

ALLI KAWSAY: EVALUACIÓN DEL OBJETIVO 4, LITERAL A. DE LA LEY ORGÁNICA DE ECONOMÍA POPULAR Y SOLIDARIA Y SUS IMPACTOS EN LA COMUNIDAD SANTA BARBARA

ALLI KAWSAY: EVALUATION OF OBJECTIVE 4, PARAGRAPH A. OF THE ORGANIC LAW ON POPULAR AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SANTA BARBARA COMMUNITY

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RESUMEN: El presente trabajo de investigación estudia la práctica del Objetivo 4, letra a) de la Ley Orgánica de Economía Popular y Solidaria (LOEPS) en la comunidad de Santa Bárbara, cantón Cotacachi, Ecuador, desde el punto de vista de la cosmovisión del *Alli Kawsay* o Buen Vivir. La finalidad esencial es escudriñar la relación que hay entre el ideario jurídico estatal y la praxis socioeconómica territorial, respecto de fenómenos tales como el asociacionismo juvenil o la disolución del tejido social. La metodología utilizada es cualitativa, de carácter descriptivo-explicativo, mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas a la muestra de 28 comuneros y la observación activa en los entornos de trabajo colectivo. Los resultados de esta búsqueda evidencian una notable asimetría: mientras existe un conocimiento universal del *Alli Kawsay* (100%), un 85,2% desconoce la LOEPS, y ello se traduce en distanciamiento entre la política pública estatal y la práctica territorial. A la que, a pesar de ese analfabetismo jurídico institucional, la comunidad presenta una resiliencia basada en la autosuficiencia y el cuidado de la vida (92,9%), manteniendo instituciones ancestrales como la *minka* y la reciprocidad (78,6%). Por otro lado, la falta de conexión con lo normativo y la migración hacia los espacios urbanos representan riesgos para la transmisión intergeneracional de conocimientos y la soberanía alimentaria. Se puede concluir que la práctica de un Buen Vivir no se encuentra supeditada a la ley formal sino a la acción local y la resistencia cultural. Existe la necesidad de diseñar políticas públicas que sean contextualmente válidas y que trasciendan la legalidad mercantil para fortalecer la autogestión comunitaria mediante procesos de acompañamiento que convaliden los conocimientos situados de las culturas kichwas.

Palabras clave: *Alli kawsay, sostenibilidad, transformación social, economía social y solidaria.*

ABSTRACT: This research study examines the implementation of Objective 4, letter a) of the Organic Law on Popular and Solidarity Economy (LOEPS) in the community of Santa

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Bárbara, Cotacachi canton, Ecuador, from the perspective of the *Alli Kawsay* or Good Living worldview. The main purpose is to examine the relationship between the state's legal ideology and territorial socioeconomic practice with regard to phenomena such as youth associations and the dissolution of the social fabric. The methodology used is qualitative, descriptive-explanatory, through semi-structured interviews with a sample of 28 community members and active observation in collective work environments. The results of this research reveal a notable asymmetry: while there is universal knowledge of *Alli Kawsay* (100%), 85.2% are unaware of the LOEPS, and this translates into a gap between state public policy and territorial practice. Despite this institutional legal illiteracy, the community shows resilience based on self-sufficiency and care for life (92.9%), maintaining ancestral institutions such as *minka* and reciprocity (78.6%). On the other hand, the lack of connection with regulations and migration to urban areas pose risks to the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and food sovereignty. It can be concluded that the practice of Good Living is not subject to formal law but to local action and cultural resistance. There is a need to design public policies that are contextually valid and transcend commercial legality in order to strengthen community self-management through support processes that validate the situated knowledge of Kichwa cultures.

Keywords: *Alli kawsay, sustainability, social transformation, social and solidarity economy.*

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INTRODUCTION

In these days of civilizational, environmental, and economic crisis, the debate on the concept of development has shifted from inflationary conceptions centered on linear economic growth to alternative ones linked to an ancestral worldview. At the global level, this search for sustainability has driven, for example, concepts such as the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) to become systemic responses to the exclusion of the formal market and the degradation of ecosystems (1). In the Andean region, the focal point of this evolution is the *Alli Kawsay* or *Sumak Kawsay* (Good Living), an ontological category that establishes multidimensional harmony between human beings, the community, and nature, and that imposes limits on the advance of material accumulation as the sole indicator of progress (2).

For its part, Ecuador, by constitutionalizing Good Living in 2008, established a legal mandate. Unprecedented, to define the economic system as social and solidarity-based. In this way, the Organic Law on Popular and Solidarity Economy (LOEPS) was also promulgated in 2011 within this normative framework (3). The purpose of the law, particularly in relation to its Objective 4, paragraph a, seeks to open, I would say, the "production process, the consumption process, and the exchange process of goods and services that satisfy needs before recognizing profit" (4). In any case, contemporary academic literature warns of the existence of an "empty institutionalization" of Good

Living, that is, where state rhetoric or technical regulations have little relation to practice in indigenous territories (2), (5).

Theoretical and referential bases. The conceptual base to which this research appeals is identified with a series of three anthropological pillars of Andean reality, and with social economic theory:

1. The *Alli Kawsay* as a praxis of life: it is not only a rather abstract philosophical concept; it is a form of community governance that manifests the *minka* (collective work), or the *randi-randi* (reciprocity). Authors consider that Good Living is a type of governance that makes possible the reproduction of life as a form of opposition to modern individuality (5).

2. Popular and Solidarity Economy (PSE): Not as a marginal economy, but as an organization of processes oriented toward the satisfaction of needs. What the LOEPS finds as a need to regulate these processes, a previous study indicates that the LOEPS tends to impose bureaucratic structures that can strangle organic communal logic (6).

3. Sustainability and worldview: The relationship with nature from communities such as those of Cotacachi is not only utilitarian; respect for “Pacha Mama” is a transversal axis that determines what is produced and how exchange is carried out, an adequate practice of biocentric sustainability (7), (8).

In the locality of Santa Bárbara, Cotacachi canton, the dilemma between norm and reality is clearly observed. Being a community that maintains a cabildo structure and that has achieved a strengthening of its own Kichwa identity, this binomial is threatened by the departure of young people taking on the challenge of seeking new opportunities in other urban centers and the failure to have reterritorialized commonly known public policy (9). The main issue underlying this community is that the mechanisms offered by the LOEPS become the design of the environment of a formal market economy, alien to the dynamics of self-management and food sovereignty that the same Santa Bárbara community promotes.

The justification of this study is social, by reason of the urgency of safeguarding the community fabric and the transmission of knowledge; legal, for the purpose of contrasting the real efficacy of the LOEPS exercised in territories of peoples and nationalities; and territorial, providing situated data on the Andean Zone of Cotacachi (10). Thus, the general objective of this research shares the evaluation of the fulfillment of Objective 4, paragraph a) of the LOEPS, essentially and the determination of its real impacts on the socioeconomic and cultural sustainability of the Santa Bárbara community during the period 2022-2025.

Table 1. Principles of *Alli Kawsay* versus the Principles of the LOEPS

Principle of <i>Alli Kawsay</i> (Philosophical)	Principle of the LOEPS (Legal)	Comments on Synergy or Discrepancy
Harmony with Nature and the Social Being	Social and environmental responsibility	Synergy. Both discuss a “balance,” although the LOEPS frames it from the sphere of responsibility, not from the holistic notion of nature as a subject of rights.

Reciprocity and Redistribution	Equitable and solidary distribution of surpluses; Primacy of collective interests over individual ones	Synergy. The law affirms ancestral practices such as the principle of reciprocity (<i>minka</i>) and the redistribution proper to the Andean worldview.
Self-management and Democracy	Self-management; Democratic organization: "one member, one vote"	Synergy. The law guarantees the autonomy and form of governance that communities were already practicing in a customary manner.
Progress not linked to material heritage	Strengthening and dynamization of production, marketing, and financing	Discrepancy. The Alli Kawsay rejects material progress; in contrast, the LOEPS uses language about growth and insertion into the market, which may invert the ideal suspended from the philosophy.

The research tests the fulfillment of Objective 4, paragraph a) of the Organic Law on Popular and Solidarity Economy (LOEPS) in the community of Santa Bárbara, Cotacachi, contrasting it with the *Alli Kawsay* (11,12). Drawing on qualitative research and interviews with 28 community members, it inserts a critique of the opposition between state normative frameworks and the territorial situation: if knowledge of the *Alli Kawsay* is universal (100%), the LOEPS is unknown to 85.2%; it is argued that this community sustains its economy and environmental sustainability (92.9%) through the will to self-manage or ancestral practices such as the *minka* (78.6%), and not through the management of public policy. It is only concluded that the mercantilist language of the law is in contradiction with the integral vision of Good Living, for which reason it is urgent to territorialize the laws in order to mitigate risks such as youth migration and to guarantee that the transmission of knowledge is not interrupted (13).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was founded and sustained on an interpretative paradigm with a qualitative and socio-legal approach, in order to explore the normative content and, in addition, to explore the meanings and perceptions that the citizens of Santa Bárbara give to the *Alli Kawsay* and to the application of the law. The research combined a descriptive level in order to describe the state of Good Living and an explanatory level in order to explain the consequences of the different changes in the forms of a community fabric. Considering its origin, it is field research, inasmuch as the empirical data were obtained from contact with its social actors directly in the territory.

Likewise, an exhaustive review of documents and legal regulations was carried out (including the 2008 Constitution and the Organic Law on Popular and Solidarity Economy (LOEPS)). This analysis was verified with the scientific literature collected on the basis of criteria of technical relevance and currency, in relation to the topics of Social and Solidarity Economy.

The collection of primary information took place through the application of two main techniques:

Semi-structured interviews: They were applied to a sample of 28 informants. The population included young people, adults, and elders of the Santa Bárbara community,

making it possible to elicit the intergenerational perception relative to the fulfillment of Objective 4 of the LOEPS.

Participant observation: The researcher lived with the local actors in the activities and in the mingas. This technique served for the understanding of meanings and emotions that go beyond verbal communication.

Table 2. Methodological components of the research

Component	Technical detail
Approach	Qualitative – interpretative
Population / sample	28 community members of Santa Bárbara (Non-probabilistic sampling)
Techniques	Semi-structured interview and participant observation
Instruments	Interview guide and field diary
Data analysis	Content analysis and descriptive statistics of frequencies (14)

The data recovered in the interviews were systematized for the purpose of identifying response frequencies and percentages of perception in relation to the application of the principles of Good Living. Subsequently, a triangulation of the information was carried out, in which the field findings were crossed with the theoretical principles of the *Alli Kawsay* together with the normative framework of the LOEPS, with the objective of seeing whether there were synergies or differences between them.

RESULTS

The results of the research show us the complex socioeconomic and cultural reality of the Santa Bárbara community in the face of the premises put forward by the Organic Law on Popular and Solidarity Economy (LOEPS). From the triangulation of qualitative and quantitative information we evidence that the operationalization of Objective 4, paragraph a) of the law under study has not achieved territorialization, operating in an asynchronous manner with respect to the community practice of the *Alli Kawsay*.

Cognitive dimension: the distance between the worldview and state regulation. The first analysis is centered on the level of appropriation of the concept by the inhabitants. The ancestral knowledge bequeathed by their grandparents is abysmally different from the technical knowledge that emanates from the legislation in force (15).

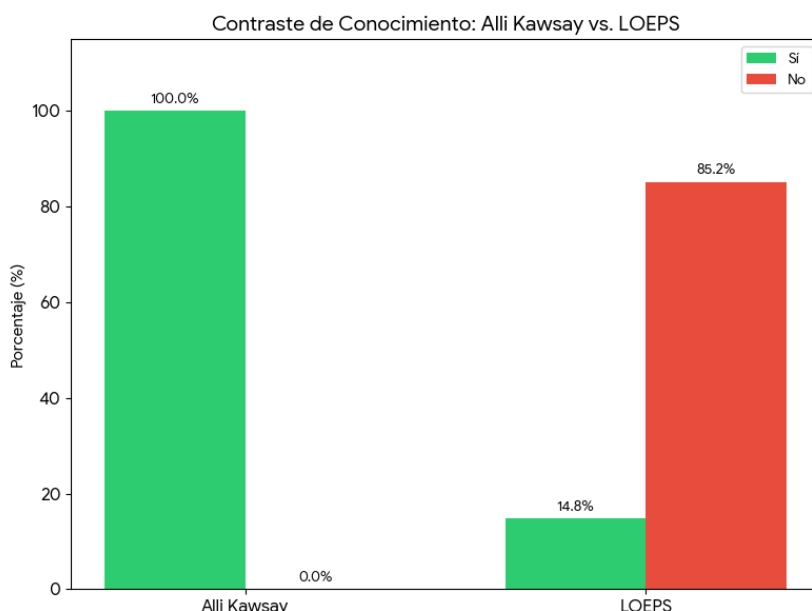
Table 3. Knowledge and Perception of *Alli Kawsay* versus the LOEPS

Evaluation Variable	Affirmative Responses (n=28)	Percentage (%)	Detail and Observations
Knowledge of the <i>Alli Kawsay</i>	28	100%	Universal and lived knowledge of the concept.

Life in accordance with principles (respect, solidarity)	23	82.1%	Perception of majority application of the values of Good Living.
Knowledge of the LOEPS	4	14.8%	High institutional legal illiteracy (85.2%).
Perception of benefit from the law	0	0%	High uncertainty; no respondent affirms a tangible direct benefit.

Full knowledge of the culture of the *Alli Kawsay* rises to a total of 100%, which indicates to us that this knowledge is not a simple theoretical construct external to them, but the guiding thread that articulates identity in Santa Bárbara. In contrast, the lack of knowledge of the LOEPS law, which stands at 85.2%, makes evident a deficiency in the dissemination of public policies, inhibiting the community's access to the mechanisms of financing and marketing that the law guarantees in Objective 4.

Figure 1. Contrast of Knowledge: Alli Kawsay vs. LOEPS



Source: Own elaboration based on study data.

The graphic representation shown in Figure 1 emphasizes the “critical asymmetry” between culture and law. At one extreme the *Alli Kawsay* floods the cognitive framework of the community, while the LOEPS law is rendered invisible. This distance indicates that the “institutionalization of Good Living” in Ecuador is erected as a top-down process that has not been interwoven into the knowledge-power structure of rural communities (16).

Procedural dimension: sustainability of ancestral practice and territory. The second dimension evaluates the degree of validity of indigenous social institutions and their correlation with biocentric sustainability.

Table 4. Validity of traditional practices and environmental awareness

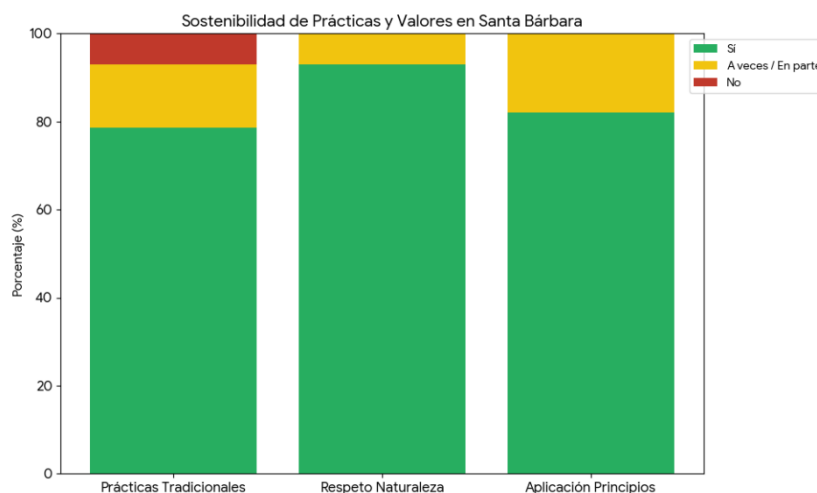
Community practice or value	Affirmative Responses (n)	Percentage (%)	Technical-social interpretation
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Maintenance of the <i>minka</i> and mutual aid	26	78.6%	Robust validity of reciprocity as an economic base.
Respect for nature and local culture	25	92.9%	Commitment to sustainability above material profit.
Work oriented toward the common good	17	59.3%	Moderately high social cohesion, aligned with solidarity.
Perception of positive changes in knowledge	25	89.3%	Optimistic vision regarding the cultural resilience of the community.

The continuity of the *minka* (78.6%) gives us evidence that Santa Bárbara incorporates a system of democratic self-management that is prior and superior to the formalization claimed by the LOEPS. The almost absolute respect for nature (92.9%) indicates that the community does organically fulfill the environmental responsibility required for compliance with legal requirements. However, only 59.3% of respondents perceive that the common good is always prioritized, which signals an incipient tension produced by the irruption of individual logics proper to the external market economy (17).

Figure 2. Sustainability of practices and values in Santa Bárbara



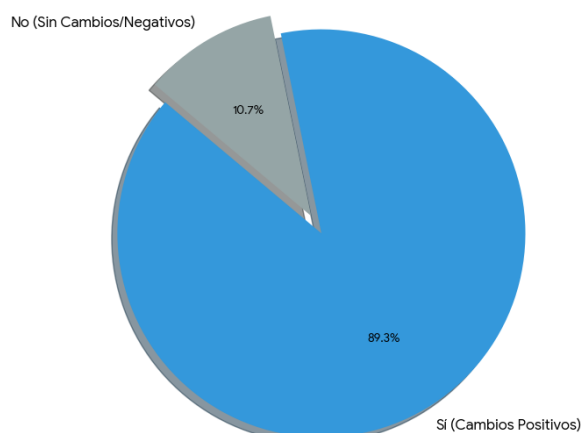
Source: Own elaboration based on study data.

Figure 2, of the stacked bar chart, reflects that sustainability in Santa Bárbara does not depend on state incentives, but arises from the strength of its cultural values. The prevalence of “yes” regarding respect for nature and the performance of traditional practices indicates a community that, in practice, is a collective not only of the popular economy, but of a popular and solidarity economy that is extremely effective in the reproduction of life, even if it is not so in the sense of capital accumulation (18).

Finally, the perception of transformation and generational challenge and the community’s vision of the future in the face of external threats were analyzed.

Figure 3. Perception of positive changes in unity and knowledge

Percepción de Cambios Positivos en la Unidad y Saberes



Source: Own elaboration based on study data.

Figure 3 of sectors shows a notable optimism regarding the strengthening of the social structure in the absence of the transmission of knowledge, 89.3%. The warning of the result must be made in the face of the situation of youth migration. The interviews evidence that, despite the attempt to conserve unity, the transfer of young people toward urban centers causes a rupture of the everyday exercise of the *Alli Kawsay*, thereby generating a vacuum that the regulations in force do not manage to mitigate, being mercantilist and centered. This analysis of results reaches the point of corroborating that the real exercise of Good Living is not in the laws, but in the resilience and in the local action of living and appropriating the *Alli Kawsay* in the territory.

DISCUSSION

The gap between the plurinational State and normative efficacy. The finding of 100% knowledge of the *Alli Kawsay* versus a scant 14.8% knowledge of the LOEPS makes evident what Luzuriaga Muñoz and Ruiz Castillo (3) describe as the distance between what was established with a plurinational regulation and the existence of a “monocultural State” camouflaged as plurinational. This asymmetry accounts for the fact that, although Good Living has been constitutionalized, its technical implementation carried out through the LOEPS has not managed to permeate the knowledge-power structure of rural communities. As Acosta (1) defends, the institutionalization of Good Living has run the risk of emptying that concept of emancipatory content in order to transform Good Living into an instrumental tool of administrative management that communities such as Santa Bárbara perceive as distant or non-existent.

Ontology of care versus market logic. The results indicate to us that 92.9% of the community members place consideration toward nature and local culture above economic benefit. This datum seems to us of the utmost importance when we contrast it with Objective 4, paragraph a) of the LOEPS, which speaks to us of “mercantile dynamization” and of “marketing” (4). At the philosophical level, there is still a

discrepancy: the law seeks to insert the actors into the market while the community of Santa Bárbara, on the contrary, preaches an “economy of care and of life.” Authors such as Inuca Lechón (5) and Dávalos (10) affirm that this resistance to being totally linked to the exchange economy is what makes it possible to maintain Kichwa identity; this implies that the LOEPS presents a productivist bias that hides the non-monetary exchange practices and of reciprocity, which are those that allow sustainability to live in the territory.

Erosion of the social fabric and the issue of migration. Although 78.6% of workshop participants maintain that the *minka* is sustained, the perception of work for the common good falls to 59.3%, and this downward spike coincides with the article by Flores Endara et al. (7), (19) on the context of the communities of Cotacachi in the face of globalization. Youth migration, a disruptive factor recognized in the interviews, occasions what we call a “flight of knowledge” that the LOEPS does not contemplate (it points only to the formalization of productive associations) (20). In some way the law leaves aside the social reproduction of the community, given that if the young people are not going to leave the place by force “inheriting” the practice of the *minka*, in the end the structure of the Popular and Solidarity Economy in the community of Santa Bárbara may fall and become a structure of individualist subsistence distant from the *Alli Kawsay* (21).

For which reason it is in the last instance also a synthesis of community resilience. In conclusion, the discussion would lead one to think that a “resilience of fact” in Santa Bárbara contrasts with an “omission of law,” that is, that the community does fulfill a series of principles of solidarity and environmental respect not by the force of public policy but by a cultural heritage. Said process, which for Quijano (22) forms part of the coloniality of power, once the laws are elaborated from an urban centrality, ignoring the rhythms and needs of the indigenous periphery, the “dynamization” that the LOEPS proposes constitutes, in practical terms, a category that is absent and that leaves the community in the possibility of reactivating its own autonomy on the basis of self-management, making of the *Alli Kawsay* a mechanism of resistance in the face of a normative framework that does not finish assimilating and understanding them.

CONCLUSIONS

We arrive at the conclusion that the inoperativeness of the regulation in the face of cultural identity calls attention to the existence of a critical disconnection between the LOEPS and the community of Santa Bárbara, evidenced by an 85.2% lack of knowledge of the law versus a 100% appropriation of the *Alli Kawsay*. Objective 4, paragraph a), which attempts to activate production and marketing, has not been able to be territorialized and has become a nominal legal framework, alien to the dynamics of communication and organization of the Kichwa peoples.

With respect to the resilience of ancestral self-management it is found that Good Living in the community does not depend on the state impulse, but depends on the validity of institutions such as the *minka* and mutual aid (78.6%), as well as on the strong commitment to exercise respect toward nature (92.9%). The community connects an “economy of life” sustained in reciprocity and self-management and organically fills the

principles of solidarity that the law attempts to formalize, but according to its own rhythms and scales of development.

The vulnerability also in the face of the generational gap is, at the least, that the sustainability of the *Alli Kawsay* faces a structural threat, for youth migration toward urban centers tends to break the transmission of knowledge and to weaken the collective networks and of living together, although there exists a dose of optimism due to the strength of social strengthening (89.3%); the lack of public policies that articulate economic development with territorial rootedness makes the community vulnerable before the logics of individuality that go on deforming community life and Good Living.

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