

# THE VALUES OF WATER

## Development Cultures and Indigenous Cultures in Highland Ecuador

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*Abstract: This article examines the symbolic transformations and material consequences of an irrigation development project designed to empower indigenous peoples in Cañar, Ecuador. It argues that the project deepened market society and reproduced colonialism more than it empowered indigenous peoples, but indigenous people found ways to appropriate project resources and embed the market in alternative principles of social life. Market society deepened through the neoliberal hegemony of international development policy and through the indigenous movement's incorporation of market rationalities. Colonialism recurred through hierarchical representations of knowledge and skills reminiscent of long-standing stereotypes of natives, which local indigenous leaders internalized. Both processes unfolded through constructions of value and acts of evaluation. The gap between the market ideal communicated in the irrigation development project and the conditions of actually existing markets that local indigenous people engaged after project closure limited the concrete empowerment of indigenous peoples.*

In 1998, Tucuy Cañar Ayllucunapa Tantanacuy (Tucayta), an indigenous organization in Ecuador's Cañar Province, secured control of significant irrigation infrastructure. Citing this acquisition as empowerment, the organization's leaders asserted professional competence and market competitiveness, seemingly conforming to neoliberal principles that they had rejected four years earlier when protesting an agrarian law that subjected land access to market competition. By 1998, local indigenous leaders believed that they had discerned more successful ways to pursue aims and procure capabilities. In this article, I demonstrate that emergent cultures of development conditioned Tucayta's attainment of the Patococha irrigation system and labeled it a qualified success. I advance a cultural conception of development based on neo-Polanyian, anthropological, and postcolonial theory. I argue that the Patococha project deepened market society and reproduced coloniality more than it empowered indigenous peoples, but indigenous people found ways to appropriate Patococha and embed the market in alternative projects of social life.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Tucuy Cañar Ayllucunapa Tantanacuy is translated from the Quichua as "all indigenous communities of Cañar together." Quichua is the predominant indigenous language in highland Ecuador.

Scholars in economic anthropology, sociology, history, and political science have revitalized the work of Karl Polanyi to achieve a better understanding of the social construction of market societies, in which the economy assumes predominance and autonomy.<sup>2</sup> In what Polanyi called the great transformation of the nineteenth century, societies shifted emphasis from collective self-sufficiency based on reciprocity and redistribution to dependence of individuals on market systems that combined barter and competition. Polanyi thus argued that market society disembedded economies from other aspects of social life (Polanyi 1957; Hann and Hart 2009b; Steiner 2009).

Recently, these scholars have elaborated on Polanyi's point that the self-regulating market does not exist in concrete settings. It is rather a belief that, together with state intervention, constitutes "the economy" as a unified and autonomously functional system. The self-regulating market also depends on the comportment of its individual participants: their pursuit of specialization and efficiency, their acceptance of competition, and their adoption of self-help in which responsibility is largely privatized (Hann and Hart 2009b; Servet 2009). One ramification is that the market seems "opposed to anything offered [or acquired] free" and antithetical to the "vertical coordination of the state" (Servet 2009, 79); another is that satisfying desires in the market appears civilized, "in contrast to actions defending the collective . . . seen as mad passions of elites or the populace" (Servet 2009, 83). As Polanyi argued, "'The economy' . . . is always instituted by a socialization process which molds individual character toward [certain] ethical, aesthetical, and instrumental norms [and] standards" (cited in Stanfield 1986, 107). Thus, it is not the market but people who self-regulate, and they do so as a social practice.

Neo-Polanyians insist that all economies are embedded. In this respect, neo-Polanyian theory overlaps with anthropological theories of value, which consider how subjects and objects are valued in production, circulation, exchange, and consumption (Appadurai 1986). Anthropological value theory challenges mainstream economics by conceiving of exchange as a cultural phenomenon embedded in wider social relations or projects (Ferguson 1988; Myers 2001). In conventional views of the market, exchange occurs between anonymous and equivalent actors. Weiner (1992) found instead that identity and hierarchy may emerge in exchange through claims to ranked or valued difference. Alternatively, the ability to exchange effectively may bestow social power and distinction (as cited in Myers 2001).

According to these theories, value is lodged in a discourse or system of meaning that contains criteria for comparison and measurement of objects, actions, and subjects (Myers 2001). Actors realize value through incorporation into a wider social entity, real or imagined (Graeber 2001). Individuals and objects have many identities; others fix on one or two of those in social contexts, thus making them visible and valuable (Strathern 1988, as cited in Graeber 2001, 39–40). Terms of value therefore constitute "structure[s] of symbolic transformation" that endow

2. An excellent example of this literature, which is sympathetic to some neo-Marxist, neo-Maussian, and neo-Durkheimian scholarship, is Hann and Hart's (2009a) recent collection (see also Inayatullah and Blaney 2004).

subjects and objects with meaning and status (Myers 2001, 59). The market makes up merely one value set among many.

The Patococha project in Ecuador shows how and why the market is embedded in the discourses, institutions, and practices of the international development industry and indigenous social movements. Development subjects and indigenous subjects are constructed through this positioning of the market. Both processes unfold through terms of value and acts of evaluation, which thicken or dilute market society. The main case involves the construction, transfer, and maintenance of the Patococha irrigation system. The Ecuadorian state owned the water that Patococha delivers to more than fifteen indigenous communities in Ecuador's Cañar Province, but market principles were evoked consistently under the influence of neoliberalism, which valued water according to the potential of indigenous people to prosper in the market and adapt to life under an austere Ecuadorian state. Embedded in the culture of international development, market principles had a powerful influence on the valuation of objects and actions never directly part of commercial exchange. Thus, intervention by the development industry and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), along with the state, constructs societies in which "the market" takes a central and autonomous place.<sup>3</sup>

#### DEVELOPMENT, COLONIALITY, AND MARKET CAPITALISM

Hierarchies inevitably accompany the constitution of market society and the construction of indigenous subjects. In the Patococha case, development theory and practice established hierarchy in two ways: by imagining for indigenous peoples the kind of society that the Patococha project would contribute to, and by enrolling indigenous subjects in the project through selective recognition and disavowal of certain norms and practices. Both kinds of hierarchies used terms of advancement and backwardness, setting parameters of value and grade that reflected long-standing stereotypes of indigenous peoples.

Quijano's (2000) concept of coloniality is based on the idea that colonial expansion entailed a mutually constitutive combination of racism, capitalism, and epistemic Eurocentrism. It also assumes that this mixture continued after the end of formal colonial rule and constitutes systems of classification and rank that reproduce colonial social differences. The international development industry practices measurement and ranking as a matter of course, where quantitative and objective standards depend on qualitative and subjective distinctions (Escobar 1995). Informal, subjective assessments underpin the coloniality of development, because development providers commonly act as superiors to project recipients without acknowledgment because altruistic sentiments mask the superiority (Palenzuela 2009). In Ecuador's Cotopaxi Province, indigenous farmers viewed development agencies as white-mestizo entities that "give something" that local people lack, a paucity constituted by what the development suppliers offer (Ramírez 2002, 121). The Patococha project in Cañar resembled a lopsided gift economy, in which

3. In this article, I refer to "the market" and "the economy" as a belief in and representation of an ideal system. In contrast, "markets" refers to actually existing arenas of commercial exchange.

the recipient cannot reciprocate except by embracing the dreams of the givers.<sup>4</sup> Empowerment of indigenous people—the power to do something they could not do before—thus presumes a prior power over those same people by largely non-indigenous, intervening forces (for studies of similar relations in Asia and Africa, see Lewis and Mosse 2006).

### *Two Cultures of Neoliberal Development*

Because development theory delineates terms of value in development processes, we must inspect changes in neoliberal and modernization theories, which have become more inclusive of indigenous subjects. I argue however that unacknowledged ethnocentric notions of development limit their possibilities for empowering indigenous people. Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe (2009) distinguish social neoliberalism from orthodox neoliberalism. Both neoliberalisms are social and cultural in that they comprise a constellation of meanings, values, and norms that development agents assign to social life. They differ in that social neoliberalism consciously addresses social policy, whereas orthodox neoliberalism does not. Social neoliberalism aligns with new turns in modernization theory. A social-neoliberal culture of development shaped terms of value in the Patococha irrigation project in Ecuador.

Orthodox neoliberalism locates value in consumer utility and producer costs, autonomous from higher authority. This portrays value as natural and individuals as free to establish priorities and calculate worth. Other people exist mainly as competition; society, if recognized at all, constitutes an obstacle to freedom (Servet 2009; Graeber 2001). In Latin America, a belief that state intervention in the economy stunted growth and caused the 1980s debt crisis justified orthodox neoliberalism. Neoliberal policies aimed to instill fiscal discipline while reducing trade barriers, government subsidies, and public-sector employment or ownership. Macroeconomic and infrastructural reforms designed by technocrats were deemed sufficient to stimulate economic growth through competition, innovation, and self-help (Munck 2003).

Unlike its orthodox counterpart, social neoliberalism values the priorities of mainstream social development: education, housing, pensions, health care, gender equity, cultural difference, environmental protection, and active participation. Society thus appears as a set of tools that facilitate individual pursuits (Graeber 2001). Internationally, social neoliberalism emerged in the 1990s from a series of social development and policy conferences, and it drew intellectual support from Amartya Sen's (1999, 2004) work on social inclusion and capabilities in development, Robert Putnam's (1993) studies on social capital, and Hernando de Soto's (1989, 2000) praise of the informal economies of the poor. Social neoliberalism responded to limitations of orthodox policies and growing popular discontent, defining participation, sustainability, diversity, and gender equity as independent criteria of development success. It thus overlapped with indigenous movement

4. Many projects are in fact loan financed. But the grassroots beneficiaries often do not hold the debt; the government does.

agendas and grassroots empowerment practices, recognizing a wider range of development subjects and actors than did orthodox neoliberalism (Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009).

However, a social-neoliberal culture of development extends market society by presupposing that social development priorities complement market capitalism and that the market is necessary for development, responds to universal desires, and operates according to scientific laws (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004; Boelens and Zwartveen 2005). One connotation of such assumptions is that the market provides a solution to rather than a problem for the development of the marginalized, which diverts policy attention from capitalism's pervasive inequalities and exploitative tendencies. Another ramification is the extension of liberal business expectations (e.g., cost efficiency, flexibility, managerial auditing) to not-for-profit government agencies, NGOs, and social-movement associations. In short, the autonomy and prominence of the economy are reinforced by new institutional embodiments of—and policy orientations to—market rationalities.

Social-neoliberal development also reiterates racial and epistemic hierarchies by establishing commercial and managerial skills in a domain of expertise, which development workers offer as an empowerment gift to marginalized peoples. Identities of NGOs in Ecuador were remade during the 1990s in opposition to a top-down bureaucratic state, based on a commitment to help the poor and on capability with small, community-scale operations that are efficient and flexible (Segarra 1998). Implied in this NGO identity, however, is a second distinction manifest in development situations where self-help and active recipient participation are crucial goals, yet recipients are subject to appraisals they did not approve of. Project limitations are blamed on alleged beneficiary tendencies, and new development standards are deployed in identifying gaps between recipient advancement and the frontiers of progress. Indigenous development beneficiaries end up trapped between Spanish colonial perceptions of natives as having potential realized only through external tutelage (D. Castro 2007) and British colonial images of the mimic, or subjects who assume features of the colonizing culture but never achieve equal status (Bhabha 2005).

What I call neomodernization theories of development reflect these features of social neoliberalism. In contrast to original modernization theory, economic growth is not defined as the end of development, and non-Western cultures are viewed dynamically rather than statically. Building on the work of Amartya Sen, neomodernization theory describes culture as a set of capabilities and constraints. Development interventions would empower the poor by marshaling and supplementing their cultural practices and networks (e.g., social capital, social fabric) and by overcoming barriers to resources and opportunities (Sen 1999; Rao and Walton 2004; see also Bebbington et al. 2006).<sup>5</sup>

However, neomodernization theory retains universal notions of progress that limit its accommodation of non-Western cultures and steer native capabilities toward market participation. Rao and Walton (2004, 10–11), for example, assert

5. For a paradigmatic example of early modernization theory, see Rostow 1968; for an overview of various early modernization perspectives, see Valenzuela and Valenzuela 1978.

a middle ground between two “extreme” views: what they call a development-as-cultural-system view, represented by Arturo Escobar, and a development-as-incompatible-with-tradition standpoint, represented by Samuel Huntington. But realizing development value outside of a system of meanings is implausible; so is fully appreciating cultural difference when only development recipients—not donors and intermediaries—are viewed as cultural actors. In practice, unrecognized meanings and assumptions of development appear objective or universal.

For instance, Sen (1999) argues that individual freedom should be the central goal of development. He adds that such freedom can be realized only in liberal-democratic and market-economic systems, when one possesses the capability to act within them. Also, Sen (2004) views information access as essential for enacting freedom and argues against media restriction or other cultural protectionism. He warns development subjects not to define themselves in anti-Western terms, as doing so would impose constraints on cultural freedom and interchange.

Historically, however, such circumscription—including limits on markets—was instrumental to pursuing collectively held values (Servet 2009). More recently, Canada and the European Union insisted on special treatment for their “culture industries” in free-trade agreements. They did so to regulate identity formation and diversity arrangement; and they resisted US arguments that such treatment would impede “the free flow of exchange” (Goff 2007, 2–3). Canada’s and the European Union’s stance entails a different understanding of cultural freedom, which is closer to that of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement.

#### VALUING WATER: INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS AND NEOLIBERAL DEVELOPMENT

Water signifies various qualities to indigenous people in highland Ecuador: secure agricultural production, livelihood sustenance, a component of landscapes that evoke belonging, a habitat for powerful spirits, a reminder of collective sacrifices for water access, participatory governance, aesthetic beauty, quenched thirst (see, e.g., Pacari 1998). Water rights form part of common ownership or usufruct regimes in many Andean indigenous communities. Maintaining the water infrastructure may constitute a family’s water rights, as may past involvement in community struggles to acquire water from a landlord or the government. Familial water rights may not be equal, but they are rooted in collectively defined notions of fairness and value. The definition process usually allows equal participation of households regardless of their preexisting rights to water (Boelens and Zwartveen 2005).

These meanings and practices also reflect the cultural politics of the national indigenous movement in Ecuador. Indigenous peoples, who account for around 10 percent of the Ecuadorian population and speak more than twelve different languages, are integrated diversely with nonindigenous people and correspond mostly to the lower and lower-middle classes.<sup>6</sup> The Confederation of Indigenous

6. This does not connote that all indigenous people in the country are deeply connected to capitalist markets or have an abysmal life. As noted by CONAIE ex-president Luis Macas (1993), those who are materially impoverished may be well-off spiritually and psychologically because of their cultural life.

Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE), created in 1986, is the largest and most recognized of a handful of national indigenous federations. Tucayta, on which I focus, is what Ecuadorians call a second-tier organization, because it incorporates nineteen village-scale organizations referred to as first tier. Tucayta and other second-tier indigenous federations in Cañar affiliate with the provincial indigenous union, Unión Provincial de Comunidades y Campesinos de Cañar (UPCCC). The UPCCC and other provincial-scale indigenous federations are members of eco-regional (e.g., coast, highlands, Amazon) confederations, which are the principal constituents of the national confederation, CONAIE.

The CONAIE organization has led a potent social movement based on a multifaceted platform of a plurinational state, which contains a number of elements, including (1) ethnic and territorial autonomy; (2) direct, unmediated participation in political decisions and debates; (3) promotion of indigenous languages and knowledge; and (4) grassroots, self-directed development. Moreover, CONAIE (2007, 5–6) envisions the plurinational state as “a model of political organization for the decolonization of our nationalities and peoples . . . that throws off . . . the colonial and mono-cultural shadows that have haunted them.” The leaders of CONAIE and associated intellectuals identified indigenous experiences under colonial and postcolonial rule as a tense combination of assimilation and marginalization. They therefore posed autonomy and inclusion as core tenets of indigenous peoples’ struggles and as essential to cultural freedom (CONAIE 1989, 1994). Also, CONAIE insists that a plurinational state is for the entire country and that instituting it requires the support of nonindigenous people; at the same time, it asserts that indigenous peoples’ particularities are inherently valuable and that national integration requires full recognition of them (Macas 1993; Maldonado 2008).

These elements require the creation of territorial and institutional spaces in Ecuador where indigenous peoples can construct their own political voice, ensure that nonindigenous people dialogue with that voice, and endow it with influence in decision making (see CONAIE 1994; Chuji 2008).<sup>7</sup> The linkage of indigenous peoples to territories in the Ecuadorian state is one example. Transcending understandings of land used for extraction and production of commodities, indigenous leaders established social and environmental reproduction as essential purposes of indigenous territories. This reproduction includes spiritual relations with natural elements and intergenerational connections to ancestors and progeny. Initially crafted by Ecuadorian Amazonian Indians as a buffer against various encroachments, this notion of territory was adopted by their highland counterparts in the 1990s as part of a campaign to revitalize local identities as *pueblos* (peoples). The *pueblo* names refer to pre-Inca societies such as the Cayambi, Panzaleo, Otavalo, Saraguro, and Cañari (Andolina, Laurie, and Radcliffe 2009). The governance of these territories and the natural resources they contain would be based on shared sovereignty, in which community governments and the national government make joint decisions (Simbaña 2008). With respect to water allocation, CONAIE proposed conjoint administration by indigenous communities and

7. For an erudite treatment of indigenous political voice in Ecuador and Bolivia, see Lucero 2008; for more detail on CONAIE’s political platform and the discourse associated with it, see also Walsh 2009.

the government rather than eliminating state responsibility to provide water (see CONAIE 1996, 2008).

During the 1990s, international development agencies redefined water as a commodity under a neoliberal, demand-based paradigm. For the World Bank (1998), demand and privatization were crucial to provide marginalized people with water-network access, which was out of reach as a result of insufficient state resources and inefficient state agencies (Goldman 2007). This change devalued the former commitment to state-run water supply for health-based purposes and tied water-access goals to values of market society such as self-help and decentralization. According to Nicol (2000, 10), "[This framework] places the onus of covering costs of delivering [water] on consumers rather than suppliers. Individuals and communities have assumed the role of purchasers of a private service . . . rather than being users of a public . . . good."

The World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) brought this policy model into Ecuador through their support of water rights liberalization and water institution reform. In 1994, President Sixto Durán issued decrees that decentralized water management to regional development bodies, authorized transfers of state water infrastructure systems to nonstate entities, abolished the interventionist National Water Resources Institute, and created the technical and advisory National Water Resources Council. The World Bank's (1994) Technical Assistance Program for the Irrigation Subsector sponsored implementation of all three decrees. Simultaneously, the Ecuadorian Congress passed an agrarian law drafted by a USAID-sponsored think tank that included provisions to privatize water ownership, to tilt the terms of credit toward large-scale producers, and to make previously inalienable communal lands subject to sale (Sawyer 2004, 154).<sup>8</sup> Supporters of this legislation also promoted the market as a mechanism of land redistribution in favor of those with less. The result, however, was greater inequality of landholdings in Ecuador (Martínez 2004).

Neither the content of the agrarian law that Ecuador's Congress passed nor the process of approving it acknowledged the interests or contributions of indigenous peoples. As a result, CONAIE led a massive nationwide revolt that led to revisions in the law. One revision made the sale of communal lands more difficult, and another ensured that water ownership remained public. Although CONAIE could not eliminate most neoliberal content of the law, it infused some of its own values of water and land into the legislation to restrict commodification of the resources.

#### VALUING PATOCOCCHA: SOCIAL NEOLIBERALISM AND DEVELOPMENT ANXIETIES

Cañari activists responded en masse to CONAIE's 1994 protest against the neoliberal agrarian law. Local nonindigenous vigilantes burned down UPCCC's

8. Mato (2003) discusses the infusion of international agendas into Latin American politics more generally. Drawing on world society theory, Khagram (2008, 154) points out that transnational diffusion of development norms has contributed to "a remarkable degree of institutional isomorphism [among] states."



offices in retaliation. This incident symbolized a history of racism and marginalization in Cañar, countered and triggered by indigenous mobilization for land reform and water access in the 1960s and 1970s, and struggles for bilingual education and health-care access in the 1980s (CONAIE 1989, 193–202). In the 1990s, they fought for political participation and collective indigenous rights. Following their acquisition of collective rights in the 1998 constitution, indigenous activists in the province endeavored to reconstruct a Pueblo Cañari (Cañari People), which consists of the revitalization and repossession of ancestral landmarks, knowledge, spirituality, music, dance, artisanship, and agriculture—all tied to their contemporary counterparts. However, they have struggled to accomplish this reconstruction in a context of increasing rural poverty that harms indigenous livelihoods.

Land redistribution in Cañar during the 1970s was substantial. But indigenous families generally received low-quality land and rarely obtained the agricultural inputs or credit that agrarian reform laws (in 1964 and 1973) promised. Reproducing colonial representations of indigenous people, the Ecuadorian land reform institute concluded that Cañari Indians had limited agricultural potential, which required external tutelage to make good use of low-interest loans or subsidized inputs (Martínez 2002, 134). With its roots in agricultural cooperatives organized as land reform subjects and in an intercommunity irrigation committee created in 1973, Tucayta associates communities and cooperatives in Cañar *cantón* (county, in Cañar Province). The irrigation committee organized for water access and sought institutional aid, which led to studies by the Ecuadorian National Water Resources Institute in 1978 for the main irrigation canal (Tucayta 1999).

Concrete plans to build the Patococha irrigation canal began in 1980, with Ecuadorian state support and local indigenous people as the main beneficiary. Ecuadorian Agricultural Services Central (Central Ecuatoriana de Servicios Agrícolas, CESA), a national NGO, and the Swiss Development Cooperation bilateral agency (Cooperación Suiza para el Desarrollo, COSUDE) joined the project in 1981 and 1984, respectively. In 1984 Tucayta was created as a result of irrigation project requirements for a beneficiary representative and to address local needs apart from irrigation water (Tucayta 1999; Martínez 2002). An interinstitutional coordinator was appointed in 1985 to share information and evaluate implementation (CESA 1992).<sup>9</sup> During the 1980s, state contributions to Patococha declined as austerity budgets were implemented, but the state water institute continued as Patococha manager. In 1991 the system began operating.

Uneven implementation of neoliberal policy shifted institutional conditions of the Patococha project. Although the indigenous mobilization of 1994 removed water-privatization provisions from the agrarian law, presidential decrees authorizing decentralization and transfer of the water-delivery infrastructure remained in place. These realignments turned Tucayta into a potential recipient of transfer while preventing private firms from purchasing the water sources of Patococha, thus shielding the irrigation system from commercial competition. Meanwhile, the Economic Reconstruction Center for the Austro region (Centro de Reconversión Económica del Austro, CREA) became the principal state agency involved in

9. Interview, CESA staff member, April 4, 2000, Quito.

project execution.<sup>10</sup> Relative withdrawal of the state in 1994 increased COSUDE's ability to discipline Tucayta while pushing administrative transfer of Patococha to that organization (Martínez 2003). Later, COSUDE agreed to finance the building of a dam and the training of Tucayta in irrigation system management, without complementary state funding. Between 1996 and 1998 Tucayta negotiated transfer of canal control with the state and COSUDE. In 1998 Tucayta officially began to administer Patococha, which made it responsible for maintaining the canal and circulating irrigation water.

Equally important in altering conditions and priorities of the Patococha project was the rise of social neoliberalism in development policy and practice. Although social neoliberalism did not coalesce until the mid-1990s, some of its principles bubbled up earlier as grassroots development ideals combined with antistate and promarket ideology (Segarra 1998; Bretón 2008). Development agencies cogoverning Patococha gradually valorized market-centered principles like efficiency, entrepreneurship, and self-help, but they also espoused collective participation, respect for diversity, local empowerment, and direct resource access for the poor (COSUDE 2009; CESA 1992).<sup>11</sup>

The Swiss agency COSUDE, which operated in Ecuador from 1969 to 2009, embraced the Ecuadorian NGO CESA as a strategic ally in the late 1970s. During that time, COSUDE shared offices with CESA and adopted its advocacy for small farmers. In the 1980s, COSUDE promoted irrigation water to improve farmer productivity; in the early 1990s, it emphasized cultivation that increased revenues from market sales. However, "once the producer engages the market," COSUDE (2009, 10) decided, "new challenges . . . arise, such as market access, marketing associations[,] . . . and business management." By reclassifying water as crucial for market competitiveness, COSUDE mirrored the World Bank's paradigm shift from supply- to demand-driven development. Another implication of water's new status was that the market would become more prominent in the life of Tucayta and its indigenous affiliates, who would remake themselves accordingly.

In the 1970s and 1980s CESA focused on small farmers' access to new agricultural inputs as a supplement to agrarian reform. For the Patococha project, it hired individual indigenous promoters in the early to mid-1980s. Around 1990, CESA conversed with Tucayta about indigenous education, health, and cultural concerns. Complementing the changes that COSUDE embraced, CESA later expanded its training to offer up-to-date accounting and management skills,<sup>12</sup> and it oriented its technological assistance toward cultivation for market sale. This latter move shifted farmers away from producing a more diverse set of customary Andean agricultural goods (Martínez 2003).

The partial overlap of social neoliberalism with indigenous agendas, combined with the illegality of privatizing irrigation water, afforded Tucayta leeway

10. The Austro region of Ecuador consists primarily of Azuay, Cañar, and Loja Provinces. In English this region is often referred to as the southern highlands of Ecuador.

11. Interview, CESA staff member, April 4, 2000, Quito.

12. Ibid.

to appropriate the Patococha project. Initially, Tucayta wanted Patococha to improve agricultural production, invigorate community labor practices, and maintain collectively defined water rights. Once transfer of Patococha was on the table in late 1994, administering the irrigation system independently would appear to realize the indigenous movement's values of autonomy, direct participation, and self-directed development. Moreover, Tucayta hoped that the Patococha irrigation canal—and the prospect of entrepreneurship—would offer an alternative to emigration as Cañari residents left to work elsewhere. In contrast to mainstream development discourse, Tucayta members questioned emigration due to various social losses, not because they feared that Cañari emigrant income would be insufficient (Castro 1995; Karnes 2007).<sup>13</sup> In summary, cultures of neoliberal development structured evaluations of Patococha (as object) and Tucayta (as subject) increasingly but never totally.

Nonetheless, neoliberalism weighed heavily on project perceptions. Development organizations and professionals aligned desires for Patococha and its training programs in terms of values that centered on market entry and administrative skills, where efficiency, specialization, and competitiveness were premium. This value scheme instituted market society by segregating economic and productive activity from cultural and political activity, and marking the former as more advanced than the latter. Coupling the prestige of technical actions and skills with economic ones reinforced this hierarchy. Through this system of meaning, development agents evaluated Tucayta by comparing it to ideal organizations and behaviors, and by representing themselves as embodiments of those ideal types in implicit ranking over the indigenous organization.

Aspirations for indigenous empowerment were therefore linked to development agency needs for successful recognition. At the time, COSUDE, CESA, and CREA enacted internal reforms consistent with redefinition as efficient providers of value-added development services, including institutional decentralization for greater specialization and flexibility (World Bank 1994; COSUDE 2009).<sup>14</sup> In addition, CESA and COSUDE associated project success with sustainability, which meant not ecological integrity but that beneficiaries would (and could) pursue project aims on their own after project closure. Not unlike an imperial transfer of sovereignty to an occupied territory, project administration transfer to beneficiaries was authorized only when they displayed "acceptable levels of autonomy and self-government" (CESA 1992, 118–119; also see COSUDE 2009). By "levels" they also meant "kinds."

The paradox is that COSUDE, CESA, and Ecuadorian state agencies expected Tucayta to be responsible for its own development but saw it as lacking the requisite capabilities and comportment. In the neoliberal context of the Patococha transfer, financial sufficiency, operative efficiency, self-help, and market orientation

13. In fact, emigrants often earned substantial income relative to Cañari resident averages.

14. Interview, CESA staff member, April 4, 2000, Quito; Portal Central Equatoriana de Servicios Agrícolas, "Acerca de CESA," <http://www.asocam.org/portales.shtml?apc=Qa--Recurso17474CESA6975xx-xx-11356&s=F>.

were deemed crucial. Patococha project agencies evaluated Tucayta along a continuum between polarities of modern-traditional, entrepreneurial-demanding, and responsible-dependent, where colonialist representations of indigenous deficiencies and neoliberal depictions of state limitations converged. For instance, according to CESA, the Ecuadorian state was often tardy or failed in its obligations to Patococha. As Tucayta engaged the Patococha coordinator group after 1988, CESA and COSUDE criticized the indigenous leaders for missing coordination meetings altogether or for making demands rather than posing solutions (CESA 1992). In 1994 COSUDE reiterated those remarks about Tucayta in a formal project assessment (Martínez 2002, 143–144).

An example of Tucayta's "demanding" behavior occurred in 1988, when it resisted the state's decision to disallow primary canal access to indigenous communities who did not live nearby, even when they contributed labor to build the canal. In the same year, Tucayta convened the oversight committee to contest the restriction; COSUDE, CESA, and the Ecuadorian water institute refused to budge, citing the expense of canal extensions. When Tucayta leaders insisted on finding a solution, indigenous activists waiting outside the meeting house encircled it to signal that everyone would stay. By evening the committee had reached an agreement and the development officers were released (Zeller 2009). The contentious act of Tucayta affirmed that local meanings of water rights—here defined by those who invest in its acquisition and maintenance—are not subordinate to cost efficiencies. What the development officers counted as irresponsibility or obstruction signified responsibility or perseverance to indigenous leaders.

Tucayta's desire for independence from CESA (Martínez 2002) and its pursuit of direct influence in decision making also explain its initially limited involvement in the Patococha project. At that time, indigenous organizations throughout Ecuador struggled to define their own voice and engage others without intermediation (CONAIE 1989, 1994). Thus, Tucayta came to see CESA as an intermediary in a project designed for Tucayta's indigenous constituents.<sup>15</sup> In 1996, however, Tucayta accepted "responsible participation" in Patococha oversight when COSUDE reallocated some canal management funding from CESA to Tucayta and when Tucayta signed the initial transfer agreement with the state's regional agency, CREA (Martínez 2002).

When negotiating transfer of Patococha management, Tucayta asked to deploy a collective governance regime built on indigenous cultural practices of *minga* (community labor) and *prestamano* (mutual assistance). The Swiss donor accepted this proposal on the condition that Tucayta generate a yearly plan with a public works (*minga*) schedule, documentation of sanctions and fee collection, proof of budget to pay personnel, and a computer to track water users (CESA-CREA 1998). By allowing *mingas* while insisting that Tucayta adopt external managerial norms and technologies, COSUDE modeled neomodernizationist and social-neoliberal strategy: marshaling and supplementing indigenous social fabric to strengthen capabilities and accomplish development.

15. Interview, Tucayta indigenous leader, May 23, 2000, Cañar.

Patococha also reflected the development agencies' differentiation from the kind of state (heavily bureaucratic, overly politicized) expected to disappear in the march of neoliberal progress. During the final stages of the project (1995–1998), the Swiss donor instructed CESA to train Tucayta in management skills and to find counterparts to efficiently build the dam. For the latter task, CESA chose CREA, “under the criteria of efficiency, agility [and] autonomy to operate” (cited in CESA-CREA 1998, 26). Both CESA and CREA defined their relationship as a social business distinguished from state agencies and for-profit firms. They claimed to combine technical capacity and experience in engineering projects with efficient financial administration, flexibility, and intimate knowledge of community development (CESA-CREA 1998, 42).

After Patococha was transferred, everyone involved cited greater agricultural productivity and potential earnings as a benefit of the project (CESA-CREA 1998). However, project assessments also valued progress as development bodies. In evaluating Tucayta, conceptual separations of culture, politics, and economy engendered hierarchical representations of this progress. For example, a COSUDE staff member portrayed Tucayta's acquired skills and resources as an improvement that leaves their previous practices behind: “The project is interesting because the [indigenous] organization has passed through the typical stages of Ecuadorian rural development. Fifteen years ago they were about vindication and . . . opposition; [they] have passed through a . . . transformation to be responsible managers . . . reinforced by economic empowerment.”<sup>16</sup>

A formal study of Tucayta carried out in 1999, which quantified its capacity and ranked Tucayta in relation to other second-tier indigenous associations, made a qualitative remark similar to the one above: “Until 1999 Tucayta's leadership was of a traditional cut. They saw the organization as a space to make demands and valorize ethno-cultural proposals, [prioritizing] education and health. [Now] they are privileging a techno-productive dimension . . . and . . . activities of a modern business type” (Martínez 2002, 151). Just as Tucayta appeared to gain full recognition as a development agency, however, this report pulled the rug out from under it: “If one wants to see Tucayta as the embryo of a ‘social business’ it is worth noting that . . . there are real possibilities of going down this road, but . . . there are still strong traits of a traditional organizational model with sturdy ethnic and cultural elements that cut across it” (Martínez 2002, 153).

By opening a new gap between Tucayta and an ideal-type organization, development professionals reestablished hierarchy through an ambivalent discourse reminiscent of British colonial visions of the mimic. Like Tucayta-in-development, colonial mimics were considered “almost the same [as metropolitan subjects] but not quite” (Bhabha 2005, 126). These evaluations did, however, consecrate new aspirations for Tucayta, centered on becoming or forming a social business. This reinstated Tucayta as a development subject with potential, similar to the position that paternalistic, if well meaning, colonial figures like Bartolomé de Las Casas established for indigenous peoples five hundred years ago (D. Castro 2007).

16. Interview, Swiss agency staff member, April 11, 2000, Quito.

*Internalizing the Market, Experiencing Markets*

The efforts of COSUDE and CREA reinforced market society without stemming emigration of indigenous people from Cañar Province. Differences between the market ideal and the conditions of actual markets explain this result. One way market society was deepened was through Tucayta's internalization of entrepreneurial and administrative expectations: "We have transcended the vindication [opposition] phase to . . . autonomous management, and we are . . . thinking about small business development. . . . With this change, Tucayta wants to demonstrate that indigenous people [have] capabilities to be competitive."<sup>17</sup> Note this leader's expression of Tucayta's new status in neoliberal terms of merit, instead of fulfillment of long-term struggle or realization of indigenous rights.<sup>18</sup>

Another example is Tucayta's 2003 proposal to manage Patococha's watersheds. Along with conservation, it proposed management training and an upgrade of production and marketing enterprises. Continuing the neoliberal demand paradigm of development, the marketing firms would primarily "monitor . . . markets to identify and take advantage of niches and trends, as well as orient production to the dynamics of the market" (Tucayta 2003, 6). Also, Tucayta (2003, 5) asserted that the project would allow indigenous production firms to "offer goods . . . competitively with the large producers . . . of the country." A third illustration of market-principle internalization was expressed in responsibility: in 2004, Tucayta's president noted difficulties with Patococha canal maintenance due to a financial shortage but placed the onus squarely on Tucayta: "Prior to transfer of Patococha, the development institutions were directing the canal . . . but now this is our challenge. We have to keep searching [for funds], managing properly . . . and organizing better amongst ourselves."<sup>19</sup>

Market society also expanded through Tucayta's organizational reforms; Tucayta required that all future leaders have at least a high school diploma, and it "institutionalized the . . . evaluation of technical and management activities" in all internal assemblies. It separated technical offices from its political and cultural ones through an institutional reengineering project sponsored by the World Bank.<sup>20</sup> This project also formed eleven producer groups to "assume the costs of technical assistance" and to "develop business culture capacities" (Quinde 2002, 189). Finally, Tucayta (1999) redefined itself as a service provider within a strategic plan rubric. It outsourced to, or partnered with, local associations in agro-technology, small-business management, financial credit, and education. It did so

17. Interview, Tucayta indigenous leader, May 23, 2000, Cañar.

18. In 1998, indigenous people won collective rights in the Ecuadorian constitution. Two of these were the right of indigenous people to define and enact their own forms of development, and the right to determine their own uses of natural resources.

19. Interview, Tucayta president, July 24, 2004, Quito.

20. Interview, Tucayta indigenous leader, May 2000. This project was part of a larger World Bank initiative called the Indigenous and Afro-Ecuadorian Development Project, which ran from 1998 to 2002 and was, like Patococha, forged in a social-neoliberal culture of development. For a critical perspective on this project, see Bretón 2008. For the view of two of the project's main architects, see Uquillas and van Nieuwkoop 2006.

in part to specialize in mediation and networking, and to otherwise focus on its services (Quinde 2002).

These adjustments diminished the role of the Ecuadorian state and crowded out pursuit of alternative economic principles. Once Tucayta took over the irrigation system, it relieved the state of its obligation to provide water to indigenous people in that area. The member communities of Tucayta paid for irrigation water as a private good, as forecast by the demand paradigm for water, but their payment went to Tucayta, not to a for-profit company. This arrangement, however, diverged from the national indigenous confederation's vision of comanagement between water users and the state. Cañari activist Manuel Castro (1995) proposed that Cañari indigenous people create their own exchange system to circumvent exploitation by intermediaries (who are usually whites or mestizos). He also advocated for more land and for better, culturally dignified public education. According to the neoliberal development narrative enveloping Tucayta, however, such a proposal was traditional. Making Tucayta leaders "modern" steered the organization away from local protection strategies and toward a wider context of exchange and circulation, enabling them to aspire to compete with the exploitative intermediaries that Castro had criticized.

Managing Patococha autonomously and supporting community enterprise did not stem emigration or optimize irrigation canal maintenance. The conditions of actually existing markets in products, labor, finance, and real estate—shaped by international agreements, state policy, and urban purchasing standards—explain much of this failure. Ecuador's year 1999–2000 financial crisis and budget cuts to fund bank bailouts reduced overall demand for goods. The government's decision to change Ecuador's currency to the US dollar to stabilize Ecuador's financial markets and attract foreign investment had an even bigger impact. First, it effectively tripled agricultural costs, especially for pesticides, with no agricultural subsidies to support input purchases (Quinde 2002; Caguana 2008). Second, the currency switch constituted a monetary revaluation that combined with prior free-trade agreements to make Colombian and Peruvian agricultural products significantly cheaper than Ecuadorian ones. By 2003, Tucayta lost marketing agreements in the major Ecuadorian cities of Guayaquil and Cuenca, which it had previously worked hard to arrange (Martínez 2004; Valliant 2008).

Shrinking access to markets was exacerbated by intermediaries—more than 50 percent of Cañari crops were sold through them—who further depressed prices for Cañari farmers (Caguana 2008; Cabarcas 2011). Urban consumption standards also restricted Tucayta's agro-commercial prospects. In 2003–2004, a farmers' group linked to Tucayta attempted to forge a sales niche in Quito, the Ecuadorian capital, for pesticide-free quinoa (an Andean cereal). The quinoa was rebuffed because of quality standards demanding homogenous, neatly packaged, and clean products, where "clean" meant pest-free but not pesticide-free (Cabarcas 2011).

Another consequence of this situation was more emigration of labor to the United States and Spain. By 2007, more than 80 percent of families affiliated with Tucayta had relatives working abroad (Verdugo 2008, 36). Remittances from these workers are rarely invested in agriculture. When they are, they are used to buy

pastureland for cows to produce milk, one of the few rural goods receiving state protection (Valliant 2008). But remittances are often invested in land, to build relatively fancy houses for the comfort of relatives or as a retirement home for emigrant workers. As a result, land prices increased between threefold and tenfold from 1999 to 2007. This inflation raised agricultural costs further, pushing more Cañarís to emigrate (Verdugo 2008, 40–41; Caguana 2008, 59; Karnes 2007, 93).

Remittances circulated more cash to Cañar and stimulated demand for local services and labor. However, emigration and cash flow also caused brain drain, familial disruption, a decline in health, and erosion of the social fabric (Caguana 2008). Local customs of reciprocity deteriorated as money replaced social ties as a basis of production and circulation (Martínez 2003). Also, the first emigrants were relatively well-educated Cañarís, including leaders trained under the Patococha project. As a result, Tucayta (2003) had difficulty managing the irrigation system effectively (see also Martínez 2004). In addition, community work teams (*mingas*) for canal maintenance suffered from labor scarcity, because remaining family members often paid absentee fines with remittances rather than attend *mingas* (Martínez 2004; Caguana 2008).

Tucayta's financial limitations aggravated these collective-action problems. Examples include Tucayta's efforts to restore the main irrigation platform, which leaked significantly, and to protect Patococha's watershed, which suffered from soil erosion and contamination. The Ecuadorian state was not responsible for these needs, and Tucayta's business initiatives garnered limited revenue. Thus, Tucayta had to "knock on doors of various institutions" and promote its proposals to acquire funding.<sup>21</sup> Results were modest. The national government provided only 10 percent of the amount needed for full canal restoration.<sup>22</sup> No external agencies supported the watershed protection project. Tucayta doubled irrigation fees to finance part of it, which further raised agricultural costs for Tucayta's members (Verdugo 2008, 78).

I asked Tucayta's president whether, in light of these difficulties, autonomous management of Patococha was mainly a big headache and whether it would be better to have the state manage it on the locals' behalf. His answer to the second question was a firm no, but his response to the first was ambivalent: "I think that on the whole it has not been a pain in the . . . but there are times when it feels like it! We have to be tolerant and patient, though."<sup>23</sup> Although he again placed responsibility for the canal's condition on Tucayta, it seems that joint responsibility for water between communities and state, as the national indigenous organization CONAIE proposed back in 1996, might have been a better alternative.

### *Resisting Markets, Reembedding the Market*

Regarding the transformations of the nineteenth century, Polanyi observed social movements pushing back against market cruelty with life projects that sought

21. Interview, Tucayta president, July 2004, Quito.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*



to reembody economy in alternative terms of value. This entailed not wholesale rejection of the market or complete disengagement with actual markets but their subordination to other principles and forms of interaction (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004, 178). After 2005, Tucayta did something similar. It elected a new leadership that mitigated the deepening of market capitalism, appropriating Patococha and other artifacts of development for different purposes.

The second five-year strategic plan (2006–2010) of Tucayta summarized these changes in the following objectives: improving food security, expanding critical consciousness, intensifying communal conceptions of land (i.e., as territory), revitalizing ancestral seed technologies, establishing agro-ecological programs to improve nutrition and health, and bettering the quality of local bilingual schools. In the text of this plan, *sustainable* refers to ecological reproduction and not just to development-project continuity (Tucayta, cited in Karnes 2007, 124). A joint plan of action between Tucayta and a local savings-and-loan co-op elaborated on this reorientation. It stated that irrigation water management remained fundamental but would be geared to improve the quality of land and produce, and aimed to raise consciousness about the nutritional and relational value of Andean grains. This platform also called for strengthening local reciprocity practices and commercializing produce in fair-trade systems (Tucayta 2007), which juxtapose principles of redistribution and solidarity to free-trade norms of barter and competition.

Both of these proposals retain goals to increase production, improve administrative capacities, and enhance social entrepreneurship. But the relative weight of these goals dropped notably compared to Tucayta's prior strategic plan (1999) and its watershed management proposal (2003). My follow-up interview with Tucayta's ex-president in July 2006 echoed these revaluations. He believed that Tucayta should exploit market niches whenever possible, yet he also stated, "We need to consider options like a solidary market. We are not going to be competitive with the largest businesses in the country."<sup>24</sup> With respect to health, he told me that technical fixes focusing on the symptoms were inadequate: "Everyone needs a balanced life; this automatically involves the environment and improving its quality."<sup>25</sup>

These comments imply disillusion with the market and with technical solutions, which correlates with Ecuadorian and Latin American reactions to neoliberalism and the growing influence of agro-ecological thinking internationally. But this disappointment is also grounded in local experiences: Tucayta's frustrations with irrigation management and agro-commercial initiatives, and social losses linked to emigration, remittances, and agro-chemical use. Accidental pesticide poisoning of children and adult suicides by pesticide ingestion exemplify

24. According to Servet (2009), a solidary economy privileges reciprocity, complementarity, and other social ties between exchange partners but also makes room for redistributive and barter practices. For more information in English, see Servet 2009; for a Latin American discussion of solidary economies, see the special issue of *Íconos*, no. 33 (Pía 2009).

25. Interview, Tucayta ex-president, July 18, 2006, Cañar. Because it was Tucayta's recently departed ex-president who made these remarks, these ideas likely emerged from widespread reflection rather than imposition by the new leaders.

these social costs most acutely. Perceived increases in local cancer rates as well as frequent reports of diarrhea and vomiting among farmers using pesticides added to a sense of loss. These problems were associated with long absences of family members, the difficulty of competing in food markets, and depleted household labor availability (Karnes 2007; Cabarcas 2011).

The market's recent devaluation by indigenous activists was also manifest in food and clothing initiatives, which revalued cultural and biological integrity and were more in line with the project to reconstruct the Pueblo Cañari. As emigrant families became too busy to cook conventional Andean crops, remittances allowed for consumption of processed and "mestizo" food. Meanwhile, local farmers—as part and parcel of the Patococha project—specialized in the cultivation of marketable crops. Andean foods lost prestige and circulated less, and the health of the local population and environment appeared to decline. In response to this, Tucayta identified food cultivated mainly for subsistence as indigenous, nutritious, and consisting of slow-cooked soups full of Andean tubers and grains; it labeled food cultivated primarily for market sale as mestizo or gringo; as unhealthy "junk"; and as comprising fried meat, potatoes, and rice washed down with soda pop (Karnes 2007, 82–85; Tucayta 2007). Previously, an indigenous leader affiliated with Tucayta managed an artisan textile project that manufactured blouses in local patterns and designs. She said the project was valuable even though the products did not "crack the national or international market," because local women began to wear this clothing again after having stopped, thus "valorizing what belongs [*propio*] to Cañaris."<sup>26</sup>

A broad interpretation of these changes is that Tucayta activists took responsibility for a kind of development that they later decided was alien. As they managed Patococha autonomously and became independent of the state, local society grew more dependent on market conditions created elsewhere while "local" inputs (e.g., food, money, seeds, pesticides, cell phones) increasingly came from elsewhere (Tucayta 2007; Verdugo 2008; Caguana 2008). Some local indigenous leaders had already recognized this trend. In 2004, one of them criticized COSUDE's trustee-like comportment in the Patococha project and concluded that COSUDE's work on Patococha "promoted development in the region but not development from the region" (Pichisaca and Guamán 2004, 57).

Finally, pressuring the state and placing responsibility back in the public domain were important measures in re-embedding the market within Tucayta's politics: Tucayta held the Cañar city government responsible for ecological cleanup of the Yuracasha indigenous community (Tucayta, cited in Karnes 2007, 130) and demanded funding from local governments for canal maintenance and water-source protection. Part of the rationale for this last demand was that Patococha furnished a portion of the city of Cañar's water supply; the other reason was that mestizos and urbanites benefit from the food that indigenous farmers cultivate using Patococha's water.<sup>27</sup> For Tucayta, it seems that potable water rates and food prices in markets did not adequately measure the value of these goods; Tucayta

26. Interview, Tucayta leader, July 14, 2004, Quito.

27. Interview, Tucayta ex-president, July 18, 2006, Cañar.

proposed an interethnic, rural-urban form of reciprocity, in which identity and status are visible, to make up the difference.

## CONCLUSION

Karl Polanyi believed that the major effects of the great transformation were cultural (Inayatullah and Blaney 2004, 178). In this article, I have argued that Patococha's most significant effects were cultural as market society in Cañar intensified. Development theorists and practitioners inscribed neoliberal terms of value that granted the market an integral place in development projects like Patococha. As COSUDE represented water in terms of market competitiveness, CESA and CREA valorized technical skills consistent with market rationalities of efficiency, self-help, and flexibility. The enrollment of Tucayta in this project furthered market society as Tucayta embraced these meanings and principles and made market prosperity central to its aspirations.

Moreover, Tucayta's assumption of these norms and values resulted from a decade (1994–2004) of socialization in neoliberal development expectations. The organization's thinking and practice underwent evaluations that denigrated as backward those actions and orientations seemingly contrary to neoliberal progress. Representations of Tucayta's "excess demands," "lack of initiative," and "culturalist orientation" recall colonial stereotypes of indigenous peoples. Tucayta incorporated these neoliberal hierarchies and differences after the Patococha project concluded, thus segregating political, cultural, and economic work while marginalizing the first two. Separation of its economic-technical offices from political-cultural ones was clearly meant to optimize the former, not the latter. A Tucayta dissident told me in 2004 that the organization badly neglected political and ethnic work, neglect that she held partly responsible for local devaluation of endogenous practices and customs.<sup>28</sup>

Why would an organization valuing indigenous differences internalize neoliberal development culture? The desperation of Tucayta to address burgeoning poverty, or the emergence of a professionalized cadre of indigenous leaders, explains this in part. Another explanation rests on how development-as-empowerment masks development's internal cultures and hierarchies. When only development recipients are viewed as cultural actors and their cultures are defined as capacities and constraints, seemingly noncultural development agents appear to "strengthen" conferee cultures without imposition and without altering their content. Changes in recipient cultures read as additive rather than substantive, and only "power to," not "power over," is visible. Desire for autonomous development beneficiaries is similar. They are deemed ready for autonomy when their capabilities reach a certain level, but it is the character of those capabilities that matter; hence the emphasis on development-subject orientations in neomodernization theory and Patococha project evaluations.

This also reveals biases and contradictions within social neoliberalism. Even though social neoliberalism valorized social fabric and grassroots participation

28. Interview, Tucayta activist, July 14, 2004.

as development objectives, it privileged the market as essential for empowerment and freedom and thus predetermined the social arena in which social fabric and participation realize their value. Social neoliberalism also assumed that engagement with the market will fortify social fabric and enhance participation (or at least not weaken them). As Elyachar (2005, 144) has argued, this is why development organizations often ponder how relational value (produced, for example, in social fabric and active participation) could be a means to increase market value but disregard how relational value might transform or deteriorate in the pursuit of market value.

The concrete experiences of Tucayta with markets did not match neoliberal expectations about the market or empowerment. They showed instead how markets remain a problem for indigenous livelihoods in Cañar, even as development agencies posited the market as a solution. Market conditions were unfavorable to small-scale agro-commerce and injurious to local social fabric and participation. After reflecting on these experiences, Tucayta reembedded the market by aligning its aspirations with the values of the national indigenous movement and international agro-ecological movements. Tucayta's current social project faces some of the same challenges as its predecessor: inadequate state support for small-scale agriculture, and emigration processes that establish urban and consumerist cultural patterns among Tucayta families. The 2008 Ecuadorian constitution contains ecological and social concepts favorable to Tucayta's new undertakings, but whether or not the government will institute these concepts sufficiently remains an open question.

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