of being the result of praxis, of the daily knowledge that we try to summarize and share in these pages.

In order to clarify and share the analysis, this paper has been organized into three chapters and one annex. The first chapter states the characteristics of development we want to promote. We have given name and defined some of the characteristics of the development processes in which we have participated. It is evident that the eight characteristics we propose do not explore all the possibilities of the debate, but they are a first synthesis of what characterizes the development we believe in.
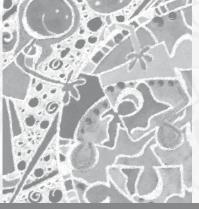
The second chapter explains the strategies we promote and from which we coordinate practical actions for social interventions. We state the practices we develop, some of our achievements, difficulties and learnings. We devote this chapter to assess our strategies; we focus on "how" to move forward in the setting of ways

to consolidate processes of alternative development. We speak about walking together with the civil society groups (and to let them walk with us), about strategies to generate productive and social-political capacities, and about the articulation of public and political advocacy actions. We also reflect on our capabilities to learn from the experience.

In the third chapter we state some elements from context and from our reality that make our road easier or more difficult. In the seminar we gave ourselves time to analyze in which elements lie our strengths and weaknesses. That helped us to generate a preliminary map that helps us in the diagnosis of an organizational reality and of a context that we cannot overlook.

The annex reflects, in a summarized way, on the specific experiences which each organization presented in the seminar, and from which the conclusions explained along the text were drawn.

Finally, we want to express that this document does not represent a point of arrival but, rather, one of departure. It is only a small step forward which has allowed us to agree, compare, and to move forward towards the idea of development we work for, but it compels us to keep going further, to continue thinking, analyzing and sharing our action. This step encourages us to walk together, to consider creative ways to exchange knowledge which, even in the distance, allows us to share and stay connected.

We, in ALBOAN, want to deeply thank the participation of all the people from different Latin American countries who came to Loyola with the will to share their experiences and work, their dreams and lives. All of them were willing to build alliances and commitments in common. We want to specially thank the organizations within the Jesuit Social Centers Network and the coordination of the CPAL social sector which encouraged and supported this meeting. We are aware that this shared road leads us to formulating new initiatives oriented to achieving a greater impact of our work for social groups, organizations and movements in Latin American and the Caribbean which, just like us, endeavor for a better world.

Chapter 1

Characteristics of the development we advocate and work for

The search for traits common to local and regional processes of development, what we shall call here "alternative development", was the core issue around which the seminar's reflection and debate were organized. We gave ourselves the opportunity to reflect and dialogue about the processes of the development we are involved in. To share and analyze impressions from experience was the best way to begin the debate, and allowed us to find traits or characteristics common to the initiatives of local and regional development we advocate for. Traits that identify a way of development, but also work styles and roads we open together with the peoples, communities and societies we accompany.

The questioning of the current model of development was a necessary point of departure to address the issue of committing to alternative proposals. The unequal distribution of wealth, power or goods of the earth is today more evident and outrageous than years before. This inequality shows the inability of the current model to solve the economic, social and environmental problems that afflict humanity. A model that exploits natural resources, and therefore, forces people to modify their deepest-rooted habits and turns life into extreme poverty; a model which makes millions of people migrate and move away from their homes; which subdues the peoples of the world under its exclusive premises and

imposes them only one economic, political and social option which oppresses and annihilates them. In short, it is a model which does not give an answer to the yearnings and dreams of the great majority of the population.

Examples like the events that took place in Honduras, in 2009, when the coup d'état was perpetrated, remind us that political order subdues to economic power without further questioning. In many places around the world, weapons and violence are at the service of the hegemonic model, killing and threatening those who dare to speak up and repressing any initiative which may question the rule of the established order.

Global problems such as drug trafficking hinder, or directly prevent, the harmonious and peaceful development of people, and they are presented as local conflicts inherent to each country that must be solved internally. According to that premise, the indiscriminate militarization dominates as the best way to deal with a problem of huge proportions but, far from consolidating itself as a solution, it finally sentences the peoples of the South to a life ruled by violence.

In other contexts, within the so called "developed world", we witness the dismantling of the welfare state and the increasing precariousness of life conditions; but, specially, the submission of social policies before the economic and financial measures that make up the recipe to "leave the crisis behind" and to revitalize the agonizing and unsustainable model of development.

These are only some of the examples of what we want to verify: that the current model generates mechanisms that ensure its own reproduction, focusing on providing feedback to its consensus and visions in order to survive under the same premises that made it possible, without paying attention to the helplessness of millions of people (mostly women) who suffer the consequences and who are the victims of the interests and claims of those with the greatest economic and political power to defend their own interests and claims. A hegemonic and patriarchal model which, in one of the greatest crisis of history, proves itself unable to provide a satisfactory answer to the important problems of our societies. This model presents itself as a structural obstacle to the development of the world's peoples.

In the face of this reality, new challenges are posed in relation with the generation of alternative proposals to consolidate and make the practices and experiences which people from all around the world are putting into practice possible. The idea is to deepen our social and political action, built from below, socially

empowering the groups and communities we are together with. We assume this context of changes and, specially, of high instability, as a space of opportunities to develop new plans and to participate with greater strength in the proposal building. The world changes rapidly: new ways of communication are created connecting the whole planet, and new social agents appear on stage to propose alternatives. Those things drive us to think again all that has been written and lived in order to face the new reality. It is not an easy task, and it implies an enormous challenge in the search of alternatives to the established order.

For that reason, the goal of the seminar was to become a meeting space which, as other spaces do, allowed us to continue the shared analysis of the social, political, economic and cultural processes that our countries and regions experience. At the same time, it offered an opportunity to move forward in the construction of a common discourse, of shared visions and strategies built out of alliances. This seminar wanted to pose the debate about development from an integral perspective, starting from the local and regional spaces, but covering different dimensions which allowed us to move closer to real proposals for the "good life" of all the people.

The common interest to provide what we usually call "alternative development" with a new meaning originated a rich reflection which gave us the possibility of elaborating certain characteristics that help us to confirm some of our commitments and to reorientate other actions. One of the first confirmations was that there is not an only model of alternative development but many, and that several logics are complementary. However, we found some characteristics which could help us identify the alternative in any of the development processes we encourage; so that we can contribute with a social transformation that dismantles the established structures of social exploitation. The following details those characteristics with the aim to summarize the debate and reflection generated during the seminar.

I. In defense of life: people and their dignity stand in the center

> "Resistance is a sort of struggle for life".
>
> *César Torres*

The alternative development must be built from this perspective. It is, undoubtedly, one of the great contributions of Human Development and it focus its work on the

person and the defense of life. "Good life" does only entail an economic aspect. We understand development integrally, where political, social, cultural and environmental aspects are inseparable from the construction of conditions that make a more fulfilling life possible. We strongly believe that there is no human development without an ethical and axiological dimension that provides that a meaningful welfare may become an essential element of development; in this issue we must reflect and work on.

When we state that the person is the core, we are basically embracing the option of working with and for excluded people. We have to commit ourselves without restraints to human dignity, with people in the center of our work. It is, in short, about humanizing models, about providing them with a transcendental and spiritual dimension in the broad sense; as meaning of life, as a reason for existence. The defense of life, in our current conditions, is the starting point to generate an "integral development" capable to transform the person at an individual level and in its collective and communitarian relations.

Placing the person in the center does not imply subordinating everything to the individual (as the hegemonic model does), but rather to generate the necessary capacities to encourage the integral promotion of men and a harmonic relation with themselves, with their fellow men and with nature.

In that sense, the defense of the person leads us to insist in the defense of his or her fundamental rights as the common place from where we build ourselves, together with others, as the conscious subjects of our rights and our responsibilities. We aspire, as many other people and communities of the world, to live in freedom; therefore, our perspective on development is complemented by the perspective of human rights, which revolves around two essential issues: **social justice** and the **common good**.

Social justice, on the one hand, implies that people have the right and the duty to participate actively and productively in the life of society; and, on the other hand, that society has the obligation to promote the exercise of such participation. Social justice promotes the active participation of people (men and women) in the life of society, while injustice leads to the exclusion from community. This notion of justice as participation could be the sapiential base for a new cultural consensus which helps the community to face the serious problem of inequality. By **common good** we understand "*the set of conditions that grant citizens an easy*

and complete development of their own perfection"[1]. That implies that people have the right to all the necessary things to live and develop in a harmonious way. And the exercise of that right cannot be eliminated by market rules, not even by the right to private property. The defense of human rights is thus presented as an essential part of alternative human development.

An important reference, consistent with these ideas, is the indigenous proposal of *"good living"*[2]. This concept opposes the idea of the dominant hegemonic model. To live in a community, in fraternity and complementarity, currently represents a revolutionary proposal which reintroduces the fundamental meaning of human sense, and which challenges us to closely understand each other. Thus, committing to "the good living" implies resisting all those things that threaten humankind; opposing all those things that reduce people to simple commercial objects; not obtaining satisfaction from fragments of happiness that distract us from fundamental issues.

To commit to alternative ways of life and of person-community relations often implies resistance. This resistance to the dominant model is postulated as a right and an inherent trait of any development proposal which, in its search of good living, questions the established order. A resistance as a sort of struggle for life that faces the hegemonic model in defense of human rights and guarantees safeguarding human dignity and the claim of a fairer and more egalitarian society.

---

[1] John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra,* 1961, nº 65.

[2] "Good Living does not mean living better at the expense of the other, but a Good Living based on the experience of our peoples; it is to live in a community, in brotherhood and, specially, in complementarity. It means there are neither exploited people nor exploiting ones; no marginalized people and no marginalizing ones. To lie, to steal, to damage nature may allow us to live better but that does not mean living better. On the contrary, it means to complement each other and not compete among ourselves; to share and not to take advantage of the other. Good Living is not the same as living better, because to live better implies exploiting, competing, concentrating wealth in the hands of a few. Living better implies selfishness, lack of interest about the others, individualism. Good Living is opposed to luxury, opulence and wasting; it is opposed to consumerism". (David Choquehuanca Céspedes. "América Latina en movimiento. Art. Hacia la reconstrucción del Vivir Bien". 2010. Pg. 452).

SERJUS Guatemala shared one of its great ventures: the orientation of its efforts towards the strengthening of citizen consensus for social participation in the sub-regions of the Guatemalan western high plateau. As they describe it, the struggle and action of the Mayan people derive from their view of the world and from their conception of life, both of which are ancestral. However, when it emerges today it is regarded as an answer or reaction against an imposed western culture and specially capitalism and neoliberalism which have determined (and still do) social injustice and the oppression which have been subduing them.

Consistent with this resistance, they look for possibilities of articulating a proposal of social relation to support a political, cultural and economic construction. The view of the world Mayan people have integrates material, economical, and cultural aspects, encourages the concept of the good living and the defense of mother nature and the land. These factors unite the population if faced with an invasion of multinational companies, and they represent the core of their resistance. Therefore, with the participation of ancestral authorities and in coordination with the national peasant movement, they generally assume the defense of the environment, their land, water and territory against the abusive exploitation of the natural resources. It is a mobilization which gathers the articulation of communal and peasant movements. Resistance is thus a central element in many of the proposals and processes of alternative development which, due to the reality of the world we live in, one must struggle in defense of human beings and life.

For many peoples, there is no development when respect to life and the community are not acknowledged and translated into a respect for fundamental rights such as: territory, governance of natural resources, and the possibility of searching for other ways to produce and become organized. The experiences of resistance give proof of inequalities, which are not only economic but also related to power and the access to it. It may seem that the processes of resistance only confront or oppose, but when it is clear what we resist to, why and what for, resistance is full of proposals, content and new options that should be taken into account.

"Behind resistance there are alternative processes of development".
Manolo García

> "There will be a local dimension wherever there is a society capable
> of having common objectives, a collective project,
> a future thought of in common".
>
> *Alfonso Dubois*

The local sphere is built as a space where we can advocate and transform. A space where the collective action has a main role based on the need to generate meeting points and commitment among the different actors in the contexts we work in. Thus, the local sphere is linked to the territorial one and it takes place in a defined space, a territory with capacities and a managing system, which aspires to become part of the group of diversities that coexist and are articulated in that same space. This space is not defined by the territory itself (in terms of *political border*) but around the collective aspirations, cultural connotations and so on, and which shape the particular context of each case. Hence, "*building sovereignty on the territory, on one's culture*", from below, from the local sphere, is the point of departure in any process of alternative development.

It is assumed that there is not a unique model, an exclusive way of proceeding, and that the local space appears under the most diverse forms in response to contexts and stories that differ among them. Nevertheless, those differences have a common denominator: they aim at construction from their local place. The territory is, therefore, the essential context in which the person and the community aspire to develop from their specificity and the natural space from where we hope to begin the transformation.

We understand the "local" as the "nearby", and not as a condition limited exclusively by its territoriality. It is in what is near us that we find the potentiality, because people share spaces, worries, values, culture, occupations. The local becomes more relevant when we see that the shared space enables the possibility of action, of transformation of reality and of achieving changes which motivate and inspire us to continue working.

"The decisive part about the local space is why and how it offers an especially adequate platform to put in motion common processes or projects. Accordingly, the local communities appear as new agents of change because they pose as a

central element the increase of the capacities of the actors, both personal and collective, to participate in the political and development processes[3]".

From Colombia, in clear connection with this trait of alternative development, we have been told about the experience of the construction of local and regional sustainability in the department of Nariño, "Susuyama" (which means: *Región Hermosa – Beautiful Region*). Since 2004, this program accompanies the department in processes of participative construction of local and regional sustainability, with a special stress on the formation of social and institutional leaders; it is based on a methodology of Prospective and Strategical Planning for a Sustainable Region. It is characterized by its optimistic and hopeful perspective, and promotes citizen participation, facilitates democratization of scenarios for planning, definition and management of budgets, and it promotes the articulation of the social, institutional and union tissues of the territory. The aforementioned concern is linked to the conviction that all organizations and institutions are subjects responsible for the construction of conditions that ensure the durability of life in all its manifestations and forms, generating synergies among the political, economic, social, environmental, cultural and spiritual dimensions of sustainability.

The experience is located in a multicultural and multiethnic Colombian region where there are many diverse indigenous peoples, African descendants, peasants, people of mixed race, mulattos and white people: a reality that configures a diverse traditional and popular culture with an identity of its own which has built a valuable material and immaterial heritage for the region. This cultural dimension is one of the strengths of the project.

We want to give here an answer to the adverse conditions experienced in the department of Nariño (intense armed confrontation, arm dealing, drug dealing) through the development of spaces and dynamics of collective construction of the territory which give us the opportunity to move forward in the sustainability of the region and therefore in the improvement of the life conditions of its inhabitants.

The main characters of the aforementioned experience reminded us of the importance of working in the research and documentation of cultural processes for the construction of new imaginary scenarios and groups which energize creati-

---

[3] Alfonso Dubois. "Desarrollo humano local y cooperación" (Local Human Development and Cooperation); document presented by the author for this seminar.

vity, diversity and coexistence as the fundamental elements of the territory; to strengthen the organization and coordination of the different actors who work this dimension in the region appears as a fundamental action in any project of local human development. It is important to highlight how, in spite of the context of conflict and violence in which the communities of the department live, new perspectives for the future articulation of the local with the regional are being developed. The summary of the experience itself states: "the fundamental goal of Suyusama is to join the regional dynamics in order to build a prospective and strategical vision of sustainability which allows the social actors of the region visualize a possible dream in common based on the economic, social, cultural, environmental and political dimensions, and to develop paths of action that may strengthen this dream about the improvement of life conditions of all the inhabitants of the region".

"The world is becoming smaller and more articulate. A proposal of development which does not seriously consider the articulation of the countries shall become weaker".

Ismael Moreno

Traditionally, and it was here were that most of the autocritical comments during the seminar arose, we have worked in a local space, "waiting for someone to change things from above, staying away from what was happening in the high spheres of power and concentrating on the problems of our own particularities". Something has been changing during the last years: working in the local space is no longer an alternative element against globalization. It is clear that without the local we can not aspire to transform other spheres. It is in that proximity where we can construct alternatives. The new challenges point at the connection of the local with the regional, the national with the global, opening towards the outside and showing us to the world. In that sense, our conclusion in the seminar was that: "the construction of new global bonds will not be possible if we do not start from the local societies being integrated and united. Growing globalization is an opportunity for the creation of new relations. It is not true that there is a pre-fixed model of globalization, or that the technologies impose a specific way to act. That is why participation becomes today a key element."

We are aware of the difficulties that this tension between the local and the global spheres entails, but we have to work in the development of strategies that guide

and offer the necessary tools to influence the evolution of globalization. Numerous experiences presented during the seminar shared this vision and formulated proposals to articulate this tension.

III. It generates participation and decision-making capabilities: capacity building for the exercise of freedom and decision-making

"We are able to make sacrifices because we think it is possible not to be afraid. Not being afraid of going out for a walk, not being afraid to go to the institutions, not being afraid to exist and to live, to meet with other people in order to share, to dream how to build what we want. We are working to overcome the fear in which vulnerable people have lived for so long".

Libardo Valderrama

We talk about the capabilities a human being should have in order to build his or her own well-being, his or her freedom, his or her future. This can only happen when he or she is able to act and participate. That is the reason why we understand that participation is the possibility for people to feel part of a political community in equal conditions through the free exercise of rights and duties.

If we understand participation as a liberating and empowering exercise, we must assume that participation is a process. It is a process which generates capabilities and transforms. From the perspective of human development, participation implies risking the integrity of people as economic, social, political and cultural subjects. We understand participation from this wider perspective, and that helps us empower people so that they can (because they have the right to) and must (because they assume the responsibility) become actors in public life.

In consequence, when we think of the ideal of "well-being", participation as a possibility of deciding the future becomes essential. To wonder about the development is to wonder about the future we want, about the idea of the future we have; and that we have to do it collectively. A human being is not a person if he or she does not have a future; but that future is not only individual, it must be built with other people breaking with the paradigm of individuality and moving forward to social construction.

We thought about how to build capabilities which may help people to achieve autonomy, the ability to participate, a vision of the future, and which they can

contribute to the generation of proposals to transform society. The idea is to break away from the old models based on personal benefit serving economic elites to build a new citizenship with a critical, supportive, and capable spirit committed with the ethical, cultural and political transformation of the environment. It is not, therefore, a simple knowledge serving a specific function; it wants to touch people's hearts, to encourage the idea that social change is possible, that a different life and a different future await for us if we are able to redirect our energies in order to assume an active responsibility in the transformation of society. It will also be necessary, then, to help men and women discover the identity of their territories, to increase their ability to diagnose their problems and, in the same way, to strengthen abilities which will help them in the search of solutions, knowing that it is a complex process, which is both collective and individual. That can only be done starting from the existent wisdom, strengthening it, bringing it into light and boosting it. It will be important to take into account the needs, interests and values that show its contributions, and to incorporate the existent diversity to generate a space in common.

Here underlies the idea of "alternative people", who build "alternative groups" which want to live their project of life from a new perspective, with a sense clearly differentiated from the established order, with freedom and equal capacity of participation and decision making. For that we need new people, new organizations with values such as solidarity, responsibility and an equitable relationship between men and women. It also implies building conditions that make those processes possible, like transparency and the culture of obeying "leadership". We also need a new way of relating to nature, to establish a harmonical relationship with it avoiding the predation and exploitation by accumulation of natural resources. In short, people who fight and achieve the necessary changes from their testimony of life.

There was also a reference to the ability to choose, to participate and to be listened to, to persevere creatively, to acknowledge the possibility of living according to different logics of development. It is essential that these strengths are achieved in order to be able to face the power elites.

The experience of Puente de Paz in Guatemala is a clear example of how, faced with the construction of the Xalalá reservoir, people work in the generation of capacities linked to the rights of the villagers. This collaboration with the communities affected by the hydroelectric power station has a key objective: that they have information on the impacts, that they know their rights and that they take, in the right moment, a well-informed and conscious decision about their lands, their development and their right to resistance. In that sense, there were learning exercises about their own territory (reading of maps and geographical charts, study of the area's biodiversity, elaboration of community maps...). At the same time, an organizational work was developed with the aim to inform, organize and defend the affected communities of the three municipalities, and 21,115 people participated in a community consultation in relation to the project itself. All that is part of a well defined strategy which aims to generate strengths that may help them in the resistance to the construction of the reservoir through specific knowledge related to the natural environment of the communities and their organizational capacities. It is, like we said before, the right of every person or group to participate in the decisions which affect them, the right to be consulted and listened to, to vindicate the existence of different logics of development to live with.

"Thinking about the wars of the past, we assume today that we do no longer want any more conflict. We must pay attention to the contradictions in this logic of two conflicting models. It is important to build democratic spaces, which are necessary for these contradictions to flow and be debated".

Cecilia Vásquez

IV. It is committed to building collective spaces: a condition that enables development

> "If there is a community in a world of individuals,
> it can only be a community interwoven in sharing and mutual care;
> a community which cares and takes responsibility for the equality
> of the right to be human and for the equality to exercise that right".
>
> *Zygmunt Bauman*

The hegemonic model highly stressed the individual dimension in the detriment of a collective one, managing the social aspect as it if were a service for the individual. We must recover the idea that the collective order is essential for the well-being of people. They are the "collective categories of well-being" which exist when people are together, working in a community, feeling the confidence of the social environment they live in and where they develop their individuality. However, which collective categories can help us to estimate what we have called "good living"? During the seminar, we were faced with the issue of the existence of four defined categories of which we can use of[4]:

1. **Social Capital:** much used by the World Bank. It poses certain contradictions and dangers but it may help us if we select exclusively that part related to human relationships. And in that sense, how important is it that there is confidence, respect, etc. among people? A society with relationships of confidence works better. The history of our respective societies is full of examples in which numerous activities, carried out within the community some time before, became part of more private spheres, spaces where the individual has earned a prominence out of proportion. In the face of this reality, the introduction of a special concern for relationships must become a fundamental challenge.

2. **Public Goods:** there are not only those from the State, or those managed by the governments as a result of a social agreements or historical processes of dispossession. There are also those which we consider essential for the well-being of people, and which are offered indiscriminately. They are goods which people enjoy. Nevertheless, which are the important goods when it comes to consider well-being in a society? We have considered global public goods… but, do we all understand the same about public good? Do we define it in the same way? We evidently do not, and that is the reason why the definition of

---

[4] Presentation of Alfonso Dubois – Universidad del País Vasco. See CD attached with ppt presentation.

"public" shall be a fundamental exercise for the community, in each sphere and place. From that definition, we can start building a well-being project.

3. **Human Safety**: we cannot claim to have achieved results if we are not able to guarantee their environmental, political and social sustainability. There are avoidable risks. The human concept of safety focuses on people exercising their vital options safely and freely, while we guarantee that the opportunities that bring us development today will not disappear tomorrow. Human safety refers basically to freedom from fear in relation to basic needs and to the freedom from fear (understood as threats, insecurity or contexts with high vulnerability).

4. **Collective Capacities:** of institutions and of the society itself as a group. Marta Nussbaum has tried to establish 10 human categories within human development, and which are common to all cultures. One of them is that the person knows that he or she has means to decide that he or she is someone. She also makes a distinction between relational capacities, the way a person relates with the institutions. Collective capacity is the capacity of each person, institution, etc., to work within a (local) framework. The group works when it is nurtured by interdependendent, interwoven relationships. In that sense, it is essential to encourage and consolidate these collective capacities.

From the Mayan territory *tseltal* in Mexico, we were presented with a project of sustainable community development dedicated to coffee production. The collective sphere has, in this experience, a special prominence in a project that wants to integrate the different parts of the community around a common objective. This project is part of a wider process which, among other things, encourages people's decision-making and gets them involved in the dynamics of community business management with everybody's participation. It is a program that boosts the capacities to participate through the building of institutions devoted to encourage participation and collective action and, in that sense, it is a clear example of collective building in which the generation of shared senses and values represent a fundamental element in the process of development. In practice, the work was based on the existence of a traditional organization of community positions that went from selling their local produce (coffee and honey) as raw materials to controlling the whole productive process, to the

very moment of the coffee sale. This was done at a small scale, working with community leaders, implementing an educational process, generating a logic of development based on self-sufficiency and becoming a social enterprise. The strategy of not selling any more raw material made it possible to establish and consolidate some small-scale infrastructure. This works as a transmitter of coffee experiences which encourages producers and their families. This strengthening of the community around a common project, in addition to other aspects of the program, has generated an important degree of satisfaction about the basic needs of their protagonists and the building of collective capacities.

V. It retrieves the richness of diversity: from the exclusive us (only men) to the inclusive us (men and women)

We begin with the conviction that development is based on diversity. We live in plural societies in which many times certain cultural values or elements are imposed, eventually becoming dominant. This plurality goes beyond seeing each other as "different" when it does not imply the acknowledgement of the importance of "the other" and, moreover, of "the other person" as valuable and worthy of respect.

Culturally, the "otherness" is described as what is different to the model, as an enemy or something inferior; the important thing is to recognize that according to that definition we establish relations and ways of organization for coexistence. In the case of our multicultural societies, even when it is true that there are certain social rules and agreements which recognize this diversity and the condition of "equality" for the exercise of citizenship, we have verified that it is no enough for development. The current power structures label people and cultures as "different" because they do not assume or flaunt the values and behaviors of the dominant group. Many of those groups, historically in the "periphery" and perceived as "inferior", are the ones we work with and with whom we build proposals for development.

Our commitment takes into account three elements: the struggle against any kind of exclusion, the nearness and preference for those people who have been dominated, and the development of strategies for collective construction (education, participation) which favor the acceptance of shared common values, the participation in a common project where each person and group have their own space. In that sense, the alternative aspect is the result of a search for equity that sets egalitarian relations of acknowledgement and respect.

Our concern to recover the richness of diversity is in clear opposition to a model which tends to blend without taking differences into account, and which is moving forward without noticing the complexity of the spheres where it works and which excluded those people who are not culturally and economically "equal". We acknowledge that diversity (cultural, religious, of language or ethnic group) is necessary for the reaffirmation of people and their identity, both individual and collective, and that it is a requirement to guarantee the development of humanity. The acknowledgement of minorities is indispensable for the creation of a less unfair and more inclusive society.

Therefore, an important step for the processes which we try to promote should be accepting the complexity of the processes for the local development we work in. We hope to generate spaces so that the person and groups can develop in complete harmony with their viewpoints, identities and aspirations. In order to achieve that, it will be necessary to strengthen our capacity of adaptation to work in different spheres, accommodating ourselves and being able to find the necessary mechanisms to articulate the differences we come across. This challenge also implies accepting and acknowledging the complexity of certain processes of development where different actors participate with different working perspectives and multiple and diverse capacities that allow us to articulate a wide range of possibilities. We must make the best out of this reality to enrich the processes of development we live in, all together, thinking complementarily, and managing this diversity as a rich opportunity.

Back in Colombia, we look again towards the Nariño department, in Suyusama; in this case, to highlight their management of diversity. Due to its geopolitical situation, it is a meeting point for the Andean, the Pacific and the Amazonian. The department of Nariño is a multicultural and pluriethnical region where, as we have already stated, there live many different peoples: indigenous, afro descendants, peasants, people of mixed blood, mulattos and whites. This reality configures a scenario of traditional and popular culture with an identity of its own in its diverse manifestations, which has allowed reuniting an important material and immaterial heritage for the region and the Colombian nation; and it also represents a major opportunity to work for its regional sustainability from the cultural dimension itself. To manage this cultural amalgam more efficiently, Suyusama assumes that the methodology used will be that of participative processes where there is an exchange of knowledge, experiences and different approaches, taking into account the

interaction between the rural and the urban worlds, and the articulation of the local and the regional. The experience describes that in the interethnic spaces for concerted action it was necessary to involve afro-indigenous organizations, churches, etc., with different logics that many times did not coincide. This demanded a lot of respect and attention when weaving together common interests, and which sometimes meant moving forward and backward, but that, in the end, was an important contribution to the articulation of differences. In addition, the program works according to an integral perspective of all the territory. This approach highlights the participation of all the actors and their interrelation, not the sectorial work. It is, therefore, a project which works from the diversity to promote a fair, sustainable society in peace.

VI. It makes a fair and sustainable use of natural resources: a development that lives in harmony with its natural environment, generating social and environmental benefits

> "It is our future we are risking here.
> It will be essential in the following years.
> It is now when we have to propose alternative models".
>
> *Lorenzo Solís*

As we have mentioned before, the model we promote is, in this case, supported by a clear common denominator: the rejection of the hegemonic and patriarchal model, extractivist, predatory, cumulative and promoter of consumerism as a way of living. A model which does not respect the natural environment and which, instead of considering self-criticism, keeps threatening and destroying the biodiversity, expelling people from their homes and promoting inequality, generating poverty and excluding people.

The acceleration of the globalization process and the strong growth of the global economy in the two previous decades have shown the reality of a fragile planet and an international society which is more and more unequal and vulnerable in the face of conflict and exclusion. It is in this context when a deep reflection on the governance of natural resources from the perspective of social justice becomes relevant and necessary. This process of strong economic acceleration and capitalist expansion has been experienced with particular virulence by the countries, populations

and territories in which many of the organizations represented here work day to day. Therefore, many of these agents have been especially interested in condemning the serious problems associated to the expansion of the current model of development. In fact, it has precisely been those peoples who have had to cover the main costs of this growth model, and it was with them where that the symptoms and exclusions associated to the management of natural resources were first manifested and highlighted, since many of them depended on such resources for their survival.

The race for the appropriation of mineral, hydrocarbon and forestal resources associated to the strong growth of the world economy in the last two decades, the rise of energy related mega projects or the monocultures for the generation of biofuels have implied a serious problem for the territorial and social integrity of these peoples. It was precisely here where the first voices were heard, voices which questioned the "access and control" to the natural resources, reflecting on the "*formal and informal rules which establish guidelines for the interaction in the process of decision-making*" (governance).

During the seminar, some voices warned on the importance of the access to and control of natural resources. It is here that we are risking our future and, therefore, it is where we should start making efforts in promoting models of alternative development which involve ways of life compatible with nature and which propose lifestyles opposed to consumerism.

Representatives from Guatemala told us about the experience of Puente de Paz, in Ixcán. This organization supports the resistance of the Q´eqchís communities threatened by the building of the Xalalá hydroelectrical power house, a big dam that shall be built near the confluence of the rivers Chixoy and Copón, and which would turn Xalalá in the second hydroelectrical power house of the country. The affected departments (El Quiché and Alta Verapaz) are the poorest areas of the country and their population is mostly indigenous. These communities strongly maintain their cultural and social identity: language, uses, traditions, authorities and ways of organization. They earn their living from agriculture, and they produce basic crops and have some cattle for their self-support. Their lives are closely linked to their environment which is now threatened by the construction of this mega project imposed by the government and which has never taken into account the main actors: the residents themselves.

Some activities have been organized with the goal of informing, organizing and defending the affected communities. Among them, community maps were elaborated to identify the use of the soil, the streams, mountains, sacred places, milpa areas, etc. Based on the people's knowledge of their natural environment and using as reference catalogues of vegetable and animal species in Central America, an inventory of biodiversity was made including the names in Q´eqchí and Spanish. In short, the collective building of a communal diagnosis was to give the communities strength and the property of their own riches in the face of the great threat posed by the Xalalá dam. The natural environment and its resources become, thus, an essential good, a collective project under death threat and subjected to the rules of the dominant model but which, far from surrendering, works hard to manage a space of resistance where alternatives can be developed.

Another clarifying experience was shared by the CIPCA-Bolivia organization. They work in the strengthening of communal organizations which, for many years, have been under harassment for the natural resources in their territories. Territorial management appears as a specific proposal for development, a proposal which implies the ownership of and access to the land and its natural resources (in the case of the Guarani people, collective ownership of these resources) and combined management of communal ways and mechanisms according to their own culture. Territorial management is a concept against the ways of dealing with the natural resources of the area and most of the country: it is predatory and extractivist and poorly pays the indigenous laborers who sometimes only receive in-kind payment in exchange for their work (food, clothes or alcohol).

This program also includes a specific proposal on Sustainable Local Development: a concerted and egalitarian integral management of a specific territory, in order to guarantee and improve the satisfaction of the basic needs and the generation of surplus without compromising the availability and reproduction of the resources for future generations. Hence, it introduces an environmental component related to the potential, limitations and capacity of recovery of the ecosystem, a condition and starting point for all the other things and especially for the already mentioned rural development. From this approach, natural resources are consolidated as an essential axis on which the multiple existing variables of any process of alternative development will revolve.

VII. It strenghtens the role of women: there is no real development if women do not have the leading role

"When speaking about alternative development,
it is important to bear in mind that women start from the lowest point;
it is to be seen if we pay enough attention to them".

Mª Mar Magallón

Women are, at least, half the population we work with. They are also the protagonists of the most excluded collectives.

Their contribution is neither acknowledged nor noticed in many realities, even when they are the support of many community resources. During the seminar we became aware of the fact that even when we are working with them, there are still many challenges to overcome. The first one is to make women visible and to look at them as different and complementary, as the necessary protagonists of the alternative development we are committed to. The visibility of women was one of the missing topics in most of the reflections during the seminar and, when it came up, it was always due to the participant women themselves. In that sense, we were aware of the lack of abilities to face gender approach in our daily work.

In many cases, it is perceived as an imposition from the North, as a kind of "whim" or a conquest by feminist movements, and it is difficult to link it to the promotion of basic human rights within that proposal of alternative development. Undoubtedly, the feminist movement and its commitment to another model of society has many elements in common with the model of alternative development we work with, in which horizontality, coexistence and justice are key elements.

It is, therefore a challenge to recognize, strengthen and enable a leading role for women, active members of the community and leading parts of this model of alternative development.

VIII. It prioritizes good life for all people: the priority is not the accumulation of capital but the "good life" for all people
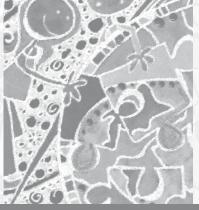
"There is a dominant logic which imposes the generation and concentration of richness for today; we, in turn, propose a logic of sharing the resources we have for today and for tomorrow".

Maqui Ruiz

All through the text we have tried to define, taking into account other contributions from the seminar, the characteristics of the so-called alternative development. From the beginning, we assumed that we cannot think of only one model of development, and that our proposal is born out of sharing the different realities in which we work and live. They are multiple proposals, but they are also complementary. In spite of the already mentioned diversity, the common elements which link and bond us are many. One of the most important one is, precisely, that our priority is not the accumulation of capital but a good life for all people. In that sense, our propositions are opposed to the dominant model, whether we speak in defense of life, of beginning at the local level, of the promotion of abilities, the collective construction or the democratic management. These commitments and the different stances we take generate strong experiences of resistance which challenge the impositions of a model that, from diverse sectors, oppresses and subjugates people.

Thus, the opposition to the dominant model is a starting point for the construction of new logics and processes, for the generation of alternative currents which help us in the search of new patterns of development.

We live in a clearly dominant economic *status quo*. Its logic is the generation and concentration of wealth "for me and for today", and it is seriously protected by the constitutional political framework of the majority of the countries we work in, by the international financial institutions, etc. Faced with that reality, we propose a logic of generation and redistribution of wealth for all men and women, and for today and tomorrow; a model which represents an alternative but which, at the same time, takes on its diversity and accepts the existence of other ways of understanding reality. It is about facing the logic of capital accumulation, of challenging it in all its sectors (environmental, economic, and social) in order to, after reporting it, be able to move forward in the generation, consolidation and socialization of new proposals. We do not propose a Manichean debate implying the destruction of the system, but it is necessary to look at the roots and change structures and not just in order to carry out a simple reform. We are also aware that it is necessary to overcome past polarizations, and we acknowledge the handicaps of the current model in order to promote a fairer system which allows sharing the resources we have. We want to contribute to a change of structures to meet the demands of the disadvantaged, and to build experiences of common good, of decent lives and good living for everyone.

Chapter 2

The strategies we develop

> "We must globalize the creativity of local experiences and combine it rightly with resistance, transformation, denunciation and announcement. Besides audacity, great doses of creativity are needed".
>
> *Joe Aguilar*

Along the first pages, we have tried to define the common characteristics of the development to which we want to contribute. They are, in some cases, realities already verified by many of the experiences shared here and, in others, aspirations and desires of a project for the future consistent with those characteristics. The essential challenge is moving from the "what" to the "how" this can be done, and this implies making it operative, possible and visible. In fact, this was a recurrent issue throughout the seminar, and one of the main points of debate. We want to build and spread what we have learned, what is working well and those matters which we should re -examine or improve.

In this section, we will look again at the strategies we are implementing, at some achievements, difficulties and learnings of this experience. We will devote these paragraphs to examining point by point the sphere of the strategies for development. For that reason, we will focus on "how" to move forward in setting ways of working for the formulation and consolidation of truly alternative processes

of development. It is about reflecting on how to put to practice the promotion of the characteristics of the development we want to build. We will have to apply the agreed elements to what we think and say, but especially to what we do and how we do it. There is always the danger of keep doing the same things but calling it with a different name. The definition of our strategies has to be coherent with the things we define: that is a task to which we should pay special attention.

We will now recover some of the strategies shared in the seminar which could help us to collaborate in the construction of alternative models of development. The major strategic groups are the agreements derived from the contributions made in the seminar.

I. Accompaniment: it is not about replacing, but walking next to

Accompaniment is not a new subject, and it has been a constant desire in our daily work the way we relate to others as groups, organizations and as people. We trust in the capacity of people to build for themselves: they, together with other people, are the center of our work. We walk next to other people and groups who want to be accompanied, with whom we shares goals and commitments. We accompany them without the desire to replace them; we understand accompaniment as a two-way travel of synergies in which learning is reciprocal and where relations between equals are built; ways of relating to each other in which the most important aspects are respect, esteem and affection for the other person. Symmetry, parity and freedom must also be part of this relation, and there must be a support on which we build proposals for an alternative development. The goal, therefore, is to promote and accompany people, groups and organizations who are the leading actors of their own development. We know they are not static processes, that there is a complexity which we should accept and learn to manage.

> *"We walk next to each other. We do not replace them, we do not protect them, we do not patronize them".*

When we accompany someone we put ourselves at the service of that person, group or people, to help them and us grow together during the process. Promoting initiatives of development in which the groups we accompany are the real protagonists implies putting at stake our viewpoints, building a common

agenda at the service of the needs and interests of those people we accompany in specific processes and initiatives.

Accompaniment as a strategy also means a style of working, a way of doing and being. Those who accompany others must understand that, in order to strengthen capacities, our personal and organizational capacities are to be put at the service of other people, and that we must trust, listen, dialogue and support. We know that it is a two-way road in which, many times, the accompanying person gets accompanied and is transformed along the shared path.

To accompany processes of development implies an attitude of nearness and affection for the people we support. It implies a commitment with groups who live in poverty and exclusion, to be next to those people in the good times and also in the difficulties. In addition to that commitment, being "with" implies recognizing tensions, different points of view, orientations, answers, etc. In short, it is about building capacities for an open and trusted dialogue and which allows moving forward with shared views and common goals.

We have verified from experience how organizations support each other following a horizontal logic which manages diversity, nourishes relations and generates common capacities in all directions. And that network grows to include more people, to encourage a model of interaction based on respect, complexity and complementarity, aspiring to bring about a permanent social change. The path is long, and it is full of comings and goings, agreements and disagreements. We believe that with an open, close, respectful and patient attitude, and with trust, commitment and fidelity, we will be able to move forward with our aspirations and that we will be better prepared to face the road to social transformation.

"As an analogy which helps us visualize the subject we are dealing with better, we will use the figure of the "drummer" of a music band. His or her mission is to keep the band's rhythm, to go unnoticed so the others can play their instruments following that melodical base. If the drummer plays too enthusiastically, he or she saturates the environment and prevents the other instruments from reaching a more harmonious musical development, the band is disturbed, the concert is not so good and, if things continue that way, the project finally fails".

Working team participating in the seminar.

The ultimate goal of accompaniment is the empowerment of the people, communities and groups we work with. These must aspire to manage by themselves their own expectations, lives and concerns. If we are able to express all that we shall be helping people to develop their capabilities, especially in relation to decision making.

> For **ALBOAN**, the construction of new spaces of justice and dignity can only be achieved through the accompaniment of people and groups. Accompaniment is understood as a shared road of permanent listening, dialogue, and support, in which both parts are enriched and question each other. It implies the overcoming of internal resistances, audacity to face the major challenges, clarity and perseverance in the difficult moments and those of celebration of the life in common, as the title of the strategic plan says: *We accompany people in their integral growth along personal, social and political dimensions.*

> Another organization which shares with us this clear commitment to accompaniment is the CIPCA-Bolivia. They remind us how the resurgence of the Guarani people is the result of its own effort, its own protagonism. Institutions like CIPCA have contributed and supported different processes according to the working fields, but the main role was always theirs. Not depending on anyone, to be *ijambae* (without an owner), as they say, it is one of their most important values, a value they are achieving little by little. Among the long-term commitments reached with the Guarani people, some of the most important were permanent accompaniment, mutual trust, respectful work with no impositions, and respect for the processes, rhythms and dynamics which could be different from those of the institution.

II. Capacity building: individual and collective; productive and socio-political

"There cannot be a process of alternative development
if we do not transform some concepts of training.
Our way of getting closer to people, our way of doing this work is shown not
only in what we try to transmit, but also in the way we do it".

Cecilia Vásquez

In the previous pages, we have discussed the generation of capabilities as a special trait of alternative development. Now, we will look at the matter from the sphere of strategies while searching the tools which can lead us in the generation of those capabilities.

In general, taking into account the experiences and interventions made during the seminar, we can conclude that the idea of accompaniment of transforming agents must be a priority for our organizations. We are talking about individuals and groups with the goal of promoting sustainable and inclusive changes in their respective societies, and who need a reinforcement of their capabilities in order to achieve a more efficient performance. In the first place, we must identify which are the processes we want to be part of, and we have to think carefully about what we want to transform. Those processes have appealed to us and they have made us review our own training. We understand that by working our own capabilities, we will be generating pedagogical processes with the firmest guarantees.

The work we carry out obliges us to define the strategical groups we want to collaborate with, analyzing the peculiarities of each problem and designing strategies according to each reality. Therefore, before starting a training process we will have to determine in which processes we want to participate (what do we want to transform?); identify the groups in which we shall carry out the strategy (young people, peasants… depending on each specific case); and promote training within our organizations, to help us train and accompany other groups, communities and/or organizations; all these factors will consolidate feasible alternatives of development in a comprehensive manner.

Any training process must pay attention to two kinds of aptitudes: on the one hand, to those capabilities which allow to understand the world and what is happening in it (in the political and social spheres and with a view of complexity and integrity), taking a stand and generating awareness about it; and, on the other

hand, to all those capabilities and skills related to daily work (more technical). It is important for people to be able to contextualize their experiences, to understand the operation of the regional and/or global dynamics in order to be able to affirm that knowledge in their nearer spheres.

How can we express these ideas in our proposals? A clear example is the experience of the CPAL with their Schools for Citizen Political Training (EFPC) for Central America. They suggest three dimensions inherent to any process of alternative development:

a) In the acquisition of new knowledge ("**understanding**"). About theories on the State, society and democracy; on models for development, globalizations and migrations, politics, culture, religion and human rights.

b) In encouraging values ("**being**"). Personal commitment with the development of the country and the region, with respect for human rights; to put into practice values that combine Faith and Justice like solidarity, tolerance, peace culture and opening to changes.

c) In the practice of what we have learned ("**doing**"). The idea is to help to train different kinds of interventions which promote citizen participation; that they may be familiar with and implement working methodologies with groups in relation to planning, negotiation and conflict resolution. The idea is that former students permanently use methods of reality analysis in which they live and work.

Therefore, it is not enough to "understand"; it is essential to "be" in order to "do", so that there will be a moment in which men and women are able to build their own destiny.

CIPCA- Peru shared an experience entitled "Local governability in rural societies of Piura-Peru" with the goal of "strengthen democracy promoting the development of citizen competences and capabilities, the full exercise of their rights, the management of their collective priorities and their incorporation into the policies of local-regional development".

CIPCA's goal is to face the weak performance of concerted action at a municipality-civil society level in order to boost the democratic governability and local development. In fact, they are already working in strengthening their capabilities and

supporting authorities, municipal public officers and representatives of civil society. The idea is to turn these actors, especially those in civil society into promoters and protagonists of the planning and management process of the concerted action. They pursue the political articulation of actors for the construction of the public sphere and institutional strengthening. This development of capabilities has led to the revaluation of the importance of *organization* in local development, participation and citizen surveillance in processes of concerted action and management of territorial development. Thus, the role of the organizations as interest intermediaries and promoters of local leadership has increased. CIPCA verifies how the social capital of the communities increases, something of great importance to face, in better conditions, the actual model of development in Peru. It is important to mention that these dynamics brought about a favorable change to the sector which traditionally felt excluded and actually was so: now they assume their participation as a right and they achieve benefits through it, both in infrastructure and in service provision. There is no doubt that this is an example of the relevance of the area of training from which much can be learned.

It is important to point out that this logic of "training" is not new, since we have already lived a rise of the "workshop approach", of different courses, etc., and we acknowledge that many times we have encouraged activities that were not related to processes or specific needs, nor to specific social movements with potential. We have learned from past mistakes and we want the activities of today and of tomorrow to be training activities related to lasting processes, articulated with wider objectives with an integrity approach.

III. Advocacy: Public impact as a strategy for social transformation

Along the seminar there were many contributions on the subject of advocacy. There seems to be unanimity on the fact that we are part of such processes. We assume, therefore, that we have to participate in order to reinforce the processes which the communities are part of. In that sense, our social organizations and movements have a voice which has to be listened to. Sometimes we play the role of intermediaries and negotiators both with people from communities (internal level) as with other involved actors; this is, perhaps, an area which we must learn to dynamise and make the most of, in order to have incidence on the decisions taken and which affect the lives of the most vulnerable people.

A large part of the experiences shared along the seminar (or even all of them) are clearly related to advocacy goals. But, what do we understand by incidence? How do we have incidence? How do we connect with political dynamics and find the most efficient way to have impact? What kind of incidence are we having?

We understand advocacy as a process including different lines of action, born out of insertion and the nearness to those groups and people we accompany, and which are specified in investigation, political dialogue (lobby), training, awareness, mobilization and educational communication.

A good example of this was shared by Colombia. The CINEP/PPP (Center for Investigation an Popular Education and its Program for Peace) introduced the experience "Building the country from below: a commitment to peace and development". One of the main components of this activity focuses on the development of an educational, accompaniment and organization strategy for the social sectors most affected by victimization and social exclusion. This is achieved through a pedagogical strategy of accompaniment oriented to strengthening the social actors with capacity to exercise their citizenship and who can participate actively in dynamics of social mobilization and dialogue so that, through this incidence, they can bring about changes in the public policies to favor the integral exercise of their rights.

The strategy is about developing an integral model of intervention which leads social organizations to empowerment and autonomy. These organizations have to reach the level of incidence needed to generate the changes required by the public policies affecting them. Some of the goals, then, are the generation of the capacity of public management and negotiation, the development of initiatives to claim their rights on social mobilization and legal processes, and building anti-discriminatory social guidelines; and also training in human rights, organizational empowerment, and generation of processes of socio-political articulation at different levels. They are processes of training, dynamics of empowerment which hope to generate capacity of incidence for the changing of public policies.

It is an intercultural experience working with the most diverse groups: indigenous, afro-Colombian, victims of violence, urban/rural dwellers, women with HIV; all excluded subjects we work with so that they may be part of an active citizenship, that is, become social subjects with the capability to influence on the public policies in a process of social and democratic construction of the territory.

We are currently committed to using at least three clear strategies shared during the seminar:

- **Political advocacy:** addressed to the political decision-makers at different levels. It will depend on the environment we move in and on the activities we carry out but, in the end, we will have to be able to insist that the political powers (local, regional, national) account for the injustices and generate proposals to improve public policies, programs or projects with a direct incidence on people's lives.

  Reports, case studies, data bases, documentation about the situation we want to change, etc.: all are necessary tools. The goal is to make public institutions listen to and incorporate the proposals from the least-favored peoples organizations, and to generate mechanisms which favor the political dialogue among the different actors of society, especially with those people traditionally excluded from this dialogue and, from there, to build policies and conditions geared towards common good.

- **Public action:** these are the actions designed to generate debate in society, to inform, to train and to raise awareness on economic, political, social, environmental or cultural matters which are essential for the harmonical life of societies. They are actions oriented both towards the local sphere we work with and to that part of the citizenship (the majority part) we generally do not reach (both in the north and in the south).

  In our organizations we have been working for a long time in the training of a critical and committed citizenship: we send messages and elaborate strategies at personal, social and institutional levels trying to generate a debate and proposals born out of the citizens themselves.

- **Alternative communication media:** Where do we start from? Along the seminar, many voices alerted about the large problem of the communication media and their very important role in the generation of public opinion, information, and education of the society. Communication media, with their important influence and power, are currently an essential source of "knowledge" and they are able to raise awareness everywhere. These media have the capacity to generate public opinion from sometimes biased discourses and points of view which strengthen a hegemonic idea of society and development. Information is spread around the world rapidly and in infinite doses, wasting resources and bragging about its power. News replay images and penetrate our consciences

to indoctrinate us, to tell the "truth" of a few against all those who simply do not count at all. It is, no doubt, an essential actor in the globalised world of our days. It creates false clichés on poverty, on the reality of the peoples of the south, on the activities of transnational companies, etc. In most of the cases, there is no reflection at all but they are still the mirror in which the world looks at itself, the place from where we look at other people, the space where we learn about the rest of mankind. Most of the times they simply forget, close their eyes or stop talking because someone has said that this or that are no longer making the headlines. They are, in fact, partial actors playing the highest stake to tell the things they are interested in. We believe we can encourage the generation of alternative communication media, making the most of the new information technologies and combining strategies with more traditional media in order to reach those groups which we want to be able to listen to other voices and viewpoints, and whom we usually have trouble reaching. We want to work for a media more concerned with the problems of our societies, with inequality, with political corruption and power abuses.

It is a difficult working environment, and sometimes it seems very far away. Many of the participant organizations have alternative means of communication, but we must analyze how we can reach the most powerful media, how we can influence them and work with them to share different approaches, alternatives to the hegemonic ideas in the economic, political and social spheres.

We need to generate strategies to promote the media which understand different ways of living, of thinking, of being; a media which is more critical with the established order, more reflective when it comes to facing the different issues. It is a task we must carry out at both sides of the Atlantic; we have to be able to generate these dynamics informing and reporting in order to generate a citizenship more conscious of mankind's problems, a better informed and committed citizenship.

IV. Learning from experience: we seek permanent reflection-in-action
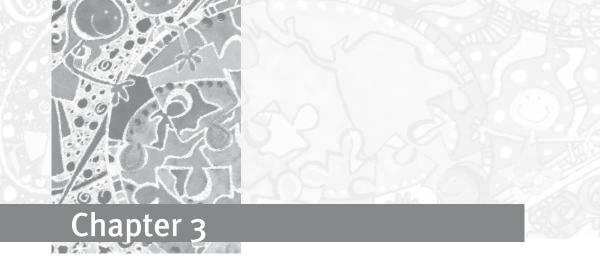
Our experience is that of a knowledge requirement, and we must be capable of making the most out of it. This implies stopping, looking, reflecting and continue doing according to what we have learned. The "know-how", or our experience, is many times wasted, unvalued, ignored. To avoid that, we are searching for specific mechanisms which help us move forward with what we have learned and not to

repeat past mistakes. The systematization of experiences is a methodology which has helped us and into which we have to go deeper in order to transmit to other people and groups what we have learned, to be able to look at the lived process and extract learnings, improvements, innovations. This is one of the conditions to build feasibility and to facilitate the advancement of processes.

There are several keys to systematization: we want to build learnings collectively, incorporating all people as protagonists of the process. We also want to dialogue with the different actors, generating a participation in which all people can contribute with different viewpoints and conclusions on the work done.

The fundamental element is the generation of knowledge from practice and its transfer: how we transfer those experiences, those conclusions and learnings to other organizations and groups, and how, from those experiences, we are able to generate learnings for the improvement of our work and the work of the groups we accompany. We must find the tools, mechanisms and resources necessary to achieve these goals. We have to build the framework necessary for these words to become a visible reality. In that sense, many people insisted on the need of making greater efforts in order to build alliances and synergies with universities and research centers. These alliances would be a good opportunity to make research and experience coverage with the generation of a knowledge, which may help us do a better job, propose alternatives as well as building and consolidating new projects.

This seminar itself was a positive step and it has become an important tool for the recovery of experiences. Along this seminar we have had the opportunity to explain our experiences, share concerns, achievements and wishes, propose subjects and generate knowledge. We could all participate in the drawing of conclusions and thus we fulfilled the goals of an event which has become a tool for learning, for the generation of a common approach, of strengthening a community which sees itself "next to" and which wants to build alliances in order to think and elaborate strategies for common action.

Chapter 3

Point of departure to accept this challenge

In the previous pages, we have tried to structure the shared reflections on the alternative development we want to build. The information gathered along the seminar has allowed us to outline the diverse characteristics, strategies and guidelines which could orient us in the challenging road we want to travel. In some cases, the contributions are new; in others they consolidate well known philosophies which have been already verified. This "development" is nurtured by different conceptions and, above all, it wants to be a process to free the people who, along history and in different ways, have been the victims of this social-economic system.

Nevertheless, the road is long and winding. We have inherited serious problems from the past, problems difficult to solve. We live an unequal confrontation with the established order and our expectations are high. But in spite of these barriers, of these high walls we want to pull down, we believe that there are reasons to be optimistic. There are inherent potentialities to our position, to the reality of our experiences and the organizations we want to strengthen. Along the seminar we had time to analyze the strengths and weaknesses for the generation of a preliminary map which may help us to diagnose a reality we cannot overlook. These are the results of such contributions:

We have **the conviction that development has to be integral: both of the person and of the community.** It is necessary to look and try to learn the processes of integral development, but we also acknowledge that it is not easy to relate so many variables in the interventions and processes we promote. The "problem" of development is not easy, and the situations we face in our Latin American context are very complex. The solutions are not easy and, many times, moving forward is difficult.

In order to work with this integrated development we have had to develop some strategies, some of which we have already discussed in this paper; but perhaps we should highlight as strengths some of the conditions which encourage us. One of them is that we acknowledge that **the way in which we design and implement the relationship with the actors is based on trust.** Being "horizontal" interlocutors allows us to accompany and be with the communities and the groups, respecting them, listening to their story, their wishes, their fears. Our work is born out of observation and **nearness to people.** People know that life teaches them, and that they are generous when they share that wisdom.

It is a strength to acknowledge that many times we have to **remain silent.** Sometimes we believe we have the answers, but those answers can only be built with dialogue, consensus and, especially, when people take responsibility for their own situation. The communities themselves know the answers to those questions and also the way to do things differently. We have been working with these communities for a long time and we are in a stage of consolidation of the accompaniment of local organizations and communities.

Another element is **our own committed presence.** We are with the people "through thick and thin". The communities know we are there and that we care about their problems, their struggles and concerns.

We acknowledge we have learned to **articulate educational and training work with other dimensions of development.** We have experience in political training of citizens, in methodologies of citizen surveillance, in advocacy, in public action. For all that we have had to reinforce our work in the educational environment, incorporating not only the training on productive capabilities but also developing processes of integral training and incorporating human, symbolic, cultural, political and environmental dimensions.

The model of work and intervention we promote has a **value proposal** which underlies all initiatives. Within the organization, we make efforts to incorporate our way of doing things, those values behind development proposal. We believe in strengthened and committed teams; both lay people and Jesuits participate with the same commitment and strength in the proposals and that generates more and more enthusiasm.

Finally, we acknowledge that the integration of our plans in the Jesuit Provinces has generated the articulation of different sectors and works of the Society with spaces we work in, what brings about a more integral and wider work for the benefit of the communities and peoples we accompany.

While we acknowledge these strengths, we are also aware of our weaknesses and of the road ahead.

We have considered many times the need to widen our work from the local to the regional and national environments. We have some experience, but we acknowledge that **the regional and national impacts are scarce**.

In addition to the challenge of extending our action in each of our countries, there is also the need to articulate ourselves in international networks and movements. We have a great opportunity, but sometimes we are not prepared to make the most out of this matter, and there are also **some difficulties when it comes to articulating** and carrying out specific actions of political incidence and lobby. Another problem is that with networks it is difficult to keep a global look, while organizations are more focused on the local environment and have **difficulties widening the horizon**.

We are also aware that we need to **work with other sectors** and organizations in order to generate knowledge about the development we promote. There is hardly any theoretical support for our action: The internationally recognized theoretical framework is given by the academical environment and, many times, it seems completely unrelated to us. We notice resistances, both our own and from other institutions, when it comes to talk about "academic" issues and "praxis".

It is important to improve our **communication abilities**. We tend to think too much but do not dare to provide answers, ideas, denunciations. It is difficult for us to recognize and communicate our achievements. Successful local experiences can become references for the local and regional advocacy, but we do not know how to capitalize them.

Though we have said that training initiatives are an asset, we also recognize as a weakness **our need to train teams better**. It is necessary to move towards the multidisciplinary work, to strengthen training for political leadership and to build strong teams which promote and consolidate new initiatives for social change.

It is also necessary to train the teams on **gender approach** so that they can carry out analysis, interpretations and proposals which suit the different groups, and to carry out positive actions which encourage the participation of women in all processes (decision-making, representation,...) and, therefore, give visibility both to the difference as to the complementarity in order to eliminate the stereotypes which fail to meet the needs and interests of women and most men.

Finally, we acknowledge that Latin American centers still have a **high dependence on external funding**. This fact complicates things, especially when we verify the instability of many international bodies, and which require that we adapt to their conceptual comings and goings. It is not easy to combine "fashion" with our own local agendas, which have been agreed with the communities, meditated upon, reached a consensus on, and so on.

II. Which factors determine the development of our proposal?

In the contexts we work in, we see roads and experiences which give us hope, which encourage us to pursue utopia starting with the small things, with the specific things we do everyday.

We acknowledge that the communities and sectors we work with are experiencing an important process of **assertiveness of their rights**. As a reaction to another type of development which disqualifies them and makes them invisible as subjects of rights, the communities assume with dignity their proposals, their ways of life, their wealth.

Cultural identity facilitates ways of resistance to the prevailing model of development. People also search for other ways of development because the prevailing model excludes them, and they realize that the differences have grown. It is there that we find connections and from where we can move closer with proposals and projects. The indigenous peoples themselves search for new ways of development and even some governments are beginning to recover old knowledges and values. The complex part is to put into practice these alternatives: it is not easy

to suddenly change the ways of doing things. It is necessary to implement long processes of encouragement which answer to the hope of people.

One of the context elements we begin to recognize is that society **acknowledges our organizations**. The continuous presence of many years in specific spaces has allowed us to legitimize the work and to obtain the funds to support certain proposals both in the North and the South, to generate social adherence and to have a public presence in spaces where we had no space before.

In addition to acknowledging these context elements which favor the work for an alternative development, we also face great difficulties which we cannot overlook.

Our most important struggle might be "going against the stream" in a world which says that there is only one way to be, to live and to work for development. We face **poverty** as the harshest expression of that exclusive world; poverty understood as a lack not only of income but also of possibilities of generating capabilities and to choosing among the scarce opportunities they have. Living in poverty makes people vulnerable before actors who look for another kind of development. Our goal is to change that, but there are so many and complex variables that things seem to stagger and that there is no possibility of ending the unfair distribution of income and the poverty in which our communities live

The dominant model of development has no proposals for the excluded majorities. Community, equity, consensus, and the dignity of people are not included in the agenda. The current system, with its perfect assembly, has the ability to make its message reach everywhere and to generate the most powerful of weapons: the desire to be part of that "successful and developed" world. This achievement of the system thwarts the possibility to add wills to the building of new alternative proposals. We face a giant, but its most powerful weapon is to usurp the wills of the people who can contribute to social change by being active subjects in it. Even when social movements and Latin American leaderships have a convincing discourse on other ways of development, they are not reaching people; that raises strong doubts about how to transmit these messages and how to collaborate in the training of critical people, prepared to listen to and to internalize those proposals.

The values of the native peoples (community, fraternity, hospitality, service, etc.) are disappearing in our own countries and also in the North. Then, we ask ourselves: How do we generate conditions for an alternative development? We move
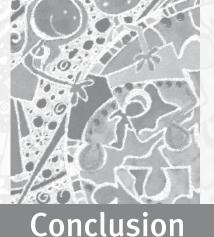
against the mainstream of a model owned by the economic and political powers. The international community is interested in democracy, but if those rights are violated in favor of important companies or corrupt governments, the international support is paralyzed. Thus, there is a lack of coherence in the international community which legitimizes these kinds of proposals, and which claims to be committed to democracy and the respect of people's rights.

There is a great frailty in Latin American institutions. It is evident that there is a lack of democratic institutionalism which incorporates the needs of people, the voice of the excluded, and which converts the masses of vulnerable population into a citizenship with the right to be heard and taken into account in the political and social dialogue of our countries.

Society does not believe or trust in governmental institutions. There seems to be a gap in the idea of a possible beneficial articulation between civil society and the State for common good. Practices like corruption or the infiltration of drug trafficking in the state institutions are accepted. Drug trafficking has become one of the great problems of Latin America. In some contexts, its economic and political power makes it play the role of "rulers", delivering "justice", generating wealth in the areas where they settle down, etc. Conflicts, insecurity and the popular culture surrounding drug trafficking are elements which complicate the context, cast doubts on the governmental role, and corner a society which, sometimes, finds it difficult to move forward and to resist this culture of violence and corruption.

Education itself is another element which hinders the building of a model of alternative development. Educational systems are double-edged swords. On the one hand, education generates human capabilities; on the other, it is being used for indoctrination and the perpetuation of a system of values which do not include solidarity, peaceful coexistence, etc. We must work to rescue the true sense of education, its purpose to liberate human beings, and its transforming potential.

Finally, we acknowledge the difficulty posed by the relation of developing countries with those traditionally called "developed". The economic dependence on rich countries determines the economic and social policies of our countries. The work for human and social development depends on international help, and that determines the orientation and approach of the kind of development to promote. The system of international cooperation tries to help, but it is not enough. Resources are still scarce, and political pressure for the change of policies is

incipient and marginal. In spite of that, we have noticed new ways of understanding cooperation, of moving towards this model of development we want and which we share in the North and the South, and which allows going beyond the financing relationships in order to create strategical and political alliances with a strong forward-looking future.

Conclusion

During the seminar we analyzed our experiences, commitments, and approaches on development. That allowed us to define some of the traits of the development we want and work for. We realized about some of the strategies we use and prioritize when supporting other logics of development which we want to promote as social organizations. We highlighted the challenges, the opportunities, and the difficulties we face along the road. And, above all, we acknowledged the enormous importance of the space we share, and we confirmed the interest to keep going in depth and thinking together in order to develop and promote "**other possible developments**".

This paper (the result of our shared reflection) wants to be a starting point for new dialogues, for in-depth discussions, and to move forward in the elaboration of working agendas in common.

A second proposal during the seminar was the creation of a **learning community**. We decided to gather a group of people and organizations in a shared space to continue with the reflection and the work. We share the passion to put into practice strategies for the inclusive world we dream of, and we are motivated by the possibility of becoming more efficient through methodological learnings and their contents. We, in **ALBOAN**, offer our limited resources and capabilities to facilitate and boost this community. This activity can facilitate a continuing process of dialogue and also prepare for next meetings. Thus, without further preliminaries, we propose the creation of the _**COMPARTE**_ ("Share", in Spanish) learning community for alternative development. We shall be a group of organizations linked

by a common dream, with shared characteristics and ways of proceeding. We will reflect in depth on the social action we carry out and are familiar with, as well as on the generation of new proposals. We shall be strengthened with exchange learnings for the improvement of our work. We will assume as a first commitment to assist to continuing processes of exchange of experiences and learnings. We shall try to meet with certain frequency to review the work done, to continue building a common viewpoint and discourse, as well as designing specific initiatives.

This publication intends to summarize the debate generated by a group of allied organizations which, looking back on our practices, have reflected together upon them. The idea of development we share here is the consequence of the processes we are involved in and for which we work day to day.