Cultures and Local Practices of Sustainability

ROUTES Towards Sustainability Network

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Contenido

Thomas More's Utopia and Vasco de Quiroga's República as Sustainable Habitats

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Abstract

Societies have struggled with sustainability for centuries and the notion of sustainable society, widely debated nowadays, invites an investigation into the early modern age when social models were conceived. Utopia as a genre thrives on the assumption that human ingenuity can produce good habitats, in which every tangible and intangible aspect of existence is carefully planned. As an early modern expression of anthropocentrism, the genre exhibits the impact of utopian projects on the natural, human,

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and built environment. Thomas More, an Englishman born in London in 1478, and Vasco de Quiroga, a Spaniard born in Madrigal de las Altas Torres in 1470, envisioned ideal places based on their legal education, religious convictions, and political expertise.

More's *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia* (1516) and Quiroga's *Información en Derecho del Licenciado Quiroga sobre algunas provisiones del Real Consejo de Indias* (1535) oscillate between the intellectual vision of a new world and the historical discovery of the New World. By adopting the perspective of the ecological humanities and ecocriticism, it will be possible to shed light on the sustainability of a utopian society theorised in Tudor England and realised in colonial Mexico in the sixteenth century. The island purportedly discovered during one of Vespucci's voyages and the Pueblos-Hospitales built during the colonial enterprise in Mexico indicate that More and Quiroga will continue to be strong catalysts of discussions on sustainable habitats.

Keywords: Utopia as a genre, sustainability, ecological humanities, ecocriticism, Thomas More, Vasco de Quiroga, New World, Golden Age.

1. Sustainable Utopias?

Societies began to struggle with sustainability centuries ago. The contemporary pursuit of integral development is the most recent evolution of long-term dynamics which can only be explained by adopting a historical approach (White, 1967; Spinozzi, 2021). Investigating the notion of sustainable society in the early modern age, when ideal societies were conceived, will offer an insight into temporal and spatial stratifications. The sustainable development goals pursued by Thomas More in Tudor England and by Vasco de Quiroga in colonial Mexico unfold along an intercontinental trajectory. More and Quiroga were contemporaries and received a formal education as lawyers: the former, an Englishman born in London in 1478, worked in the King's service, acted as Lord Chancellor between 1529 and 1532, and died in 1535; the latter,

a Spaniard born in Madrigal de las Altas Torres in 1470, moved to Mexico in 1531 and died in Uruapan, Michoacán, in 1565.

More's literary text in Latin inspired Quiroga's colonial enterprise in Mexico and legal treatise in Spanish. Scholars have long studied why More's οὐ/εὐ-τόπος, an abstract place of wellbeing disconnected from history, became a model of commonwealth and shaped the early modern history of ideas in Europe and worldwide.[2] Vast investigations have been devoted to the theoretical and practical relationship between More's *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia* (1516) and the colonization of the New World,[3] to More's utopian thought as Quiroga's source of inspiration,[4] to the outcome of Quiroga's colonial enterprise in Mexico and the impact of *Información en Derecho del Licenciado Quiroga sobre algunas provisiones del Real Consejo de Indias* (1535).[5] Studies have also been dedicated to the circulation in Latin America of the other canonical early modern utopia, Tommaso Campanella's *Città del Sole* (1602).[6]

The intellectual vision of a new world and the historical discovery of the New World will be considered as the expression of specific geopolitical and intercultural environments and will be studied from the perspective of the ecological humanities and ecocriticism to assess the sustainability of a utopian society theorised in Europe and realised in America in the sixteenth century.

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[2] See Firpo (1964), Prévost (1969), Davis (1981), Fortunati (2008) and, more recently, Spinozzi (2013) for the importance of More's *Utopia* as a socio-political model.

[3] See Cohen (2004), Hallberg (2010), Chordas (2010), Beauchesne & Santos (2011).

[4] See the unrivalled work by Zavala (1937, 1947, 1948, 1955, 1981, 1987, 1989), Beuchot (1991), Florescano (1997), Armella (2018), Witeze Junior (2018).

[5] See Jarnés (1942), Martín (1957), Warren (1963), Miranda (1984), Verástique (2000), Krippner-Martinez (2001), Zarandona (2006).

[6] See Scramaglia (1985), Headley (1995).

Figure 1. Image of Ambrosius Holbein's 1518 Map of Utopia, from Thomas More's De Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia

Figure 2. Juan O'Gorman's Mural (1942)

Note: Reproduced with permission from Gertrudis Bocanegra Public Library, Pátzcuaro, Mexico.

2. A New World and the New World

In the summer of 1515, More travelled to Flanders as a member of a royal trade commission. There, he drafted the description of an island called Utopia. After his return to London in October, the draft became Book Two, which presents an insular autarchic republic governed by an oligarchy reminiscent of Plato's Πολιτεία (*Republic*, 375 BCE) and organized as a self-sustaining early Christian community. Then, he wrote Book One, which discusses England during the reign of Henry VIII and European colonialism. Interestingly, *pars construens* was composed abroad, while he was in the best disposition to envision an ideal society, and *pars destruens* was written in London, during his service as advisor to the King. The two books form *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu deque Nova Insula Utopia, libellus vere aureus nec minus salutaris quam festivus clarissimi disertissimique viri Thomae Mori inclutae civitatis Londinensis civis et Vicecomitis*, published in Louvain towards the end of 1516, in Paris in 1517, and in Basel in 1518. The original Latin version and various translations into European languages circulated all over the continent and travelled to America with the *Conquistadores*. More was knighted and became Under-Treasurer of the Exchequer in 1521, was appointed Speaker of the House of Commons in 1523, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in 1525, and Lord Chancellor in 1529. As a strong defender of Catholicism, he refused to support King Henry VIII's schism with the Church of Rome and was beheaded in the Tower of London on the 1st of July 1535. He became a Catholic martyr saint in 1935. That small golden book with an impossibly long title, first translated into English by Ralph Robinson in 1551, has become a masterpiece of world literature and has shaped world history.

On December 13th of 1527, the Primera Audiencia, the highest tribunal of the Spanish Crown, was established by royal decree in the Kingdom of New Spain in Mexico. Corruption, murder, and exploitation of the Amerindians spiralled between 1528 and 1530, when the Audiencia was presided over by Nuño de Guzmán, who became infamous for his abuse of power. In 1531, Emperor Charles V sent the sixty-year-old Spanish

churchman and lawyer Vasco de Quiroga to the colony of New Spain. Quiroga's interest in the Pacific Ocean region of Michoacán was one of the main reasons why he was invested with the task of restoring stability with the Segunda Audiencia, the second court of appeals. In 1535, he published *Información en Derecho*, in which he examined the flaws of the slavery system imposed on the indigenous populations and set up legal and ethical norms on colonialization and evangelization. In 1536, he was nominated the first bishop of the newly established diocese of Michoacán by Sebastián Ramírez Fuenleal, President of the Segunda Audiencia and Bishop of Santo Domingo. After his nomination was approved by the Emperor and the Pope, the appointment became official in 1537 and Bishop Quiroga took office in 1538. He died in 1565, having accomplished his project of *mixta policía* (mixed policy) and being well regarded by the indigenous inhabitants.

3. England and the Republic of Utopia: A Focus on Slavery and Freedom of Religion

Peter Giles, a humanist, printer, editor, and town clerk in Antwerp, helped Thomas More publish his manuscript in Louvain. He is also the recipient of the prefatory letter of *Utopia* as well as one of the three characters in the narrative. In Book One, on his way back from the Cathedral of Antwerp, More encounters Giles and is introduced to Raphael Hythloday, a Portuguese mariner who has travelled with Amerigo Vespucci. Colonial enterprises and utopian travellers presented as eyewitnesses of geographical discoveries are a structural feature of utopia as a genre,[7] which More simultaneously constructs and deconstructs. Hythloday's journeys by sea and his acquaintance with the *Conquistadores* qualify him as a privileged observer, but Giles notes that "his sailing has not been like that of Palinurus, but more that of Ulysses, or rather of Plato" (More, 1516/2002, p. 10). Hythloday is a sailor who has been to America three

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[7]   See Fortunati (1996) and Hallberg (2012) for the relationship between utopia, travel writing, and the New World Travelogue.

times and a traveller of the mind whose sharp philosophical reasoning detects inequality and despotism.

Book One focuses on a heated discussion about economy and the law at the house of Cardinal John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, and More's mentor. The description of the sheep having become "so greedy and fierce that they devour human beings" (More, 1516/2002, p. 18) is a metaphorical reference to and critique of the Enclosure Act which was transforming fertile soil into pasture to increase wool trade. Deprived of their means of subsistence, farmers and small landowners were forced to move to town, where they were exploited as labourers and left with no choice but to resort to theft to survive. Therefore, death penalty was as disproportionate and unjust as it was useless because thieves ended up killing witnesses to avoid capital punishment. Hythloday illustrates the penal system of the Polylerites, who do not imprison thieves but condemn them to hard labour, then suggests that England should adopt similar measures. Cardinal Morton considers that such scheme could be tested and extended to vagabonds (pp. 23, 25-26). Hythloday also commends the Achorians for disregarding imperialist schemes and military conquests (p. 31) and the Macarians for pursuing social wellbeing through economic equity (p. 35). By illustrating policies of sustainability adopted in remote countries and using the Portuguese sailor as a sounding board, More skilfully eludes censorship and voices radical ideas about home and foreign affairs.

Book Two describes Utopia as an ideal society based on egalitarian communitarianism, which More envisioned as a form of government superior to aristocratic communism, described by Plato as the foundation of his *Republic*, and commercial capitalism, which was already vexing Tudor England. The core of the island is Amaurot, the fortified capital city crossed by the river Anyder and surrounded by fifty-four identical towns. Every town in Utopia is organized according to a principle of sustainability, starting from the number of inhabitants: "they cannot, of course, regulate the number of minor children in a family. The limit on adults is easily observed by transferring individuals from a household with too many into a household with too few" (p. 54). and redundant children are distributed

among less prolific families. The norm of even distribution is extended to all social and political relations. Every ten years, the Utopians move to a new house with unlocked doors and spacious gardens. Every year, thirty families consisting of at least forty members appoint their magistrate, called *Syphograntus* in their ancient language and now known as *Phylarchus*. A *Traniborus*, also known as *protophylarchus*, presides over clusters of ten *Syphogranti* with their families. The two hundred *Syphogranti* elect the *princeps* by secret ballot. Public and private affairs are discussed by the *Tranibori* and the *princeps*, who rules for life in the senate or popular assembly—unless he is suspected of tyranny. When crucial issues arise, all citizens are invited to express their opinion to the *Syphogranti* who hold an assembly and then inform the Senate.

There is no private property, economy is based on agriculture, everyone works six hours per day, enjoys public lectures, music, and educational games, eats frugal meals, and wears identical clothes; the only difference being the colour for gender and marital status. Women, from the age of eighteen, and men, from the age of twenty-two, can marry after passing a health and fitness test. Marriage can end only in case of death or adultery, which exposes the adulterer to social stigma and prohibition to remarry. Assisted dying is institutionalised and practised to patients who are affected by a painful and terminal disease and have sought advice from priests and magistrates, while suicide for reasons unrelated to illness is punished with a ban on burial (Spinozzi, 2016). Self-defence or protection of oppressed peoples are the only alleged reasons that could justify waging a war, which however will be fought by mercenary soldiers. The sustainability of Utopia is based on autarchy and economic self-sufficiency, whereby production is organized to satisfy the needs of all, as well as on homogeneity, which regulates every sphere and stage of life.

Human rights are a major sustainable development goal. The debate around natural and legal rights became prominent in the period of Renaissance humanism. As a humanist, More analyses various types of servitude in Utopia. In the chapter on "Slaves", Hythloday illustrates the efficient system established by the Utopians. They may choose to keep

prisoners from wars in which they themselves have been involved. The only slaves among the Utopians are those who have committed serious crimes, or more frequently foreigners who had been condemned to death in their own country and can be bought at a low price or even for free and in large quantities. They do not have to work all the time but are fettered. If Utopians become slaves, they receive a harsher treatment, having strayed despite the education they received. There are also paupers from other countries who have chosen slavery in Utopia and are treated with respect, as if they were citizens, with the exception that their workload is heavier, given their familiarity with labour. Should anyone want to leave, they may easily do so, in which case they receive a farewell gift (pp. 77-78).

> Generally, the gravest crimes are punished with slavery, for they think this deters offenders just as much as getting rid of them by immediate capital punishment, and convict labour is more beneficial to the commonwealth. Slaves, moreover, contribute more by their labour than by their death, and they are permanent and visible reminders that crime does not pay. If the slaves rebel against their condition, then, since neither bars nor chains can tame them, they are finally put to death like wild beasts. But if they are patient, they are not left altogether without hope. When subdued by long hardships, if they show by their behaviour that they regret the crime more than the punishment, their slavery is lightened or remitted altogether, sometimes by the governor's prerogative, sometimes by popular vote. (p. 81)

Besides being adopted as a form of punishment for serious crimes, slavery serves utilitarian purposes. While death penalty is useless, slavery is profitable, because it produces free labour force. The utilization of criminals as labourers is regulated according to specific case scenarios. If the attitude of convicts is recalcitrant and their behaviour is dangerous, death sentence can be applied. If they show good conduct, penalty reduction is granted, and freedom may be restored. The overarching principle is that slavery can be efficiently managed as a type of labour. The logical consequence is that it cannot be inherited by the children of slaves. Rationalization of human

resources defines More's conception of property law applied to people and will be at the core of Quiroga's view of productivity.

As a fervent Catholic, More devotes great attention to religious beliefs. In "The Religion of the Utopians" he develops a broad enquiry into faith, not as an individual manifestation but rather as a sphere that connects ethics and politics and is part of a system of beliefs about the supernatural, the transcendental, and the spiritual. The Utopians ignore the Revelation, reject atheism, intolerance, fanaticism, and materialism. They believe in an unknown, infinite Deity of the universe, support religious pluralism, and allow the performance of aniconic rites, in accordance with the principle of diversity. Throughout the island, some Utopians worship the sun, others the moon, others one of the planets, while others believe in mythological deities. Hythloday explores the issue of proselytism and conversion and explains that many Utopians have become Christian after learning about the life and miracles of Christ, the strength and spirit of sacrifice of the martyrs, the noble task of the missionaries and, above all, the community life shared by the apostles. While declaring that the impact of Christianity may be the result of concomitant factors, such as the secret inspiration of God and a natural predisposition of the Utopians, he draws attention to a specific aspect: "But I think they were also much influenced by the fact that Christ approved of his followers' communal way of life, and that among the truest groups of Christians the practice still prevails" (pp. 93-94). More's rhetorical talent emerges in the fine balance he achieves between an appreciation of pluralism and a preference for Christianity, motivated by divine intervention, human inclination, and especially communitarianism, which stands out as a powerful incentive.

Of the seven sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Matrimony, Anointing of the Sick, and Holy Orders) only baptism and marriage can be administered without a priest. The administration of sacraments in a non-Christian country and in a colonial context is a sensitive theological problem that More tackles with diplomacy. Hythloday explains that the Utopians who chose to become Christian were baptised,

but the absence of priests posed an obstacle to the achievement of a full religious status.

> By that time, two of our group had died, and among us survivors there was, I am sorry to say, no priest. So, though they received the other sacraments, they still lack those which in our religion can be administered only by priests. They do, however, understand what these are, and eagerly desire them. In fact, they dispute warmly whether a man chosen from among themselves could receive the sacerdotal character without the dispatch of a Christian bishop. Though they seemed about to elect such a person, they had not yet done so when I left. (p. 94)

Hythloday specifies that, when he left the island, the possibility of directly choosing a Utopian convert to be ordained priest was under discussion. It is a subtle narrative device that allows More to tackle the technicalities of conversion in a colonial scenario, leaving the problem open to avoid controversies. The absence of a priest was a problem that would not affect bishop Quiroga in the least, as he was appointed bishop. Neither was he concerned about the coexistence of different religions because the evangelization of the Amerindians was always one of the main goals of the Spanish voyages of discovery. In More's view of a sustainable society, the topic of proselytism requires great sensitivity because it must harmonize with the idea of pluralism and freedom of religion in a republic founded on equality. Christian converts can preach without restrictions, provided they do so with propriety and respect for other religions. Disparaging attitudes, aggressive coaxing, and any other form of extremism result in harsh punishment.

> Those who have not accepted Christianity make no effort to restrain others from it, nor do they criticize new converts to it. While I was there, only one of our communion was interfered with. As soon as he was baptised, he took upon himself to preach the Christian religion publicly, with more

zeal than discretion. We warned him not to do so, but he began to work himself up to a pitch where he not only set our religion above the rest but roundly condemned all others as profane, leading their impious and sacrilegious followers to the hell-fires they richly deserved. After he had been preaching in this style for a long time, they arrested him. He was tried on a charge, not of despising their religion, but of creating a public disorder, convicted, and sentenced to exile. For it is one of their oldest rules that no one should suffer for his religion. (p. 94)

It is remarkable that the discussion of proselytism shifts from a theological to a social perspective: because freedom of confession is guaranteed, it must be regulated. Thomas More points to the difference between faith, deserving respect, and extremism, requiring containment. He also indicates that religion plays a key role in politics, as sectarianism is a factor of weakness that exposes a country to external attacks. Thus, religious unity is important from a spiritual and secular perspective. Nonetheless, acknowledging the danger of conflicts arising from a rigid pursuit of homogeneity, More allows for diversity, which involves intelligence in professing and proselytising.

Utopus had heard that before his arrival the natives were continually squabbling over religious matters and he had observed that it was easy to conquer the whole country because the different sects were too busy fighting one another to oppose him. And so at the very beginning, after he had gained the victory, he prescribed by law that everyone may cultivate the religion of his choice, and strenuously proselytise for it too, provided he does so quietly, modestly, rationally and without insulting others. If persuasion fails, no one may resort to abuse or violence; and anyone who fights wantonly about religion is punished by exile or slavery. (p. 94)

The topic of conversion calls for closer inspection, considering how it affected the life of More, who chose to die rather than embrace the Church of England, and how it shaped the plan of colonization-cum-

Christianization pursued by Quiroga in Mexico. While confessional variety and the regulation of different preaching practices define Utopia as an ideal society, in reality More's religiosity proved as inflexible as that of Quiroga: the former refused to convert to the Church of England and the latter systematically evangelized all the indigenous people.

4. Michoacán and the Pueblos-Hospitales de la Santa Fe: A Focus on Mixed Policy

When More published *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu* in 1516, he presented a societal model, which humanist intellectuals would share and discuss all over Europe. Far beyond the cultural debate it elicited, that model came to be realized in Mexico only a few decades later by Quiroga, after he studied *De Optimo Reipublicae Statu*, the lives of the first Christians, the works of Saint Augustine, and Campanella's *Città del Sole*.

In 1531, he chose a hill known as Acaxúchitl, the indigenous term for cane flower, almost 3 kilometres away from the pueblo of Tacubaya, in the southwest area of present Mexico City; in 1532, he built Santa Fe de México. In 1533, he built Santa Fe de la Laguna, close to Pátzcuaro, in Michoacán, and Santa Fe del Rio close to La Piedad, also in Michoacán. Many more Pueblos-Hospitales de la Santa Fe (Hospital-Towns of the Holy Faith) were built in the following years, until two hundred of them were well established in the colony by 1580, fifteen years after Quiroga's death.

Recently, Geraldo Witeze Junior (2018) has filled a gap in scholarship by offering an insight into the multitude of indigenous ethnic groups in Michoacán. From what Quiroga wrote about them, it is impossible to establish which ones he was referring to:

> In the territory he was operating in, there were the Mexicas, the Purhépechas or Tarascans, and the fearsome Chichimecas. He does not specify their customs and he refers to Indians in generic terms [...]. Nonetheless, from what we know of his life and his movements in New Spain, it may be

assumed that he had more contact with the Mexicas in the early days when he was a judge in Mexico City, and that, after 1536, when he was bishop of Michoacán, he was probably closer to the Purhépechas. (p. 55)

Quiroga blended hierarchical rules with principles of primitive socialism defined in More's *Utopia*. Each Hospital-Town was a settlement containing a school, a church, an open chapel, and three hospitals: one for the young, one for the contagious, and one for the non-contagious (Eaton, 2002, p. 82). Men and women wore identical clothes, owned no personal property, lived in extended families, shared collective buildings, and equally contributed to the common welfare by working six hours a day; mainly farming and learning a trade or craft. Every thirty families were guided by a *jurado*, the equivalent of the *Syphograntus*; every ten *jurados* were guided by a *regidor*, the equivalent of the *Traniborus* or *protophylarchus*. Above them were two *alcaldes ordinarios* and a *tacatecle*, corresponding to the *princeps* of Utopia. These offices were held by natives except for the highest role, the *corregidor*, which was held by a Spaniard appointed by the Audiencia. It is a mixed policy in which the Amerindians form the various layers of a pyramidal structure, and the Spaniards are positioned at the top. The traditional habits of the natives were replaced by a Christian lifestyle, while their pristine innocence was preserved through isolation from the colonizers.

In *Información en Derecho*, published in 1535, Quiroga examines slavery in America, illustrates new policies for the indigenous people, and defines a new social structure based on the Myth of the Golden Age, More's Utopia, the Primitive Church, the Prophesized Church, and the Hierarchical Church (Herrejón Peredo, 2006, pp. 89-102). Quiroga's primary aim was to dismantle the *encomiendas*, a system of land-tenure which granted Spanish settlers the right to own the land and to benefit from the unpaid work of natives who lived in semi-slavery.

A close reading of *Información en Derecho*, finely edited by Herrejón Peredo in 1985, will shed light into Quiroga's ideas of political reform. He believed that the natives were as innocent as the first Christians in the

Acts of the Apostles: properly housed and educated, they would become a model of Christianity. Quiroga's point of departure was More's model of sustainable society, in which serious crimes should be punished with slavery and hard labour, and freedom or mitigation of a sentence could be obtained with good conduct. The section dedicated to "El servicio entre indios" (Service among Indians) begins with the strong declaration that there are no real slaves. Instead, there is the possibility of renting work in perpetuity, whereby the natives retain their freedom and goods (pp. 32, 104-107). In "La doctrina del derecho romano" (The doctrine of Roman Law) Quiroga delves into the notion of slavery, explaining that whoever allows himself to be sold becomes a slave. Far from being permanent, that status can be revoked, as freedom can be restored via payment (pp. 32, 107-116). In "Entre indios: alquiler a perpetuidad" (Among the indigenous: perpetual rent) he acknowledges that they are sold only in cases of extreme necessity: "Los indios se venden por necesidad extrema" (pp. 33, 116). Under no conditions can they be enslaved. They do not lose freedom, dwelling or property: "No se dan las condiciones para esclavizarlos. No pierden libertad, lugar ni bienes" (pp. 33, 116-117). Those who sell their works in perpetuity, without losing their freedom, goods or place, are a kind of free men: "Los indios que venden sus obras a perpetuidad, sin perder su libertad, bienes ni lugar, son una especie de hombres libres" (pp. 33, 118-119). There are no slaves of war (pp. 33, 119-120). Relatives can obtain the freedom of those who sold their work in perpetuity, because they never lost their status of free men: "Los parientes pueden restituirlo a la libertad. En verdad, nunca perdió estado de ingenuidad o libertad" (pp. 33, 121-122). The section entitled "No hay verdaderos esclavos" (There are no real slaves) reiterates that real slaves cannot exist among the indigenous people, as they are free men who sell or rent their work in perpetuity. He adds that the same applies to those who were stolen as children or deceived as adults. Continuous oppression invalidates any kind of bondage, in compliance with the Codex Theodosianus. Those who are threatened or forced by their chieftains to accept slavery are also free. Quiroga laments that slavery in New Spain is

harsher than in Spain and does not understand why the Spaniards should hold the indigenous in such a harsh bondage (pp. 35, 137-143).

"La posibilidad de una policía mixta" (The possibility of mixed policy) shows Quiroga's ideas on sustainability, based on the conviction that new policies can be established by taking advantage of the natural good disposition of the Amerindians, who are as simple as humankind was in the ancient Golden Age. Quiroga compares the indigenous to a "masa blanda", a soft dough arranged by God so that the Spaniards would apply a good mixed policy. The model of republic he envisions is deemed feasible, considering all the differences of the New World from Europe, because the natives naturally respond to the sacraments and sustain the earth. While slavery can be justified in certain cases, the Spaniards should not take advantage of the slaves (pp. 39-41, 175-188). In "Semejanza con la edad de oro" (Similarity with the golden age), it transpires that the indigenous consider slavery only as a form of moderate service. The aim of Quiroga's subtle rhetorical discourse is the justification of slavery as serfdom: deplorable as a form of exploitation, it becomes viable as a type of labour.

To highlight the similarities with the Golden Age, the life of the Amerindians is described in terms of simplicity, freedom, and proclivity for celebrations. Quiroga believes that God inspired him with Lucian of Samosata's *Saturnalia* (pp. 41, 188-195). The ancient Roman festivities of Saturnalia held theological importance, symbolising the restoration of the Golden Age. During the upside-down world on December 17th, then extended to December 23rd, the slaves were treated as equals, wore their masters' clothes, and were served meals in remembrance of an earlier Golden Age initiated by the god Cronus (Saturn in Latin mythology). In Lucian's *Saturnalia*, the god Cronus himself declares:

> *Cro.* [Zeus] will be in authority again soon enough. Mine is a limited monarchy, you see. To begin with, it only lasts a week; that over, I am a private person, just a man in the street. Secondly, during my week the serious is barred; no business allowed. Drinking and being drunk, noise and games and dice, appointing of kings and feasting of slaves, singing naked,

clapping of tremulous hands, an occasional ducking of corked faces in icy water, – such are the functions over which I preside. But the great things, wealth, and gold and such, Zeus distributes as he will. (Lucian, c. 125-180 CE/1905, p. 108)

In "La reforma de la Iglesia" (Church reform) Quiroga expresses his trust that God will reform the Church in the New World, where the natives' simplicity and freedom of animosity are proof of a novel Golden Age. A natural inclination towards the Christian faith, which More attributes to the Utopians and Quiroga to the Amerindians, confirms the affinity between autochthonous religions in the New World and the primitive Church. Compared to the New World, Spain is in the Iron Age, in which humankind pursues war and has become violent (pp. 41, 196-199).

"La república de Moro y la edad dorada" (The republic of More and the golden age) brings together the ancient classical myth and More's ideal society. To rule over the native populations, the Spanish colonizers must adopt laws that differ from the laws in Spain. The government envisioned by More in Utopia is ideal for the New World, since the indigenous are predisposed to receiving a mixed policy. The evolution of thought from Lucian to More and Quiroga is now clear. More, who translated Lucian, imagined his republic for people like the ones from the Golden Age. Since Quiroga believes that the indigenous are the expression of a new Golden Age, More's model suits them well for several reasons: it takes the bad aspects away from their nature and enhances the good ones, brings them together in towns, removes their idleness, and does not offer misleading examples. It is a model of sustainable social order based on containment. Quiroga notes that the indigenous populations subjected to slavery would not live long, which raises the question as to whether his willingness to change the colonial rules was aimed at establishing humane relationships or at setting up the conditions for an optimal utilization of the human capital. He also remarks that they satisfy themselves with too little and lack the ability to maintain or instruct themselves, which points to the importance and advantage of a pedagogical plan enforced

by the Spaniards. Truth is, he concedes, real slavery is not worthy of the Golden Age, also because all forms of freedom involve some form of service anyway (pp. 41-42, 199-203). His "Conclusions" clarify that what has been explained, if rightly understood, will be for the good of the New World. It would be wrong to assume that the indigenous are ill-natured and wicked or should bear the grievances of the colonizers. Obedience to God and the pursuit of wellbeing for all entails preserving, instructing, bringing together, and spreading Christian faith and good habits (pp. 42, 203-204).

In "Objeciones y respuestas" (Objections and answers) Quiroga addresses whoever may argue that such a perfect policy is unattainable and answers that his mixed policy is in fact viable, because it cuts possible evils at the root. As the local populations are held together, few religious people are needed to look after them. Families, *jurados*, governors, mayors, *corregidores*, and the Real Audiencia form an intercultural hierarchy that guarantees peace and justice in the republic. Thanks to this mixed policy, the temporal and spiritual powers complement each other, and the Christian law can thrive. To those who may object that the indigenous, being simple, are incapable of such a state of republic, Quiroga offers an argument from John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, and prominent Early Church Father, who said that even uncouth men, when interested, show intelligence. Another answer, taken from St. Ambrose, is that God chooses the simple ones, as confirmed by his love for the humble. Such a state of republic may not be achievable in Europe, but it is possible for the indigenous because of their closeness to the Golden Age. Faith and the mixed policy are exactly at the foundation of the ideal republic they need if they want to survive and cope with their responsibilities. Quiroga's holistic view encompasses their preservation and instruction, their service to God and maintenance of collective wellbeing. His sustainable society includes spiritual values, such as peace and grace, as well as temporal values, such as justice and charity (pp. 42-43, 205-215). In "Advertencias y despedida" (Warnings and farewell) Quiroga submits his manuscript to the Church and recommends reading

More's *Utopia* to better understand the reasons for establishing such a republic, since the conditions of the New World were revealed to the Englishman. Finally, Quiroga apologizes for his repetitions, the typical flaws of lawyers (pp. 43, pp. 215-218).

The Pueblos-Hospitales were successful because they were sustainable. Private property or luxuries were not allowed; physical health was encouraged; education was egalitarian and encompassed reading, writing, singing, and music playing; the hungry, the sick, and the homeless were taken care of through a health and social programme; grievances were brought to ecclesiastical courts. Santa Fe de México reached the peak number of 30,000 Indians living together. The Colegio de San Nicolás in Michoacán, which Quiroga built in 1540 as a seminary for Indians and Spaniards, is one of the oldest and most renowned universities in America. He donated his personal library of 266 volumes, a prodigious number for the colony of New Spain in the mid-sixteenth century. Nowadays, the descendants of the indigenous people are highly appreciated as arts and crafts masters and Quiroga is celebrated as a benefactor.

> When he died, in 1565, Quiroga was just a few years short of centenarian status. Tata ("Father") Vasco, as he was known by the Indians, left an indelible mark. The skills he implanted among Tarascans of the Pátzcuaro region have been passed down to their descendants, who are considered among the most skilled craftspeople in Mexico. Quiroga trained his pupils in a variety of disciplines and his method of specialization by community endures to this day. You go to Paracho for guitars, Tzintzuntzán for pottery, Santa Clara for copper products and Nurío for woven woollen goods.
>
> The Spanish colonial era was one of astounding diversity. It could produce a daring conqueror like Cortés, a monster like Nuño de Guzmán, and a reformer as enlightened and benevolent as Vasco de Quiroga. (Tuck, 2008, para. 12-13)

Quiroga introduced steel to the lake region, allowing the production of steel tools that increased the artisans' output. Trees were chopped more quickly and provided larger quantities of wood for furniture. The "Santa Fe Style" gained popularity and became the most prized in Michoacán (Rose, 2000, Erongaricuaro section, para. 5). The economic and historical significance of the arts and crafts must be properly appreciated. Various forms of craftsmanship have become the distinctive feature of the Tarascans, connected to specific towns, and boosting sustainable local economy. Mexican craft towns on Lake Pátzcuaro ensure the continuation and positive reception of Quiroga's legacy as a great reformer and social educator in Mexico.

His project fused colonialism and interculturality, generating an ambivalence that transpires from various ambits. He believed that European values should be introduced among the natives yet suggested that their own values ought to be respected. The *encomiendas* should be abolished because they were inhuman, however, the ways of life of the natives required corrective measures. They were primitive and needed instruction, yet their very simplicity, humbleness, and innocence were the ideal prerequisites for Spanish colonization. While living within the congregations and becoming highly skilled in numerous arts and crafts, they were subjected to indoctrination and western acculturation.

The Spanish conquest of the Americas in the 15th and 16th centuries generated a heated debate about human rights. On December 21st of 1511, Fray Antonio de Montesinos of the Dominican Order at the Island of Hispaniola delivered a sermon, known as Christmas sermon, which may have motivated the Laws of Burgos. Issued by Ferdinand the Catholic on behalf of his daughter, Joanna of Castile, on December 27th of 1512, the Laws of Burgos regulated child labour, women's rights, wages, accommodation, rest, and holidays. Bartolomé de Las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda at Valladolid continued to debate the sermon from 1550 to 1551.

The reasons why Spanish exponents of the Catholic Church magnified the prelapsarian innocence of the Amerindian populations can be explained by considering colonization and evangelization as parts of

a comprehensive refoundation of humankind. In his famous study *La modernidad de lo barroco*, Bolívar Echeverría argues that the societies built by the Spaniards on the Catholic destruction and conquest of Amerindian and African cultures encapsulate the long predominance, first central and open, then marginal and subterranean, of the Baroque ethos, generated by two antagonistic forces. A progressive and aggressive drive prevailed over a conservative and defensive one, which however could not be deleted and replaced (Echeverría, 2011, pp. 47-48).

> Un mundo histórico que existió conectado con el intento de la Iglesia Católica de construir una modernidad propia, religiosa, que girara en torno a la revitalización de la fe - planteado como alternativa a la modernidad individualista abstracta, que giraba en torno a la vitalidad del capital -, y que debió dejar de existir cuando ese intento se reveló como una utopía irrealizable.–A historical world existed in connection with the Catholic Church's attempt to build its own religious modernity, which revolved around the revitalization of faith—proposed as an alternative to abstract individualist modernity, which revolved around the vitality of capital—and must have ceased to exist when that attempt revealed itself to be an unrealizable utopia. (p. 49, my translation)

Echeverría exposes the polarities of a project that attempted to counteract the rise of the modern individualistic society with the establishment of a collective society founded on the erasure of an archaic endogenous culture and regulated by hierarchical Western principles. However, his point about the inevitable termination of the project does not apply to Quiroga's achievements. By importing the utopian model from England, enriching it with classical and religious sources, adapting it to his own Spanish background, and exporting it to Mexico, he enacted a social plan that has evolved for centuries owing to its intercultural breadth.

In the Introduction to his edition of *Información en derecho*, Herrejón Peredo argues that the implementation of the mixed policy throughout the New World was only partially successful. Colonizers adopted part of

Quiroga's plan, grouping the indigenous people, often by force, into villages built according to the model of a church and town council at the centre, but the spirit of Christian humanism that inspired the Pueblos-Hospitales de la Santa Fe was swept away by the demands of a colonialist state. The master and slave dialectic, growing on co-dependency, proved more enduring than the ideals of Christian utopias and social pedagogy (1985, pp. 23-24).

What deserves recognition is the intelligence with which Quiroga, who strongly believed in the law, religion, and colonialism, built up a legal framework thanks to which he validated the execution of his religious mission and political mandate. His assumption was one of superiority uniquely blended with compassion. While it would be anachronistic to claim that he pursued equality and diversity, it is evident that he cared for the wellbeing of the indigenous people. His mixed policy was successful in combining conversion to Catholicism and European domestication within a cohesive social order, maintained through solid work ethics and some recognition of human rights.

5. More, Quiroga, and Sustainable Thinking

It remains unknown whether More intended to present an abstract model of ideal society or a blueprint. Contemporary readers find the quality of life on the island of Utopia hardly desirable. Discussing *The Old World and the New Seen from Nowhere*, Carlo Ginzburg (2000) explores why a lawyer who engaged in a political battle for the rights of indigenous people could believe that the Golden Age mentioned by More and Lucian was real. The golden age described by Lucian in *Saturnalia* originates from a ritual of inversion, whereby private property is suppressed, ambassadors wearing sumptuous clothes and jewels are taken for slaves, and gold and silver are used to make chamber pots. More elaborates on Lucian's upside-down society to see what nobody else had seen before: a reality paradoxically reversed, an island in which the sheep devour human beings. The separation between fictional and historical narrative still

stands, generating an extraordinarily powerful fiction and maintaining a strong grip on reality (Gnoli, 2002).

The path that connects the myth of the Golden Age, Lucian, More, and Quiroga is rooted in the utopian mentality, which incorporates satire and the upside-down world, prompting a series of mental leaps: the first occurs through the deconstruction and subversion of reality, which generates a sense of estrangement and opens the possibility of accessing other hypothetical realities; the second involves exploring them, while seeing one's own world from a distance; the third coincides with the return to reality, now illuminated and changeable.

Mundaca Machuca (2010) has highlighted a historical paradox, by drawing a lucid comparison between More's speculative critique and Quiroga's social and religious empiricism. The former never meant to introduce his reformist ideas in England, his aim was rather to write an ironic and parodic literary work without any practical claim beyond that of a thorough critique of the society of his time.

> After the terrors experienced in the first years of the conquest, *Utopia* in America is examined with critical force by Quiroga, as a compass pointing to the future horizon. And just as Thomas More brilliantly combined his appropriate moral and social critique with a free intellectual game, an imaginary American world was used [...] to offer a new and alternative world to European societies. (*La Utopía* section, para. 6, my translation)

It is true that, after the terrifying first Audiencia of Mexico, Bishop Quiroga adopted utopian ideals. It is true that Bishop Bartolomé de las Casas and the religious and political utopia of the Franciscans adhered to these ideals because New Spain was indeed the ideal place to develop them throughout America. It is also fundamental to distinguish between the terror and destruction caused by some Spanish colonists and the productive social models established by others. It is less comfortable to single out good colonists, evangelizers, religious educators, and social reformers, as their goal was the efficient exploitation of natural and human resources

rather than the advancement of the Amerindians. Certainly, there were colonists driven by a true utopian impulse, but scholars of utopia have become more and more aware that what may look like an ideal habitat to the eyes of the utopian thinker very often looks like a dystopian enclosure to everybody else and becomes a place of detention for those who are presented with no other choice but to stay there.

Chordas (2010) noted that "if More's Utopia turned out to be a fiction, however, it was ultimately a fiction not confined to the pages of a book" (p. 66). The world would look quite different if More's small golden book had been confined to the realm of the imaginary, and while counterfactual reasonings may sound superfluous, Quiroga's impact on history continues to polarize scholars. The assessment of More's and Quiroga's sustainable thinking cannot reach a critical poise, it must oscillate.

Renaissance utopian thinkers explored ideal forms of state based on homogeneity and autarchy. More invested in the notion of human capability and Quiroga acted on that investment. Both More and Quiroga supported utilitarian ethics, convinced that the wellbeing and efficiency of society depended on a productive regulation of human resources. However, the linearity and coherence of their conceptions can hardly be validated. Theoretically, More believed in relativism and pluralism, then chose to die and preserve his integrity as a Catholic. Quiroga elaborated a mixta policía that takes interculturality into account yet capitalizes on mass conversion to Christianity. The island purportedly discovered during one of Vespucci's voyages and the Pueblos-Hospitales built in Mexico call for further studies from the perspective of sustainability. More's and Quiroga's works are and will continue to be strong catalysts of discussions on sustainable habitats. They will prompt readers to ask themselves what it is that should be sustained and whether it may also be desirable. Pairing sustainability and desirability seems as arduous in history as it does in utopia.

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