





Cultivating Good Living through Social Innovation: the experience of the Frontier Social Innovation Observatory

Cultivando o Bem Viver através da Inovação Social: a experiência do Observatório de Inovação Social da Fronteira

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Abstract: Debating social innovation through the lens of the Buen Vivir approach is a powerful proposal for addressing the challenges of Latin American societies. It promotes and values democratic participation, strengthens community ties, and encourages a less predatory relationship with nature. Based on a comprehensive literature review and the complexity paradigm as a strategy to reconnect knowledge and scientific fields, this theoretical-empirical article aims to propose a transdisciplinary operationalization of Buen Vivir, grounded in pragmatist social innovations. Specifically, it presents the study of the Social Innovation Ecosystem on the Brazil-Bolivia border, conducted by the Social Innovation Observatory of the Border. The results contribute to advancing this discussion by valuing community mobilizations, giving visibility to the region's public issues, and analyzing the role of the State in this process. This approach emerges as a

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strategy to rethink ways of life, public policies, and governance from a Latin American perspective.

Keywords: Good Living; social innovation; transdisciplinarity; social transformation.

Resumo: Debater a inovação social a partir da abordagem do Bem Viver é uma proposta potente para enfrentar os desafios das sociedades latino-americanas, promovendo e valorizando a participação democrática, fortalecendo os laços comunitários e incentivando uma relação menos predatória com a natureza. Com base em uma ampla revisão da literatura e no paradigma da complexidade como estratégia para religar conhecimentos e campos científicos, este artigo teórico-empírico tem por objetivo propor uma operacionalização transdisciplinar para o Bem Viver fundamentada nas inovações sociais pragmatistas. Especificamente, apresenta o estudo do Ecossistema de Inovação Social na fronteira Brasil-Bolívia, conduzido pelo Observatório de Inovação Social da Fronteira. Os resultados contribuem para o avanço da temática ao valorizar as mobilizações comunitárias, dar visibilidade aos problemas públicos da região e analisar o papel do Estado nesse processo. Essa abordagem se configura como uma estratégia para repensar formas de vida, políticas públicas e governança a partir da realidade latino-americana.

Palavras-chave: Bem Viver; inovação social; transdisciplinaridade; transformação social.

1. INTRODUCTION

Latin American societies have experienced and continue to experience a broad process of economic, political, social, cultural and environmental crisis. We can understand this scenario as the result of the coloniality of power, which has imposed on these societies an unattainable notion of progress, as well as a precarious insertion in the global capitalist system and adherence to neoliberal policies.

Awareness of the need for a drastic break with the hegemonic model of development, based on accumulation and exploitation, opens the way for the idealization of a radical systemic change. Such transformation must be aligned with a balanced civilizational project, respecting planetary limits (Morin, Kern, 2000), in tune with the exercise of decolonization⁵ (Quijano, 2020) (Quijano,

⁵ Decolonization/decolonize in the text in reference to the idea of decoloniality, constructed from the concept of coloniality developed by Aníbal Quijano. Thus, the act of decolonizing is an epistemological shift based on the political and theoretical constructions that arise from the Latin

2020) and committed to the search for systemic alternatives (Sólon, 2019), capable of redefining the destiny of humanity.

In the following sections, we will argue that this search is not restricted to state action, but is also driven by civil society. Specifically, we will explore this dynamic from the perspectives of Good Living and social innovation, understanding that the former should guide public policies, while these can benefit from the emerging experiences of collectively constructed social innovations.

In Latin America, the approach of Good Living, *Buen Vivir*, *Vivir Bien*⁶, rooted in the history of the Andean and Amazonian peoples, has been taking place, to a certain extent, as awareness of the social and ecological crisis grows and criticism of the predominant development model increases (Acosta, 2016). This movement has both a normative dimension, by breaking with neoliberal discourse, and an empirical dimension, as it seeks to understand the meanings of life in the territory (Dussel, 2012).

At the same time, social innovation emerges as a response to economic and socio-environmental challenges, especially in a context of decreasing public resources (Domanski et al., 2015). However, its understanding is fragmented and can be analyzed under different theoretical approaches (Moulaert; Sekia, 2003; Andion, 2023). However, a Schumpeterian interpretation predominates, which emphasizes profit and entrepreneurial action as a solution to respond to social problems (Santo, 2023).

An alternative perspective, developed in Brazil by the Florianópolis Social Innovation Observatory (Obisf)⁷, proposes a pragmatist analysis of social innovations⁸. This approach goes beyond the Schumpeterian view by investigating how social innovation experiences emerge and develop in the

American experience, admitting the impact of colonial intrusions and seeking to build our own ways of understanding and acting on social reality.

⁶ In Brazil, the expression *Bem Viver* is used; in Ecuador, *Buen Vivir* and in Bolivia, *Vivir Good*. We will not present the *Buen Vivir* paradigm in depth here, as this would be beyond our objectives, and this presentation has already been widely done in Brazil (Silva; Guedes, 2017; Jacques, 2020; Maia, Farias, 2020), not to mention the works in Spanish. We start from and defend the assumption that science needs to advance, so we will only present a summary of this approach to advance its discussion based on the gaps found.

⁷ See: <https://observafloripa.com.br/>

⁸ Table 2 below presents a summary of the pragmatist social innovation approach. For further details, see Obisf <https://observafloripa.com.br/>

territory. The methodology prioritizes the identification of public action promoted collectively by socio-state actors who face public problems in the city and seek shared solutions (responses) to contemporary socio-environmental challenges (Andion et al., 2020).

Despite the growing interest in the topic, much of the debate on social innovation remains isolated from Latin American social realities, compartmentalized into disciplinary fields and, for the most part, centered on a Eurocentric perspective. In this sense, the Buen Viver proposal allows us to reframe social innovation in a way that is more coherent with the experiences and experiences of historically precarious groups and the peculiarities of the social imaginaries forged by colonial processes.

Revisiting the literature on Good Living, we observed that, of the 146 studies found⁹, only 10% are Brazilian, while 90% are from other South American countries. Of these, 12.5% describe isolated initiatives without theoretical depth, while 80% analyze the drafting of the Bolivian and Ecuadorian constitutions based on Good Living, with a focus on state action. None of the studies prioritized the analysis of the practices and experiences of civil society organizations, an essential aspect because, as Solón (2019, p. 48) highlights, “the role of the State in relation to Good Living cannot be that of organizing and planning society. Communities are not clients; they must be agents of change”. Furthermore, only one study attempted to promote a dialogue between Good Living and social innovation (Fontan; Klein, 2020)¹⁰, without major advances.

Given these gaps, this (theoretical-empirical) study proposes a transdisciplinary operationalization of Buen Vivir based on pragmatic social innovations. To this end, the Social Innovation Ecosystem (EIS) on the Brazil-Bolivia border will be analyzed through the Border Social Innovation Observatory (Obisfron)¹¹. This social technology, inspired by the pragmatic methodology of Obisf and Buen Vivir, has given visibility to the work of

⁹ Review carried out from June to July/2023 in the Scielo database. The material found refers to articles written in Portuguese, Spanish and English, peer-reviewed and available for reading.

¹⁰ The authors analyzed the new forms of governance and territorial action that emerged in Quebec/Canada between the 1980s and 1990s, in conjunction with Buen Vivir. However, associating this experiment with Buen Vivir is inappropriate, since Buen Vivir is not the same as Social Well-Being, as discussed in the 2nd section of this article.

¹¹ See: <https://obisfron.com.br/>

community organizations, the public problems of the region, and the role of the State in this process.

To achieve this objective, a literature review was carried out to support the discussion on Buen Vivir (next section), social innovation (third section) and the transdisciplinary dialogue between both (fourth section). The fifth part of the work presents the empirical data obtained from the Obisfron experience.

Aware of the possible questions about the combination of the notion of Good Living (a production of the Global South) with theoretical perspectives developed under the social imaginary of the Global North, we refer to the paradigm of complexity (Morin, 2011a; b), according to which it is essential to overcome the reductive, simplifying and disjunctive nature of our knowledge production. Therefore, the transdisciplinary union between complexity, Good Living and pragmatism allows us to build a theoretical framework that reconciles the contributions and virtues of the South and the North, without devaluation or blindness.

2. BEYOND UTOPIA: CONTRIBUTIONS FROM GOOD LIVING

According to Quijano (2020), the notion of Good Living, summarized in figure 1, emerges among indigenous and native societies in Latin America as a strategy to build alternative experiences to the imposed patterns of progress and development. The focus is on obtaining resources to guarantee life in a sustainable manner, prioritizing the collective organization of the community and building its own tools and strategies that meet collective needs and value multiple forms of knowledge. Thus, Good Living must be understood as a complex fabric, developed from different worldviews of original societies, pointing to the need to build a new relationship with nature and strengthen community ties.

Figure 01: Summary of decoloniality and Good Living

- **Decoloniality:** term coined by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, in 2005, to define the theoretical and practical resistance movement, of a political and epistemological nature, initiated by the Modernity/Coloniality Group (M/C).

- **Modernity/Coloniality Group:** a collective of Latin American intellectuals who seek to develop their own response to the challenges posed by colonial intrusions. This response, called the “decolonial turn”, proposes a radically critical stance in the epistemological, cultural, social and political spheres, offering a new reading of the history of the continent and the colonial dynamics that still persist.

- **Coloniality:** a concept developed by Aníbal Quijano in the late 1980s and a central axis of decolonial reflections and the M/C Group. It refers to the structures of power, domination and influence exercised by societies of the Global North over the Global South, which continue to operate even after the end of formal colonialism. Coloniality unfolds into three main dimensions – power, being and knowledge – and allows us to shed light on knowledge and worldviews that have historically been made invisible by colonial practices and discourses. In this context, the notion of Good Living stands out.

- **Good Living:** “Well Live and Live Well, that’s it the most widely used terms in the debate of new movement of the society, especially of the population indigenized In Latin America, there was a social existence different from the one we have tax there Coloniality of Power. Good Living is there oldest formulation their indigenous resistance against it Coloniality of Power” (QUIJANO, 2020, p.937). Good Living is a political and epistemic construction of the indigenous peoples who inhabit the territory of Abya Yala (the name given to the Latin American continent before colonial intrusions). It represents a proposal for decolonization that is radically critical of predatory patterns in relation to Nature and the genocide imposed on indigenous peoples. It emerges as an alternative to colonial, capitalist and patriarchal policies, defending cultural diversity, interculturality, plurinationality and political pluralism – in opposition to neoliberal practices, which tend to homogenize and make diversity invisible.

Source: prepared by the authors, based on Ballestrin (2013) and Quijano (2020).

According to Acosta (2016), Good Living contemplates the plurality of worldviews of different Andean and Amazonian peoples, finding similar expressions in different languages, such as *sumak kawsay* (Kíchwa), *suma qamaña* (Aymara) or *nhandereko* (Guarani), which can be translated as “beautiful life”, “good life”, “full life”, “community life”. Similar notions are identified among the Mapuche of Chile, the Kuna of Panama, the Shuar and the Achuar of the Ecuadorian Amazon and in the Mayan traditions of Guatemala and Chiapas, Mexico. The concept also comes close to the African ethics and philosophy of ubuntu (“I am because we are”).

For Dussel (2012), Good Living is a non-modern normative formulation, emphasizing the verb as it operationalizes a way of life in action, a material

ethic, a sense of community, a cosmic life (physical and mythical) and a distinct understanding of nature and the cosmos. Both Solón (2019) and Acosta (2016) perceive Good Living as a worldview that distances itself from the Western imagination and presents itself as an alternative to development, emerging in the late 20th and early 21st centuries as a critique of modernity and neoliberalism. This concept proposes a process of relearning self-managed indigenous practices and visions.

Solón (2019) presents five central elements of Good Living, which allow us to understand its applicability:

- Vision of the whole or Pacha: Andean concept that can be translated as the indissoluble and complex unity that forms social reality;
- Coexistence in multipolarity: recognition of diversity and strengthening of community ties to overcome inequalities;
- Search for balance: dynamic and constant balance between the different elements that make up the whole;
- Complementarity of diversity: the difference of the parts (pluriculturality) guarantees the existence of the whole;
- Decolonization: recovering roots, identities and memories to overcome models imposed by economic powers.

In addition to these elements, Solón (2019) points out strategies for practicing Good Living, such as: overcoming statism (the State must contribute to the empowerment of communities without clientelist practices); enhancing the local and the community; building an integrated vision of Nature; ensuring full cultural diversity; overcoming patriarchal practices; promoting real democracy (with effective political participation); and fostering international complementarity (without submissions between nations).

The first major debate on Good Living refers to the need to overcome the developmentalist model and the ideology of modernity. Dussel (2012), Acosta (2016) and Solón (2019) converge in pointing out that Good Living is an alternative to capitalist development, unbridled progress and competition between nations, characteristic elements of the Eurocentric and modern imagination. Thus, Good Living transcends modernity by seeking a harmonious

vision of the whole, promoting a civilizing transformation. which redefines the economy (meeting material demands without environmental depletion) and combats multiple inequalities (valuing multiculturalism and the principle of complementarity).

These elements represent a denial of modernity, which imposes a brutal and Eurocentric capitalist model. However, it is not a question of rejecting the potential of modern technology and knowledge, nor of returning to a mythical and idyllic past, but rather of “(re)constructing a path that disarms the universal goal of progress in its productivist version and of development as the only direction, especially in its mechanistic vision of economic growth and its multiple synonyms” (Acosta, 2016, p.69).

The second aspect is the institutionalization of Good Living in national constitutions, bringing to the fore the debate on plurinationality (recognition of the multiple nations that make up a State) and the inclusion of environmental and multicultural issues in the legal system. Dussel (2012) and Acosta (2016) warn that the constitutional experiences of Good Living (Bolivia/2006; Ecuador/2007) did not put this proposal into effect. On the contrary, there was an expansion of extractive and developmental practices, aggravating environmental devastation and inequalities, while indigenous and peripheral communities were dismantled through clientelist practices that tied them to the State.

Thus, Good Living is not restricted to constitutions or the State, but must be operationalized by communities to achieve effectiveness and avoid being reduced to partisan propaganda and property of political groups. The role of the State must be to guarantee the expansion of freedoms, encourage public debate and ensure social participation in political decisions.

The third crucial point is the intrinsic relationship between Good Living and decoloniality, a paradigmatic Latin American perspective formulated by Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2020). The coloniality of power, born of colonialism, transcends its historical period and shapes colonized societies. Decoloniality allows us to look critically at “well-intentioned” colonizing terms, such as social well-being (associated with consumption and accumulation,

intensifying subordination), resilience (passively enduring the adversities imposed by an unequal system) and internal colonialism (exercised by local elites, as demonstrated in the constitutional experiences of Bolivia and Ecuador). Thus, a process of decolonization is proposed that overcomes the coloniality of power, being and knowledge.

In this way, the proposal for Good Living transcends the societies that originated its conception, allowing it to be rethought in different social realities without losing its essence. It is not a rigid model, but an ethical and democratic proposal for social reorganization, referring to the notion of intercultural translation. It consists of a set of tools, strategies and practices built by peripheral and marginalized communities in favor of subsistence and a fuller life. Good Living is not a utopia or a model to be replicated, nor is it an exclusive instrument of the State. It emerges from collective experiences and experiences, which makes dialogue with social innovation especially opportune.

3. SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH SOCIAL INNOVATION

Social innovation is a recurring term, indicated as the result of a collective action socially constructed through a horizontal, democratic, inclusive, participatory and collaborative process. This process seeks to develop practices that meet socio-environmental needs that have not yet been fully met (Howaldt et al., (2019). Rather than providing a single, standardized definition, we treat social innovation as a dynamic and fluid field, recognizing its importance in tackling complex problems.

Howaldt et al., (2014; 2019), highlight that social innovation emerges from the mobilization of different socio-state actors, generating knowledge and new practices, in addition to the execution and planning of ideas to solve public challenges. For Cajaiba -Santana (2014), its main objective is to promote social change. Andion (2023) argues that the role of civil society in promoting social innovation and public policies is essential to deal locally with global problems, reinforcing the importance of recovering the trajectories of actors, public problems and the notion of urban ecosystems.

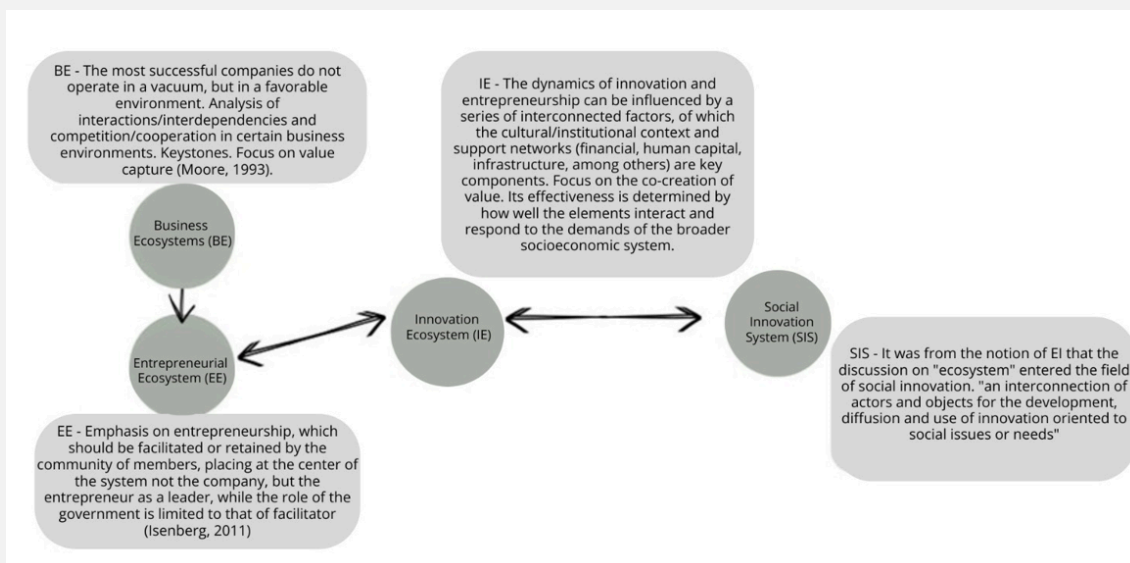
Santo et al. *Cultivating Good Living through Social Innovation: the experience of the Frontier Social Innovation Observatory*

These studies highlight the growing interest in this field, encompassing governments, civil society and companies, demonstrating its relevance both in academic research and in public life. In addition, they explore different methods to understand the reconfiguration of relations between socio-state actors and the connection between social innovation and social transformation.

Social innovation results from these collaborations, which must be aligned with local sociocultural contexts (territorial inscription). This perspective justifies the EIS approach, which highlights how social innovation results from the interconnection of actors and objects oriented towards meeting socio-environmental needs (Fulgêncio and Le Fever, 2016). According to Andion et al. (2020), this interconnection occurs through experiences, local dynamics and articulations between different actors in the face of urban public problems.

Lévesque (2016) explains that the term “ecosystem” emerged in 1935 in the work of biologist George Tansley, referring to the interactions between organisms and their environment, requiring interaction and interdependence for the system to function in a balanced way. Later, the concept was adapted in management schools and, over time, developed into several aspects (Figure 2).

Figure 02: From Ecosystems to Social Innovation Ecosystem



Source: prepared by the authors, based on Levesque (2016).

The approaches presented in figure 2 have in common the Schumpeterian tradition (emphasis on profit) and were designed to be applied to the business environment. It is important to highlight that EIS differ from EN and EE because, while the latter emphasize only the integrated innovation system, through support networks (financial, infrastructure and people) to foster entrepreneurship, access to the market, human capital and finance, EIS advance this vision and begin to include society in this process.

Lévesque (2016) then points out that the notion of EI was implemented in the social field (SIS), where the focus on entrepreneurship is defended as the main tool to respond to social needs. Andion et al. (2020), in dialogue with Lévesque, argue that this understanding is too limited to understand EIS, as it ignores aspects such as trajectory (reasons for their emergence), composition, civil society action, active role of the government (through public policies) and impacts of social innovations on the territory. This requires reconfiguring this understanding to understand how social innovation occurs (or does not occur) and its capacity for transformation.

EIS are formed by multiple actors, generating power relations, games of interest and collective actions that impact the desired processes (Terstriep et al., 2020; Santo, 2024). Howaldt et al. (2019) emphasize that mapping the interactions between social innovation initiatives and their supporters strengthens EISs, recognizing the multiplicity of networks involved in public governance and social innovation at the local level.

The study of EIS reveals how continuous interactions and interconnections between stakeholders and the environment promote social transformations. However, the mere existence of an EIS does not guarantee the resolution of the problems faced, as it requires mobilization of stakeholders, engagement and ensuring the continuity of actions over time (Santo, 2023). In addition, EIS have increasingly focused on daily socio-environmental needs, contributing to promoting systemic changes in society.

Studying EIS in Europe, the European Commission (2014) concluded that there is a broad interaction between networks of actors, funds and intermediary organizations to meet different socio-environmental needs.

Therefore, recognizing the scope and limits of EIS is essential to create favorable conditions for innovations to flourish, boosting their development and expanding their supply.

In view of this, EIS are treated in this research as a “constellation of networks” (Pel et al., 2018), where human factors (social actors and organizations) interact with political and social factors (sectors of society and legislation). This network connects several organizations, societies and individuals in the search for joint development, where social innovation becomes a driver for sustainability. It is, therefore, a technical device that allows mapping a network of actors, identifying their interactions and their field of action (environment, childhood, health, education and others). To this end, this research follows the pragmatist approach to social innovation, proposed by Andion et al., (2017), summarized in figure 3.

Figure 03: Summary of pragmatist social innovation

- Social innovation is part of long-term development trajectories: research must reconnect the micro-sociological analysis of how public problems are addressed to the macro-structural dimension, moving from the macro to the micro (and vice-versa). This is essential to understanding the consequences of the action over time, from the period prior to a given situation (e.g. creation of the Quota Law) to the practical effects of this action, such as the consequences for the target audience after its implementation.
- Social innovation is part of fields of experience: the effects at a global or macro level reverberate in the local or micro context, making it essential to understand the experiences of the actors involved, their experiences, practices, consequences and limitations. In this sense, ethnographic work proves fruitful, as it allows immersion in the reality of the researched and a deeper understanding of social dynamics.
- Reconnecting the processes of SI and social change to understand their consequences: it is necessary to identify a public problem and analyze how it is addressed or perpetuated, considering the controversies, modes of engagement, crises and justifications. This perspective will allow us to understand how broader processes of social transformation occur.

Source: prepared by the authors based on Andion et al., 2017; 2020.

In the pragmatist approach, social innovation is a vector for expanding the “capacity of groups and society itself to reinvent themselves, that is, to create their own rules and conventions and also new social practices, becoming more creative and more politically autonomous” (Andion et al., 2017, p. 379). It emerges as a strategy to solve public problems, in the conception of Dewey

(1927), who understands them as collective constructions arising from participation in public life. According to Cefaï (2007), the collective perception of disorder leads to a field of collective experience, in which networks and articulations are built with the purpose of formulating the public problem and building strategies for its solution, hence the importance of entering public arenas.

Public arenas, a concept developed by Daniel Cefaï (2007), allow us to reconnect the study of micro-social problems with the analysis of collective actions in civil society. An arena is not a physical space, but an environment that brings together an audience formed by a problem that will be intensely publicized. The “public problem increases its strength when the degree of mobilization of multiple actors and the degree of resonance in numerous audiences increases, when different scenes question and respond to each other, and when themes, resources and information are shared” (Cefaï, 2017, p. 186).

It is in this interaction between the problem and its audience that the public arena is configured. However, even the actors who experience the problem may disagree about its solution, generating conflicts and disputes for influence. Thus, the spokespeople, the representatives of a given agenda, emerge and gain prominence in the arena, issuing statements, igniting conflicts and controversies, seeking agreements, promoting judgments and discussions.

From this theoretical perspective, the study of EIS aims to identify public problems, social articulations that seek to solve them in different public arenas, and their contributions to improving life in the territories. Thus, the problematization and publicization of a given disorder becomes evident, as well as the search for solutions. This justifies the dialogue proposed here between social innovation and Good Living, in the search for harmony between society and nature, a topic discussed in the next section.

4. PROMOTING A DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOOD LIVING AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

To promote this dialogue, we need to, at the very least, accept three reductionisms: 1) the primacy of debates on social innovation based on Eurocentric and business-oriented models, without including the actions of civil society; 2) the univocal discussion of Good Living focused on the role of the State, which has resulted in its failure; 3) the recognition that debates on social innovation and Good Living are still scarce, resulting in unilateral and disconnected categories, concepts and discussions. Thus, we adopt the paradigm of complexity as a strategy to overcome disjunctions, reductions and one-dimensionality.

Morin (2011a; b) develops the theory of complexity based on elements from certain scientific fields (systems theory, cybernetics and systems theory), formulating three fundamental principles: the dialogic principle (simultaneous association of complementary and antagonistic terms); the principle of organizational recursion (breaking of linearity, where what is produced retroacts on what is produced, generating cycles of self-constitution, self-organization and self-production); and the holographic principle (the whole is in the parts and the parts are in the whole, intrinsically linked).

With this paradigmatic shift, Morin seeks to establish multidimensional knowledge, capable of accessing interactions and feedback between the parts and the whole (and the whole between the parts), reconstituting the subject-object relationship and recognizing their interdependence. This process, called by Morin self-eco-organization, understands that the subject is in the world and the world is in the subject, in a reciprocal relationship of constitutionality. Thus, it becomes possible to overcome the aforementioned constraints, adopting a transdisciplinary approach essential to articulating Good Living and social innovations.

The specificity of the notion of Good Living allows us to think about it in a complex way. In dialogue with Solón (2019), we must understand it as an open category, whose renewal and construction occurs through feedback with social reality and multiple communities, making it impossible to reduce it to a closed

model. For Solón, Good Living has no fixed norms, and any attempt to define it suffocates it. We can, however, get closer to its essence by understanding its worldview on the relationships between human beings and nature, as discussed in section 2 of this article.

From this perspective and in dialogue with complexity, we can apply this conception to the pragmatic understanding of public problems, proposed by Dewey (1927), since it is an open circuit, existing only when a disorder is perceived collectively and faced jointly. Thus, public problems emerge from a dialogical relationship between the environment and actors, in constant feedback (self-eco -organization). The recursive principle also applies here: public problems are only constituted through the active action of actors, who perceive, validate and continually renew them. The holographic principle, on the other hand, is reflected in the active participation of actors in political life.

As pointed out by Gonsalves and Andion (2019), this approach refers to Dewey's view on the participation of individuals in politics, anticipating a contemporary discussion in administration about the reconfiguration of the State. Today, public policies are no longer exclusively designed, implemented and evaluated by the State, but also by collective actions of various actors (Santo, Voks, 2021a; b).

In the context of formulating and implementing public policies, government commitment is essential (Lascoumes, Le Gales, 2012). Thus, strengthening democracy and its pillars (freedom, guarantee of rights and participation) becomes fundamental to valuing the voluntary experiences and practices of actors. This makes it possible to understand when a public problem becomes a political problem, the moment when the demands of civil society gain the attention of the State, whether through pressure or empathy.

Identifying civil society practices is important because, according to Morin and Kern (2000, p. 85), “the more the problems of civilization become political, the less politicians are able to integrate them into their language and programs”. Therefore, it is essential to recover/identify civil society initiatives, and not just limit ourselves to political projects (perceiving Good Living only and from the State). Recognizing the systemic nature of socio-environmental

problems and the responses generated by the struggles experienced by actors in the territory are fundamental to achieving local and global sustainability.

However, when we talk about systemic character, we are dialoguing with Solon (2019) and emphasizing that we need to accept the unbridled expansion of capitalism and parasitic neoliberalism, which insists on being present. This is the root of the current socio-ecological crisis and impacts not only the future of Latin American societies, but of all humanity. Therefore, by prioritizing the understanding of social innovations as drivers for the promotion of collective Good Living, we seek to value civil society practices as key to success and sustainability over time. This is a transformative action capable of teaching central and local governments to face real problems, instead of perpetuating the eternal search for resilience, as many Eurocentric and even national productions advocate.

According to Taboada et al. (2006), the concept of resilience emerged in physics and engineering, based on the studies of Thomas Young in 1807, and was defined as the ability of a material to receive deformation energy without suffering permanent consequences. In the humanities and social sciences, resilience came to mean the human capacity to overcome adversity. In psychology, it is analyzed as a process of adaptation versus overcoming, and it is essential to understand how individuals deal with the acquired factors and permanent characteristics resulting from these adversities.

It is precisely this understanding – that is, the fact that individuals need to go out of their way to cope with the challenges imposed – that calls into question studies¹² that defend the understanding of resilience as the result of social innovations originating in the territories, especially in Latin America. In general, such research defends urban resilience through ecosystem services and social innovation for the construction of more sustainable cities. However, they do not focus on Eurocentric responsibility in this crisis; they reinforce the idea that resilience will guarantee the maintenance of life in European urban centers, where the welfare state, although in crisis, has existed or still exists, disregarding other social realities.

¹² Like Mcphearson 's et al. , 2016; Silva, Franzato , 2018, to name a few.

In light of this, a question arises: could it be that the relentless search for resilience in this 21st century, through social innovations, does not represent a reconfiguration of the search for modernity that began in the 15th century¹³ ? Could it be that this search will not transfer the responsibility for outlining strategies and innovating to civil society, forcing it to live with the imposed socio-environmental consequences? Both modernity and resilience are fruits of the coloniality of power! Both represent lifestyles that, in their time, societies were/are encouraged to adopt. This reflection is necessary, after all, as pointed out by Quijano (2020), the idea of modernity and evolutionary growth, typical of the notion of progress, had a very high cost for the history of Latin America.

The search for resilience becomes more problematic because we, Latin American societies, have not yet managed to resolve the basics of human rights (education for all, zero hunger, effective agrarian reform, among others). This shows that we cannot be content with seeking resilient strategies to adapt to certain problems. In many situations, what we need is transformation.

A clear example is the issue of drought and access to water, which requires transformation, not adaptation. In times of water crisis, the government and the media often demand that society take measures to save water on a daily basis. In fact, we should all do our part. However, the core of the problem in Brazil is the neoliberal policy in rural areas focused on agribusiness, which exploits the environment, contaminates water resources and causes anthropogenic changes that intensify droughts and dry spells (Santo, 2023). Even in this scenario, the responsibility falls on society, which needs to develop “resilient” practices to deal with water scarcity, when, in fact, we should face the problem in a systemic way, that is, “deepening our understanding of all overexploitation, inequality, exhaustion of nature’s limits and the consequences of the process of coloniality of power” (Sólon, 2019, p. 13), in order to identify

¹³ For Dussel (1993), modernity is constructed from colonial intrusions, as a theoretical construction to justify colonization and violence against colonized peoples, in addition to placing Europe as the center of civilization. Therefore, for decolonialists, modernity begins with colonial intrusions in the 15th century. In current discussions, it begins in the 18th century, resulting from the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the Enlightenment. We follow Dussel's view.

social innovations already undertaken in the territories, especially those with potential for expansion

Such initiatives should be prioritized by the government, legitimized through public policies and even managed in a shared manner (governance). Thus, figure 4 proposes a possible operationalization of Buen Vivir based on social innovations in the territory.

Figure 04: Summary of the operationalization of Good Living based on social innovation

- **Breaking the reductive, simplifying and disjunctive nature of our knowledge production:** the complexity of social reality demands a transdisciplinary perspective to break the isolations that limit the effectiveness of political, social, cultural and environmental constructions.
- **Overcoming statism:** prioritizing depatriarchalization, real democracy, international complementarity and the full cultural diversity of Latin American societies.
- **Demand State participation:** even if the responses come from civil society, it is essential to demand State participation, at the very least: financing of actions; visibility of struggles; guarantee of political participation; and transformation of successful civil society practices into effective public policies, ensuring social and human rights and fair and sustainable economic development.
- **Prioritize community creations and innovations:** overcoming statism requires recovering history and decolonizing our territory. This process strengthens collective memory, systematizes the trajectory of groups and highlights discourses, practices and social representations.
- **Translate the Andean proposal for Good Living to the urban context of all of Latin America:** recognize the collective action of actors in the territory, as carried out by the OBISF team, understanding how they articulate and face public problems. However, this analysis should not be based on resilience, but on the struggle for transformation (or obstacles) of a given cause, avoiding transpositions and Eurocentric mimetic models.
- **Tracking and reconnecting the perspective of the network (ecosystem) of social innovations:** an effective ecosystem depends on the capacity for connection and interaction between people, creating solutions for the gaps left by development projects. The collective construction of tools and strategies strengthens subsistence and the search for a fuller life, thus ensuring a collective Good Life.
- **Mapping the network of actors:** highlighting the plurality of actors and not just the role of the State (NGOs, collectives, universities, social entrepreneurs, companies, public sector and others), highlighting challenges and impacts, many of which still remain invisible to the State, reinforcing the importance of governance.
- **Not defining Good Living and social innovation a priori:** understand, through fieldwork (ethnographic, oral history, participant observation, etc.), how the actors themselves define a full life and how social innovations emerge from their practices, identifying facilitators and obstacles to this process.

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

In view of the above, it is possible to state that, in order to achieve Good Living, a social transformation of the whole is necessary, since there will be no localized Good Living, restricted to certain groups. This transformation occurs through the action of actors who continually (re)create social innovations in the territory – spaces that accommodate multiple coexistences, driven by different motivations, conflicts, historical moments and diverse interests. These territories are, therefore, fertile environments for the collective construction of Good Living (the search for a sustainable life) and social innovation (the effective exercise of democracy).

This process requires identification, monitoring and observations – actions that have been carried out by Obisfron.

5. APPLICATION OF THE PROPOSED ANALYTICAL APPROACH BETWEEN GOOD LIVING AND SOCIAL INNOVATION: THE CASE OF OBISFRON

In order to apply the theoretical and methodological conclusions previously discussed, the current research focuses on Obisfron, a social technology that studies and presents the EIS of the municipalities of Corumbá and Ladário (Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil) and Puerto Quijarro and Puerto Suárez (Santa Cruz, Bolivia). The choice of these four border municipalities is due to the territoriality of the region, marked by intense population, commercial and cultural flow, in addition to the sharing of several problematic situations, such as hunger, poverty, environmental and health crises. In the first Social Innovation Initiatives (ISS) identified, it became clear that their target audience is not distinguished by nationality, making it impossible to exclude any municipality.

The EIS on the Brazil-Bolivia border seeks to understand the emergence of public problems, identify respectful practices, and highlight the search for harmony, balance, and affection among diverse interconnected forms of life. Thus, the Obisfron methodology was developed in four phases: the first three phases are based on the Florianópolis Social Innovation Observatory, and the fourth consists of analyzing the data obtained from the synthesis between Good

Living and social innovation (figure 4). The results of each phase are presented below.

5.1 Identification of the main public problems

The first stage of the OBISF methodology consists of identifying the public problems of the territory, that is, the main problematic situations that affect a group of actors and the strategies adopted to address them or make them visible. This occurs through the recognition of the practices of various actors (public, private and civil society) linked to the problem.

As organizations were identified, an analysis of their practices was carried out in light of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), defined by the United Nations (2023) as global challenges for development. The result of this process revealed the eight main public problems on the Brazil-Bolivia border (Figure 5). Secondary data were then collected and analyzed to support the problem, as well as images provided by the ISS to contextualize and dimension the public problem in question¹⁴.

¹⁴ To acknowledge this discussion in depth cf. <https://obisfron.com.br/problemas-publicos/>

Figure 05: Public Problems on the Brazil-Bolivia Border



Source: Obisfron (2023).

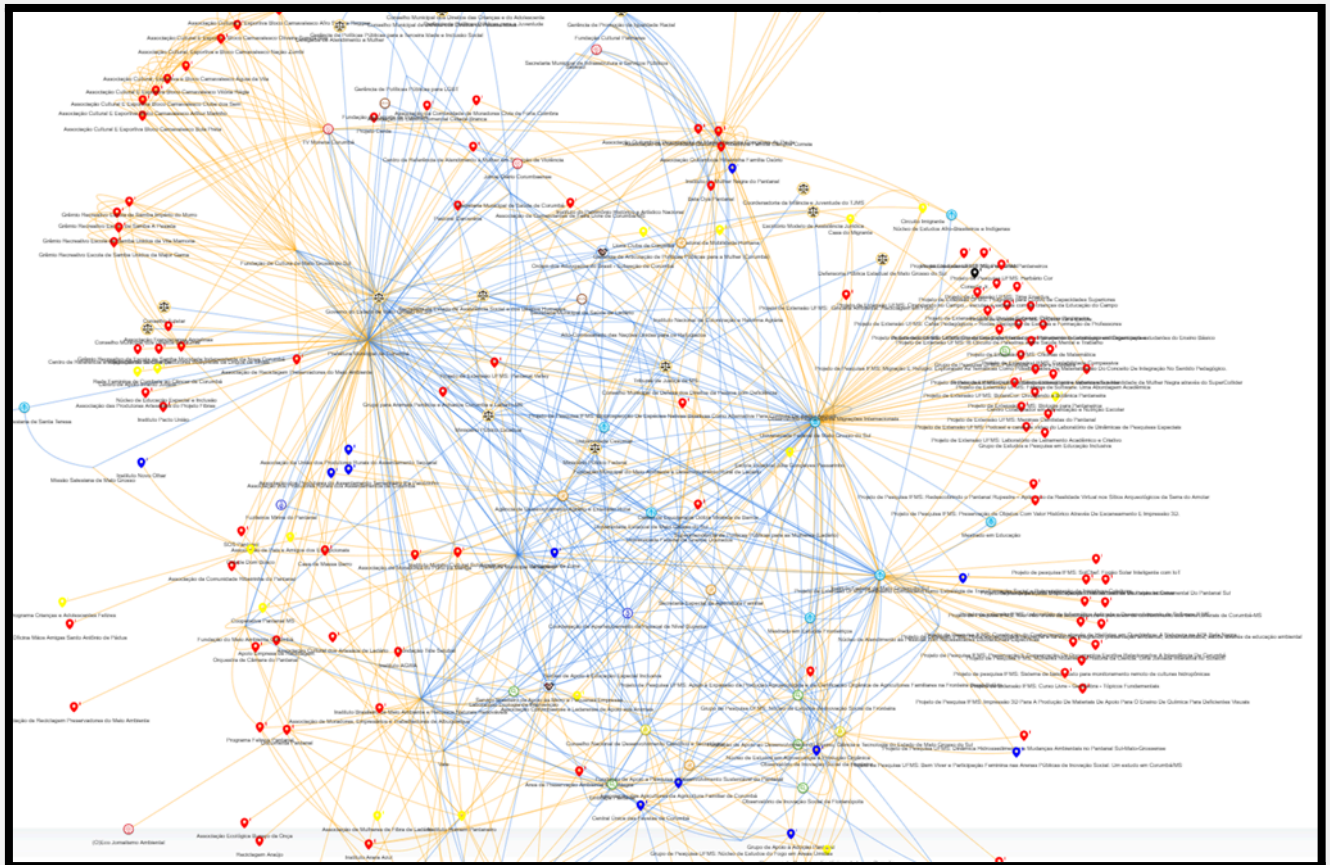
One example is the Central Única das Favelas in Corumbá (Cufa-Corumbá). Many have questioned its existence, since the city does not have favelas in the widely known model, such as those in Rio de Janeiro. However, there are eight favelas on flat land in Corumbá, where access to rights and public services is precarious or non-existent. Thus, one of the main results of this phase was to give visibility to public problems, in this case, “social and racial vulnerability and gender equality” and “eradication of poverty”, and the ISS that promote actions in the territory. Cufa, for example, develops actions such as the distribution of basic food baskets and cooking gas, lectures on health and domestic violence, recreational activities and other actions that allow the problem to be made visible. After all, as Cefai (2017) teaches us, bringing the problem out of the shadows, publicizing it, expanding the repertoire and making it recognized is to seek commitment from public authorities and contribute to addressing the social fissures in the territory.

5.2 Track and reconnect the public issues articulation network (ecosystem)

When we talk about cultivating Good Living through social innovations, we are referring to the fact that if we analyze today's global society, we will see how far we are from achieving a full, inclusive and sustainable Good Living for all. However, it is essential to value and closely examine the actions of actors at the micro level, since it is at this level that we identify local forms of governance, power networks, close and distant social interactions and the state apparatus. Local actions reflect global social, economic, cultural and environmental issues. The objective of this second phase is to track and reconnect the interactions between actors in order to understand the complexity of the public problem.

After identifying the main public problems (phase 1), it becomes clear who the ISSs are that are active in the territory (Figure 6). ISSs are considered to be all plural organizations of individuals, groups, associations, cooperatives, social movements, research and extension projects, politicians, companies and other initiatives that share a collective identity and promote actions in the territory. Examples include the ISS Ecologia em Ação, which develops projects and public policies for the environmental conservation of the Pantanal and the Rio da Prata Basin (public problem: Environmental Degradation), and the Instituto Moinho Cultural Sul-Americano, whose objective is to reduce the vulnerability of children and adolescents on the border, promoting access to cultural goods and technological knowledge (public problems: Education and Culture; Social, Racial Vulnerability and Gender Equality).

Figure 06: Part of the EIS of the Brazil-Bolivia border



Source: Obisfron (2023).

In addition to the ISS, the Support Initiatives (SI) also stand out, that is, public and private organizations that support and/or finance the ISS. One example is Vetorial Mineração, a mining and steel industry in Corumbá that supports, among others, the ISS Primatas do Urucum, dedicated to monitoring and preserving the primates of the Urucum hill (public problem: Environmental Degradation).

The interactions presented in Figure 3 were obtained through interviews with the ISS and SIs, conducted by the Obisfron team, or from secondary data. The blue lines indicate interactions reported by the SIs, while the yellow lines represent interactions mentioned by the ISSs. As of December, 2024, Obisfron has registered 200 ISSs, of which 120 have already been observed, that is, they have been visited by the Obisfron team and had their data validated in the interview. Another 80 have been mapped, indicating that the team already has enough information to allow their inclusion in the platform, but they will still be

interviewed. As for the SIs, 97 organizations were identified, mainly from the public sector.

The main cause identified among the 200 ISS is assistance to women, the focus of 25 organizations that seek to combat social and racial vulnerability and gender equality through job and income generation strategies. These initiatives aim to guarantee the subsistence and financial autonomy of border women, allowing them to break cycles of violence.

Other relevant causes include: Conservation and preservation of the Pantanal and Cerrado (10 ISS); Culture and art (24 ISS, with emphasis on samba schools and São João festival groups); Rights of immigrants and refugees (6 ISS); Agroecology, organic production and agrarian reform (10 ISS). In addition to these, initiatives focused on the rights of children and adolescents, the elderly, people with specific educational needs, the homeless population and racial equality stand out.

By identifying the ISS and IS, it is possible to reconnect their connections. On the website, users can click and drag to view interactions. “This mapping contributes to democratic strengthening, making visible the struggle of several communities that often do not receive adequate support from the State” (Obisfron, 2023).

It is in local singularities that we perceive elements of a universal truth and the emergence of social life. In this case, it is essential to understand the participation of the actors and how they co-produce public products, goods and services. This is how we can validate that the proposal for Good Living escapes statism, after all, the actors of public action are increasingly numerous. The challenge is enormous however, we have to validate the seeds planted (recognize and enhance the community). If we look only at the State, the answer is that we do not have Good Living, and we never will. The next step involves immersion in public arenas to broaden this understanding.

5.3 Enter public arenas to prioritize actions and innovations built by communities

Santo et al. *Cultivating Good Living through Social Innovation: the experience of the Frontier Social Innovation Observatory*

This stage requires fieldwork to gain an in-depth understanding of the reality, environment and communities studied. After all, social innovation is not just about solving social problems, but about transforming social practices by introducing new ways of thinking and acting (Cajaiba -Santana, 2014).

Until March/2024, Obisfron will conduct research in four public arenas: Women (Figure 7), School Meals, Reception and Welcome to Immigrants and Refugees, and Racial Equality (Anti-Racist Education and Rights of Quilombola Communities)¹⁵.

Figure 07: Women's Public Arena



Source: Obisfron (2023).

The identification of arenas occurs based on the researchers' lines of research. This stage is the most in-depth moment of the investigation, requiring constant visits to the communities to understand the unfolding of actions around a public problem.

This incursion allows us to identify the public scenes (Cefaï, 2007), that is, the configuration of the actors involved, the causes faced, the unfolding of

¹⁵ See <https://obisfron.com.br/arenas-publicas/>

Santo et al. *Cultivating Good Living through Social Innovation: the experience of the Frontier Social Innovation Observatory*

actions over time, power struggles, conflicts and representations (who speaks and acts on whose behalf), in addition to the themes discussed, denounced, claimed and made invisible. It is also possible to evaluate the role of public authorities (federal, state and municipal) through ongoing actions, laws and policies aimed at the problem studied.

The wealth of details recovered and systematized in public arenas¹⁶ highlights the challenge communities face in making their causes visible and co-producing social innovations in a border territory, where democracy is often confused with national security, relegating its population to the margins of basic rights. Thus, recovering public scenes and recognizing collective action are fundamental steps to understanding how transformative political actions and practices emerge.

However, politics must be understood as Good Living together in the public space, building the collective as opposed to individualism. As Castoriadis (1992, p. 145) states, it is “a project of autonomy - a reflected and lucid collective activity aimed at the global institution of society as such. In other words, politics concerns everything in society that is participatory and shareable”.

Therefore, the role of the State must be to organize public life, protecting the common interest, and not that of privileged minorities. It is up to the State to guarantee the foundations of democracy, ensuring freedom and effective mechanisms for participation, so that people can exercise their political and civil rights. This need is even more urgent in Latin America, where the democratic trajectory has been marked by violence, social struggles, instability and political coups.

Since the State has not guaranteed collective well-being¹⁷, it is essential to enter the public arenas and closely examine the collective practices of social actors. The goal is to understand how they resist the reduction of public resources and face increasingly interconnected challenges in their daily lives. In

¹⁶ This can be verified in specific works produced by the Obisfron team . Cf. Santo, Voks (2021b) Mendes (2023), Santo (2023), Voks et al. (2023), Veiga et al. (2024).

¹⁷ See the increase in poverty (209 million people) and extreme poverty (22 million people), which, according to the UN (2021), reached levels in 2020 that have not been seen in the last 12 and 20 years. See <https://bit.ly/2Ymd3nd>

this way, it is possible to identify whether these actions constitute social innovations capable of generating lasting changes. This is one of the main purposes of the study of EIS on the Brazil-Bolivia border: to strengthen democracy by recognizing and analyzing actions at the micro level, highlighting how communities find solutions, even if increasingly difficult and distant, to face public problems.

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on a methodical review of the literature, we seek to present a proposal for operationalizing Buen Vivir beyond state actions, focusing on the identification and analysis of social innovations. By exploring the gaps found, we promote a dialogue between Buen Vivir and pragmatic social innovation, applying this approach to Obisfron's research to rethink ways of life based on a Latin American reality.

Social reality, the setting for the categories discussed here, and human beings, both product and producer of these categories, are complex instances, resulting from the interaction of multiple factors and elements that go beyond the domain of a single science. Reconnecting multiple knowledge and scientific fields, dialoguing with different approaches that promote a transformative interaction between science and society, and breaking with disciplinary isolations: this is the contribution of complexity to thinking about the articulation of Good Living with social innovation.

In Latin American societies, it is urgent to adopt a decolonial perspective that escapes the incessant search for modernity and the recent and recurring emphasis on resilience. This perspective allows not only to analyze problems and public policies based on the peculiarities resulting from colonial intrusions, but also to transform political activity into a collective and autonomous practice focused on the common good.

Given the panorama outlined and the work of Obisfron, we emphasize that social innovation emerges from EIS, the result of the articulation of multiple actors who develop creative actions to make visible and address public problems. Recovering this trajectory, according to the approach of pragmatist

social innovations, is urgent to develop more inclusive and effective public policies, breaking with unjust power structures that still dominate Abya Yala.

To this end, it is necessary to abandon the belief that EIS are concentrated only in the South and Southeast regions of Brazil (Silveira, et al., 2022) and that there are few structured initiatives to study them. Reinforcing this discourse perpetuates coloniality within the territory itself! Thus, this article also contributes to the dissemination of the methodology developed by the team at the Florianópolis Social Innovation Observatory, which has driven both social transformation in the region in which it operates and the construction of its own approach to social innovation. This methodology, the basis of Obisfron 's work, can be replicated in other territories, since the study of social innovation is linked to territorial registration, and not to a specific provider hub. This is one of the paths that this work encourages.

In the case of Obisfron, analyzing social innovations from the perspective of Good Living (Table 3) proved to be more pertinent because it is located in a border and precarious territory, in addition to defending the urgency of a decolonial approach to the studies of social innovation and management. However, this requires abandoning utopias and projects that are fixed on the plane of becoming, since the multiple crises that plague global society put the future of humanity at risk.

The dialogue proposed here, if properly explored, allows for the operationalization of Buen Vivir and brings it closer to social innovation in Latin American realities, making this approach more appropriate to the experiences and experiences of precarious social actors. Furthermore, it makes it possible to reflect on the peculiarities of social imaginaries forged from colonial processes, promoting a necessary movement of decolonization.

Finally, we emphasize that this is not a proposal to be replicated as a fixed model, but rather an approach that prioritizes the identification of actors' practices and their interconnections (EIS). This is a possible response to the gaps identified, but we recognize that other paths are possible. Thus, we encourage further research on EIS and dialogues between Good Living and social innovation to be carried out, especially with regard to the practices of

Santo et al. *Cultivating Good Living through Social Innovation: the experience of the Frontier Social Innovation Observatory*

specific groups and the interface between community organizations and the institutional sphere, to answer possible questions raised by this study.

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