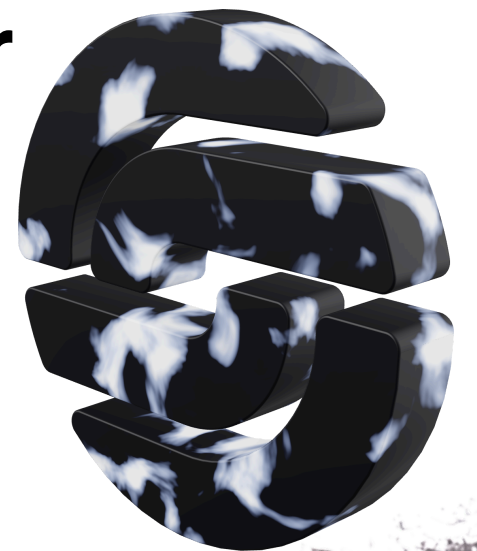




# **SARVODAYA: The Uplift of All**

**and Other Ideologies for  
Human Flourishing**

April 2026



# Traveler's Notes

## About:

Think of ideologies as streams flowing into a river that when turgid and rushing, can effortlessly bear away the loaded boats of our social impact work. When the river is low, it leaves them at risk of foundering on the banks. **In this piece we examine twelve ideologies from various cultures and thought traditions that give intellectual and moral heft to the project of human flourishing.** To highlight lesser known ideologies, major religions, and the framework of human rights—itsself an ideology\*—have been excluded from this list.

While the application of these ideologies could be endless, we focus here on how they support human wellbeing, creativity, and expression as a synchrony between individual and societal flourishing.

\*Moyn, Samuel. *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History*. Harvard University Press, 2010.

\*Moyn, Samuel. *Not Enough: Human Rights in an Unequal World*. Harvard University Press, 2018.

\*Mutua, Makau. "Savages, Victims, and Saviors: The Metaphor of Human Rights." *Harvard International Law Journal* 42, no. 1 (2001): 201–245.

# Traveler's Notes, cont.

## How to Use:

You are a traveler, able, through the superhighways of your imagination, to journey through time and space to communities or societies where such ideologies are the operating system of life. Perhaps you start in present societies, within a world currently in the throes of a technological revolution, before traveling back further in time. **Wherever you go, you will find certain aspects of these societies remarkable. You will begin to reflect on what aspects could be adopted into your social impact work back home.**

### Some examples on how these can be adopted into your work:

- More clarity on the objectives of AI integration and which technologies to prioritize
- How to design metrics that seem less like KPIs (key performance indicators) and more like exclamation points in an ongoing dialogue
- How to integrate culture, self expression, and creativity as desired outcomes in program design

# Traveler's Notes, cont.

## Interpreting Ideologies:

While as a collection, these ideologies underscore the concept of human flourishing as universal and incontrovertible, **all ideologies must be critically examined.** Like metaphors, **they are lenses that can both widen and limit our understanding of the world.** We recommend a kind of ideological bricolage,\* which, in addition to critical reflection on any ideology, brings together multiple ideologies as a more holistic set of mental constructs.

\*Bricolage refers to the practice of creatively recombining whatever resources are already at hand—tools, relationships, data, community assets, or informal practices—to advance an organization's goals.



## BUEN VIVIR

# Living Well, Not Living More

**(Andean Indigenous traditions, Ecuador & Bolivia)**

### **What it is:**

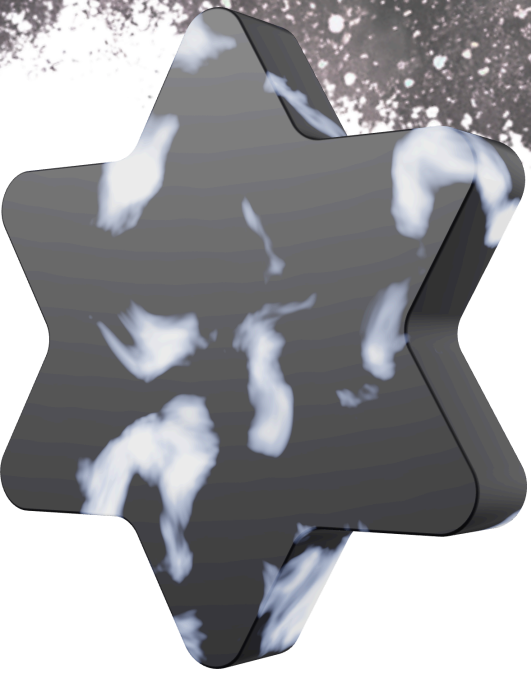
Buen Vivir is the idea of living well in harmony with community and nature rather than pursuing endless growth. Originating in Quechua and other Andean Indigenous worldviews, it has been incorporated into the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia, shaping rights-of-nature laws and alternative development models.

### **What feels remarkable:**

There is no urgency to outgrow limits. Prosperity feels quieter, less extractive, and grounded in balance rather than expansion.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Redefining success to include **what is preserved**, not just produced.
- Integrating **ecological limits** into innovation design.
- Supporting **place-based solutions** rather than defaulting to scale.



# EUDAIMONIA

## The Art of Living Fully

**(Ancient Greece)**

### **What it is:**

Eudaimonia is the idea that human flourishing comes from living with purpose, virtue, and active participation in society. Rooted in Aristotelian philosophy in Ancient Greece, it now underpins modern well-being frameworks, including positive psychology and human-centered policy design.

### **What feels remarkable:**

Flourishing is treated as something people actively cultivate. Meaning and purpose are seen as essential, not optional.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Designing programs that support **purpose and well-being**, not just income.
- Integrating **arts, reflection, and civic life** into impact strategies.
- Measuring success through **quality of life and individual contributions**.



# CREATIVE JUSTICE & CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

## Expression as a Right

**(Contemporary global movements)**

### **What it is:**

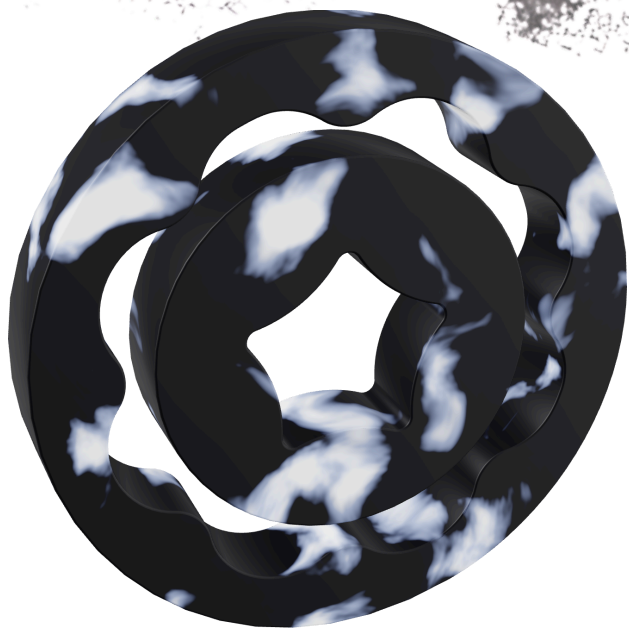
Creative justice and cultural democracy are frameworks that assert everyone's right not only to access culture but to actively create and shape it. Emerging from late 20th century movements such as community arts, participatory arts, and cultural rights advocacy, and evolving in the 21st century through movements like creative placemaking, and decolonizing culture, they challenge the concentration of cultural power in elite institutions. These frameworks have gained worldwide traction in public policy and practice.

### **What feels remarkable:**

The traveler notices that creativity is not reserved for trained experts or elite institutions. Ordinary people are actively shaping culture, telling their own stories, and influencing how communities see themselves.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Treating **creative expression as a core right**, not a peripheral activity.
- Investing in **community-led storytelling and cultural production**.
- Redistributing power over **who creates, curates, and funds culture**.



# CONFUCIAN REN

## Cultivating Harmony Through Humaneness

**(East Asia)**

### **What it is:**

Confucian thought emphasizes humaneness, moral cultivation, and responsible relationships within society. Originating in ancient China, it continues to shape education systems, governance approaches, and cultural norms across East Asia.

### **What feels remarkable:**

There is a quiet choreography to social life. Trust is built through consistent actions rather than declarations.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Investing in **ethical leadership**, not just technical skills.
- Designing systems with **clear roles and mutual accountability**.
- Valuing **trust and continuity** as part of innovation.



# MINO-BIMAADIZIWIN

## Walking the Path of a Good Life

**(Indigenous North America)**

### **What it is:**

Mino-Bimaadiziwin is the idea of living a good life in balance with oneself, community, nature, and spirit. It originates among the Anishinaabe peoples of the Great Lakes region and today informs Indigenous-led education, health, and governance frameworks that center cultural continuity and holistic well-being.

### **What feels remarkable:**

Well-being is understood as a journey, not a destination. The traveler notices how spiritual, social, and ecological balance are treated as inseparable parts of a good life.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Designing programs that support holistic well-being, including **cultural and spiritual dimensions**.
- Embedding values of **respect, reciprocity, and responsibility** into implementation.
- Framing **impact as a continuous process of balance**, not a fixed outcome.



# GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

## Measuring What Truly Matters

**(Bhutan)**

### **What it is:**

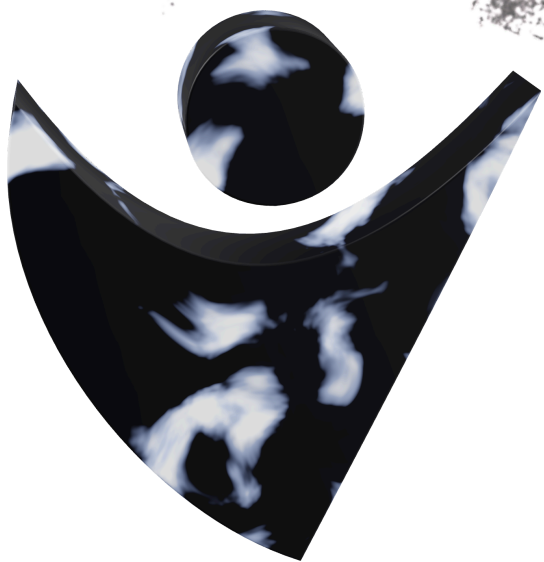
Gross National Happiness is a development philosophy that measures progress through well-being rather than economic output alone. Developed in Bhutan, it is embedded in national policy and includes cultural participation, environmental health, and psychological well-being as core indicators.

### **What feels remarkable:**

Intangible aspects like happiness and cultural strength are taken seriously in policy decisions. Well-being is treated as something that can and should be measured.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Building **multi-dimensional measurement systems.**
- Combining data with **lived experience in evaluation.**
- Aligning stakeholders around a **shared definition of progress.**



# SARVODAYA

## The Uplift of All

**(India)**

### **What it is:**

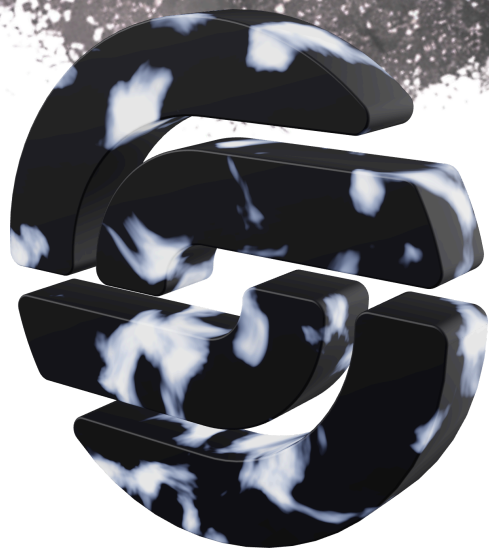
Sarvodaya means “the uplift of all,” with particular concern for those most marginalized. Developed through Gandhian philosophy in India, it continues to guide grassroots development movements and civil society efforts focused on equity, participation, and nonviolent social change.

### **What feels remarkable:**

The moral center of decision-making sits with those who have the least. Policies and actions seem to bend toward the margins, not the middle.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Designing with a **“last-first” lens** in funding and programs.
- Elevating **marginalized voices as decision-makers.**
- Framing **impact as justice achieved**, not just services delivered.



# UBUNTU

## Finding Personhood in “We”

**(Southern Africa)**

### **What it is:**

Ubuntu is the idea that a person becomes fully human through their relationships with others. Emerging from Bantu-speaking communities across Southern Africa, it emphasizes shared dignity and interdependence, and has influenced post-apartheid constitutional thinking and reconciliation processes such as South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

### **What feels remarkable:**

The traveler notices that people speak of others’ well-being almost as reflexively as their own. Identity feels less like a boundary and more like a shared current.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Designing programs where **community validation matters** as much as individual outcomes.
- Embedding relational metrics like **trust and cohesion into evaluation.**
- Structuring **leadership as stewardship of relationships**, not just authority.



# SEVENTH GENERATION PRINCIPLE

## Thinking of Tomorrow in the Now

**(Indigenous North America)**

### **What it is:**

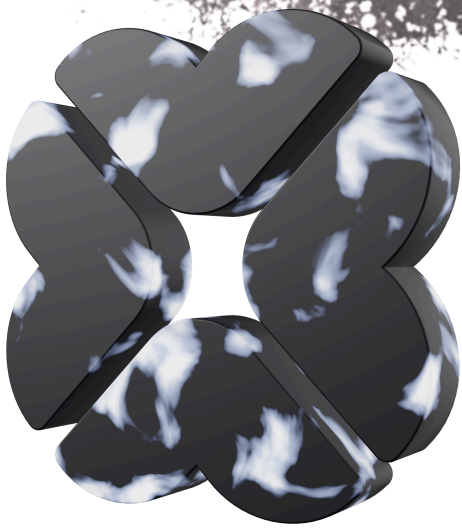
The Seventh Generation Principle is the idea that decisions made today should consider their impact on people seven generations into the future. Rooted in Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and other Indigenous North American traditions, it continues to influence Indigenous governance, environmental stewardship movements, and long-term policy thinking around sustainability and climate justice.

### **What feels remarkable:**

Time horizons are much longer. Decisions are made with future people in mind, not just present needs.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Embedding **long-term thinking** into funding and planning.
- Testing strategies against **future impact scenarios**.
- Including **youth and future-focused perspectives** in decision-making.



# APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

## Tools at the Right Scale

**(20th century global development movement)**

### **What it is:**

Appropriate Technology emerged in the mid-20th century, notably through E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, as a response to industrial models that were capital-intensive and socially disruptive. It advocates for technologies that are locally adapted, affordable, environmentally sustainable, and supportive of human well-being rather than displacing it.

### **What feels remarkable:**

The traveler notices that innovation is not chasing sophistication for its own sake. The “best” solution is often the simplest one that people can understand, repair, and own.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Designing technologies that are **locally maintainable and culturally aligned.**
- Prioritizing **human-scale solutions** over maximum efficiency.
- Evaluating innovation based on **dignity, usability, and long-term resilience.**



# DIGITAL COMMONS & OPEN SOURCE

## Knowledge Wants to Circulate

**(Late 20th–21st century global movement)**

### **What it is:**

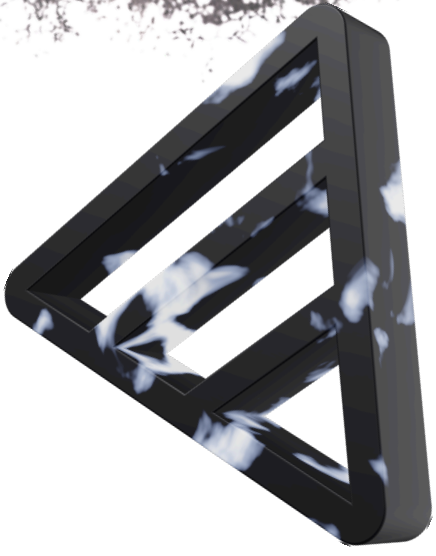
Rooted in the open-source software movement and commons-based peer production (e.g., Linux, Wikipedia), this ideology treats knowledge and digital infrastructure as shared resources rather than private commodities. It has influenced global tech ecosystems, open science initiatives, and policies around data sharing and digital rights.

### **What feels remarkable:**

The traveler sees strangers across the world building things together without centralized control. Value is created not through ownership, but through contribution and collaboration at scale.

### **What could be adopted:**

- Treating **knowledge and data as shared goods** where possible.
- Designing platforms that enable **participation, co-creation, and transparency.**
- Supporting **distributed innovation networks**, not just proprietary systems.



# HUMAN-CENTERED & ETHICAL AI Technology in Service of Humanity

**(20th century global development movement)**

## **What it is:**

Appropriate Technology emerged in the mid-20th century, notably through E.F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, as a response to industrial models that were capital-intensive and socially disruptive. It advocates for technologies that are locally adapted, affordable, environmentally sustainable, and supportive of human well-being rather than displacing it.

## **What feels remarkable:**

The traveler notices that innovation is not chasing sophistication for its own sake. The “best” solution is often the simplest one that people can understand, repair, and own.

## **What could be adopted:**

- Embedding **ethics, equity, and inclusion into technology** design from the start
- Ensuring **transparency, accountability, and human oversight**
- Centering **human agency and well-being** over automation or efficiency alone



# A Closing Reflection

What the traveler carries back is not a set of perfect models, but a shift in orientation. **Impact, in these contexts, is less about delivering change and more about cultivating the conditions in which people, communities, and ecosystems can thrive together.**

[ignitedword.com](http://ignitedword.com)  
[info@ignitedword.com](mailto:info@ignitedword.com)