The time of Buen Vivir in Chile: power returns to its legitimate owners

The results of Chile’s elections for the Constitutional Convention marked a breaking point in the country’s history. At the same time as the particracy is demolished and the political class defeated, the epicenter of decision-making finds its way back to the people. Right now, indigenous and Chilean men and women must unite to reach Kume Mongen, and thus allow for a diverse coexistence under conditions of greater equity and an unconditional respect for Mother Earth.

By Diego Ancalao Gavilán - 1st of June, 2021

After the social outburst of 2019, many remained in a state of total shock. The traditional political system believed, under a sort of infantile ingenuity, that this would only amount to a bad dream, and that sooner rather than later, they would gain back control over a space that they felt belonged to them by right. However, events have unfolded under a stubborn consistency, and the codes that allowed for an anticipatory interpretation of events are no longer functioning. The facts have placed the political class, which was until now dominant, in the place that they have earned themselves with merit: that of complete irrelevance.

As Pope Francis reminds us in his apostolic exhortation, Evangelio Gaudium, under the current times, one must assume that to have an impact on the adequate development of social coexistence, and on the building of a people in which differences are harmonized by a common project, one must understand that “reality is superior to the idea”. And that reality, running hand in hand with the common people, has slapped the face of an insensitive and unscrupulous political elite, through an act so simple yet so bizarre to witness: the act of reminding everyone that power lies in popular sovereignty.

Those who got too accustomed to their privileges, believing that such conditions belonged to them under a sort of irrevocable mandate, forgot that they were there to serve the wellbeing of all people. They were so disconnected from reality, that they must still be feeling resentful against
the people that turned their back on them without a justifiable cause. Or at least, so it must seem to them from their perspective.

**The demolition of the particracy**

The epicenter of decision making has shifted to the homes of everyday people everywhere in the country. Chilean men and women have decided to trust in the neighbor that they had witnessed grow, seeking the certainty of an effective representation and not one sustained by mere campaign promises. Thus, the particracy was demolished. Moreover, the dignity of the office of the President of the Republic has been eroded by a businessman disguised as politician and dominated by a pathological narcissism.

The last elections finished putting things back in their place. That which is transforming Chile from below was left out in the open, for everyone to witness. In the words of Moisés Naím, this transformation is not related to the rivalry between mega-actors, but with the rise of micro-powers, and their capacity to successfully challenge the powerful. The economic and political elites don’t seem capable of seeing what lies right before their eyes. They should see themselves in the mirror to see the face of a failure which brought about hopelessness, frustration and neglect. One must reap what one has sowed.

Those of us who belong to the large majority that has been subjected to systemic injustices, know and understand the problems that assail us. And today, we have decided to recover power in order to do exactly what has to be done.

Democracy has returned to its legitimate owners. But, it is the power of a new generation. It is the power of seeing the common good and establishing the limits that this higher power advises us. It is about democratizing wellbeing, so that no one is left behind, and all can dispose of that which human dignity demands. We are speaking of the *Kume Mongen* or the *Buen Vivir* that was taught to us by our Mapuche, Aymara, Quechua, Rapa Nuj or Licanantay ancestors. It is the knowledge of those first nations which they were not able to exterminate, and which today returns as the salvation of humanity.
The *Kume Mongen*: utopia and possibility

Experience has taught us that the *Buen Vivir* only happens when the common people get involved, commit and join forces to demand it happens. There exists in Chile a common consciousness of the need for this change. As was prophetically pointed out by the philosopher Pietro Ubaldi: “The next evolutionary leap of humanity will be to recognize that cooperating is better than competing.”

The 15 and 16 May, we have demonstrated that a vote can change lives. And if a vote can change lives, then surely it can also change the country. Today, more than ever before in history, we must join forces, not only to write the new Constitution, but to write down history. We will no longer act as spectators. 140 years in the case of my Mapuche people, and 200 years in the case of Chile, is too long a waiting period. What we do today will have repercussions for generations to come.

*Buen Vivir* is, at the same time, a utopia and a true possibility. It is a utopia because it constitutes the dream of a different country, one where diversity coexists under conditions of greater equity and an unconditional respect for Mother Earth. But it is also a true possibility, as the indigenous peoples lived under this precept for thousands of years. In truth, we are not coming to propose foreign ideologies. We are coming to propose what we really are.

The old practices and the constitutionality tailored for the elites were defeated in the elections for the Constitutional Convention. Now we must win the presidential elections. Indigenous, Chilean men and women must join forces against our common adversaries, those who fabricated inequality in the halls of power and held democracy hostage for their personal gain. We are brothers of the same human species, and unity must be forged from our diversity.

We must seek the political and social unity of a people that wants to reach an inclusive *Buen Vivir*. Nothing can stop the power of millions who demand change.
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