

# **Why Interculturalidad is not Interculturality: Colonial remains and paradoxes in translation between indigenous social movements and supranational bodies**

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# Why Interculturalidad is not Interculturality: Colonial Remains and Paradoxes in Translation between Indigenous Social Movements and Supranational Bodies<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

*Interculturality is a notion that has come to dominate the debate on cultural diversity among supranational bodies such as the European Union and UNESCO in recent years. The EU goes so far as to identify interculturality as a key cultural and linguistic characteristic of a union which, it argues, acts as an inspiration to other parts of the world. At the same time, the very notion of interculturality is a core component of indigenous movements in the Andean region of Latin America in their struggles for decolonization. Every bit as contingent as any other concept, it is apparent that several translations of interculturality are simultaneously in play. Through interviews with students and teachers in a course on interculturality run by indigenous alliances, my aim in this essay is to study how the notion is translated in the socio-political context of the Andes. With reference points drawn from the works of Walter Dignolo and the concept of delinking, I will engage in a discussion about the potential for interculturality to break out of the prison-house of colonial vocabulary – modernization, progress, salvation – that lingers on in official memory. Engagement in such an interchange of experiences, memories and significations provides not only recognition of other forms of subjectivity, knowledge systems and visions of the future but also a possible contribution to an understanding of how any attempt to invoke a universal reach for interculturality, as in the case of the EU and UNESCO, risks echoing the imperial order that the notion in another context attempts to overcome.*

## Introduction

Spray-painted in black on a crumbling, flaky, yellow brick wall, the words *Se Busca* (Wanted)<sup>2</sup> in capital letters immediately steer the mind

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<sup>1</sup> This essay was published in *Cultural Studies*, 2014, pp. 1-24.  
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<sup>2</sup> All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

back to posters distributed to inform the general public about alleged criminals whom the authorities wish to apprehend. The figure drawn underneath this headline appears on monuments throughout the Western world, from Chicago to Barcelona, from New York to Huelva. However, the piece of street art in my immediate field of vision, portraying Cristóbal Colón, is located on a wall in El Alto, an urban centre adjacent to La Paz on the *Altiplano* in Bolivia, and the motif is not intended to praise the expansion of geographical consciousness in Europe (the *New World*). In contrast to ‘heroic’ tales describing one man’s ‘courageous’ voyage from Spain to the Caribbean shores, with the indigenous populations<sup>3</sup> serving as a mere backdrop to an odyssey of territorial annexation in the economic and political interests of Spain, this piece of graffiti represents a counter text – written from another locus – of a legacy still permeated by colonialism and excluded from collective memory.<sup>4</sup> In the accusations enshrined in paint, Columbus is sought here for being not only a great thief (*Gran ladrón*), genocidist (*Genocidia*) and racist (*Racista*) but also an oppressor of originary cultures (*Opresor de las culturas originarias*), and finally, the instigator of the Great Lie (*Instigador de la Gran Mentira*).<sup>5</sup> Despite its limitations in terms of space, this brief denunciation of history as told from within a European framework manages to capture the numbing ghastliness of colonialism far more effectively than more expansive eloquence. Brought to the fore is the turmoil of violent negations, referred to here as the ‘Great Lie’: concealed histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternized knowledge systems and silenced languages.

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘indigenous’ deployed in this essay is indeed problematic as it collectivizes distinctive groups with vastly different experiences under imperialism. Without denying the powerful world views embedded in similar terms such as ‘Native People’, ‘First Nations’, or ‘People of the Land’, I use ‘indigenous’ not only because it in the context of the Andes is a way to include many diverse communities, language groups, and nations, but predominantly due to the fact that it is the term used by the interviewees themselves as a collective marker of identity.

<sup>4</sup> Although celebrated under different names, the arrival of Columbus on the 12<sup>th</sup> of October in the Antilles is celebrated as a holiday on the American continent and in Spain. For instance, ‘Columbus Day’ in the USA; ‘Fiesta de la Hispanidad’ in Spain; ‘Día de la Raza’ in Chile.

<sup>5</sup> In 2004, anticolonialists tore down a Columbus statue in Caracas, Venezuela on what was previously celebrated as ‘Día de la Raza’. Two years earlier, in 2002, under president Hugo Chávez, the day had been renamed ‘Día de la Resistencia Indígena’ (*Day of Indigenous Resistance*).

In his 2006 inaugural address as the first indigenous president of Bolivia, confronting the chronicles of the colonial archive, Evo Morales proclaimed that ‘500 years of indigenous resistance [...] have not been in vain’. Before the Bolivian Congress, he spoke of a new era: ‘[W]e have achieved power to end the injustice, the inequality and oppression that we have lived under. The original indigenous movement, as well as our ancestors, dreamt about recovering the territory’.<sup>6</sup> In the final part of this sentence, ‘recovery’ emerges as fundamental to continuing action. A term laden with loss, this word’s presence is intimately linked to past experiences of colonial subjugation. Against this background, Mexican writer Octavio Paz (1986) metaphorically describes the situation of indigenous populations as a state of orphanhood (‘broken are the ties to their ancient cultures, dead are their gods as well as their cities’) whereby incorporating a European language and framework of knowledge – through direct violence (forced baptism), as well as other more subtle exercises of power (a European educational system replicated in the colonial setting) – inexorably becomes the only badge of entry to what Paz calls ‘a living order’ (*un orden vivo*).

On gaining office, the Morales administration sketched out a proposal for intercultural education centred on the objectives of multilingualism and decolonization. *Interculturalidad* – translation: interculturality – has been on the agenda of indigenous organizations in the Andean region since roughly the early 1990s. The Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas de Ecuador (the *Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador*) and Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indígenas y Negras (the *National Federation of Peasants, Indigenous Peoples and Blacks*) interpret the principle of *interculturalidad* as respect for the diversity of indigenous peoples (*los pueblos indígenas*), but also as a demand for unity in order to transform the present structures of society as imposed by colonialism. However, it was with Morales’ election that *interculturalidad* first became as significant in state discourse as it historically had been for indigenous movements in their efforts to move toward decolonization (Walsh, 2009).

At the same time, interculturality (in English and without italics) is a notion that has come to dominate the debate on cultural diversity in

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<sup>6</sup> For a comprehensive elaboration of the inauguration, see the Argentinean daily *La Nación*, 22 January 2006.

recent years among supranational bodies such as the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Aman, 2012a). Although each is the other's intended equivalent in their respective language schemas, *interculturalidad* is not interculturality; thus, I will distinguish between the nouns throughout this essay. These concepts are differentiated, on the one hand, by the inevitable failure of semantic transference, and on the other hand, by the socio-political circumstances under which they prevailed. UNESCO advocates interculturality as a method of facing the cultural challenges of every multicultural society by uniting around 'universally shared values emerging from the interplay of these cultural specificities' (2009, p. 43), and the EU regards interculturality as a tool with which the member states can promote social cohesion: 'cultural diversification has gained momentum. Europe has attracted migrants in search of a better life and asylum-seekers from across the world' (2007, p. 7). In a critique of the way the concept is presented by these two bodies, Peter McDonald (2011) argues that interculturality reifies difference in departing from an assumption of *a priori* separateness between cultures and of the subject's implicit or explicit production within the nation-state, rather than regarding all cultures as already intercultural - unfixed entities, every aspect of which could potentially transform the others without ever settling into a final pattern.

Although I side with McDonald in the theorization of cultural difference as process, not product, framing *interculturalidad* in those terms is inadequate based on what I have observed in the empirical material drawn upon in this essay. Merely a quick glance at the above-cited speech by Morales conveys an understanding of *interculturalidad* not in the sense of all cultures already being interrelated and mixed with one another; but rather, in terms of the fact that some cultures are recognized by the state while others are not - *cultura* as an ideological position. From this viewpoint, *interculturalidad* is intertwined with an act of restorative justice for the way in which for centuries, the nation-state has turned indigenous populations into its blind spot. Every bit as contingent as any other concept, it is apparent that several translations of interculturality are simultaneously in play. Where indigenous movements target the colonially-imposed structure of society that has annulled and muted other languages and ways of being, the EU refers to interculturality as a political project that characterizes the founding of the union with its 'rich cultural and linguistic diversity, which is inspiring and

has inspired many countries across the world.’ The EU identifies conditions for interculturality in the cultural and linguistic heritage of the member states, claiming that this serves as a foundation from which ‘to develop active inter-cultural dialogue with all countries and all regions, taking advantage of for example Europe’s language links with many countries’ (2007, p. 10). This emphasis on the medium of language makes the contradictions between the two translations (interculturality/*interculturalidad*) yet more apparent: one ascribes importance to local languages that became global through colonialism, while for the other, those very languages echo the imperial order that *interculturalidad* is an attempt to overcome.

Given the apparent mismatch in appropriations of interculturality between supranational organizations and local social movements – in terms of both theory and political purpose, as well as practical significance – my aim in this essay is to study how *interculturalidad*, as a path to decolonization, is interpreted among indigenous alliances in the Andean region. Not only have indigenous movements failed to attract substantial interest in the West (cf. Deere & Leon, 2003; Patrinos, 2000), it has also been argued that indigenous struggles are seldom regarded as a central issue, even within postcolonial studies, a disjunction related to the use among indigenous movements of paradigms not easily translatable to the Western theories and presuppositions commonly used in this scholarship (Young, 2012). Against this background, there are strong reasons for seriously engaging in a discussion about the potential for *interculturalidad* to break out of the prison-house of colonial vocabulary – modernization, progress, salvation – that lingers in official memory, and simultaneously, to problematize the universalizing claims implicitly embedded in supranational bodies’ articulations of the concept.

In what follows, I will focus specifically on the core meanings attached to *interculturalidad* in terms of retrieved languages, reinscribed histories and the production of knowledge, beginning the essay with an elaboration of the logic of domination as it is rooted in the modern/colonial world – here referred to as coloniality. Shortly thereafter, with reference points drawn from the work of Walter Dignolo and his notion of *delinking*,<sup>7</sup> I introduce the theoretical

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<sup>7</sup> First coined by Egyptian economist Samir Amin (1990) as a way for the Third World to break – delink – from the world market and build its own economy. However,

backdrop that guides my analysis. Then, I offer a brief account of the empirical material by providing an overview of interviews conducted with students and teachers in local academic courses on *interculturalidad* in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. In the fourth and main part of the essay, I develop an argument for *interculturalidad* to be understood as an act of resistance led by indigenous needs and principles in which, in Morales' phrasing, the recovery of territory is inseparable from knowledge and language.<sup>8</sup>

### **Coloniality, or the Striptease of Modernity**

Acts of resistance in the translation of concepts between Europeans and indigenous populations can, be traced to the earliest entries in the colonial archive. Picking a prime example from a catalogue that, as previously remarked by Morales, spans over 500 years, Manuela Carneiro da Cunha (2009) turns to colonial Peru, and describes how the pedagogy of Christian missionaries involved the translation of Christian notions into Quechua in order to facilitate communication as part of a larger aim to evangelize the indigenous populations. Gradually, however, suspicions began to grow among the tutelary men of letters that they were being double played by the natives – the unfaithful creatures whom they viewed as the objects of their divine duty to spread God's word and offer salvation from the shackles of primitivism. The Christianization of rituals, cosmologies and Quechua terms offered the indigenous populations tools for incorporating Christianity into the schemas of their own Inca cosmology, which enabled them to practise their religious beliefs under the safe cover of Biblical terms. To avert the continual risk of undermined authority, the church eventually banned the usage of Quechua terms within Christian doctrine; beginning in the

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Mignolo's understanding of the notion derives from Aníbal Quijano (1992), who introduced the concept *desprenderse* – translated as 'to delink' – in his writings in the 1980s. Mignolo (2007) states that for Amin, delinking is emancipation within the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality. Since Amin's desire to delink is bound up with a Marxist viewpoint, the result becomes an internal critique of modernity since it offers a different content but not a different logic, Mignolo concludes.

<sup>8</sup> Territorial claims from indigenous peoples are not unique to the Andean region. Aboriginals in Australia, among other areas, have similar longstanding claims as part of their political agenda for the state (Wood, 2003).

16<sup>th</sup> century, words for God or the Holy Spirit were forbidden to be uttered in any language other than Spanish in the Andes (Carneiro da Cunha, 2009).

This imposed vocabulary of *Dios* and *el Espíritu Santo* shows that the *conquistadores* were not only armed with weapons; they also carried with them a sign system, a new master code, that excluded the indigenous populations from collective memory at the same time as it inscribed them onto European maps. In this sense, to be part of history is a privilege of European modernity; excluding every society without alphabetic writing or with a vernacular other than the imperial languages of modern Europe (Mignolo, 2005). This is visible not only in the renaming – the baptism – of a landmass already known as ‘Abya Yala’ as ‘America’ after one of its European witnesses but also in the later addition of ‘Latin’ to further emphasize literal inscription into another sign system.

The indigenous populations provided the mirror in which Europe, as an identity and culture, could recognize itself as modern. Put differently, the dividing line between the modern and those who are not or have yet to become modern was marked out by the very discourse that defined modernity; its presence is essential to establishing modernity as the location in time of the ideals to be attained, and to situating it in the geo-political space of Western Europe (Mignolo, 2005). However, to say that modernity is an invention is not to say that there is a single interpretation of it. On the contrary, modernity has been conceptualized in numerous ways, full of robust waves of polemic and contradictions that target divergent political, intellectual and aesthetic practices. Without turning a deaf ear to modernity’s many voices, in this essay I will rely on Arturo Escobar’s (2010, p. 9) definition of modernity as ‘the coherence and crystallization of forms (discourses, practices, structures, institutions) that have arisen over the last few hundred years out of certain cultural and ontological commitments of European societies.’ As this is central to my overarching argument, I shall quote Escobar at length,

[w]ith the modern ontology, certain constructs and practices, such as the primacy of humans over non-humans (separation of nature and culture) and of some humans over others (the colonial divide between us and them); the idea of the autonomous individual separated from community; the belief in objective knowledge, reason, and science as the only valid modes of knowing; and the cultural construction of “the economy” as an independent realm of social practice, with “the market” as a self-

regulating entity outside of social relations – all of these ontological assumptions became prominent. The worlds and knowledges constructed on the basis of these ontological commitments became “a universe.” This universe has acquired certain coherence in socio-natural forms such as capitalism, the state, the individual, industrial agriculture, and so forth.

The final sentences of this citation are fundamental to my discussion: they point at the ways in which a certain type of European modernity has been able to claim universality for itself and, in the process, to come across as natural and desirable far beyond the realm in which it originated. Based on such an understanding of modernity, Mignolo (2005) traces its development within the context of colonialism; modernity is seen as a result of Europe’s overseas adventures. To marry modernity with coloniality is thus to reveal that there is a darker side of modernity, a destructive logic hidden underneath keywords such as ‘salvation’, ‘development’, and ‘progress’, or, to put it differently, coloniality. According to Mignolo (2005), Eurocentrism can be defined in precisely those terms – a view of history in which modernity is there to supersede traditions and backwardness, whereby colonialism is – unfortunately or otherwise – a means to a better end. What such a perspective recognizes is the ways in which the colonial powers, supported by the control of knowledge, could impose a devaluation of non-Europeans who did not conform to the model and norm of modernity – produced as Other, an absolute negation, expelled from the borders of civilization – exercised through a matrix that positions certain groups within colonial and racialized hierarchies. ‘There cannot be modernity without coloniality’, Mignolo (2005, p. xiii) asserts: ‘the two constitute each other, as coloniality demarcates the hierarchies at modernity’s heart’.

Whether it is subtly implicit (altering the meaning of a Spanish term) or concretely explicit (revolting against the colonial rulers), resistance to the regimes of power and to the incorporation of social institutions based on European models – economics, politics, family – becomes decisive for continued existence in many areas subject to colonial violence (Mignolo, 2010). As this essay argues, drawing on Mignolo (2007), the project of *interculturalidad* as articulated in the Andes can be theorized as an act of resistance to the vestiges of colonialism, with the purpose of delinking from the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality. Delinking, then, is to bypass European history in favour of another memory in

order to reinscribe into contemporary debates categories of thought, social organizations, and economic conceptions that have been silenced by the progressive discourse of modernity (Mignolo, 2007). Thus, delinking is a route to a decolonial alternative; that is, a dedication to the constitution of alternative modes of modernization by bringing to the fore knowledge systems that have been colonized and delegitimized, but which nonetheless facilitate moving outside the logics of modernity. In short, delinking thus removes itself from the idea of a singular modernity with universal reach and embraces the possibility that there is a plurality of modernities. As has been argued in relation to *interculturalidad*, indigenous peoples and movements ‘have been able to consolidate a heterogeneous and multiform pole of resistance and of social and political confrontation that places the indigenous movement as a central subject regarding the possibility of social transformation’ (Gutiérrez & Escárzaga 2006, p. 16).<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, what Mignolo proposes, once the colonial identity is abolished, is not a return to some kind of ‘authentic’ identity – the Quechua, the Maya, the Guaraní etc. – as they existed before the Europeans’ arrival, with their traditional modes of social organization and authority. Rather, embedded in the project of delinking is the acknowledgment of the impossibility of thinking about transcending or overcoming modernity without approaching it from the perspective of colonial difference. For instance, movements to reconstruct Aymara and Quechua frameworks of knowledge and categories of thought have to pass through the very European categories that have denied them legitimacy. Thus, to delink is also to decentre; that is to say, to reveal that those categories that pass for universal or modern are in themselves particularities that undeniably reflect the specific cultures and knowledge systems which have shaped them, and the languages in which they are articulated.

If this discussion establishes some of the overarching concerns of the theoretical backdrop, the time has come to more thoroughly present the empirical part of the essay. I draw upon material from a course on *interculturalidad* provided by an indigenous organization spread over the Andean region of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. Founded in 1999 as a social movement with the aim of establishing indigenous educational

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in Escobar (2010).

models, the organization provides courses on *interculturalidad* to adult students. With each course spanning over a year, the students study part-time and are given academic credits on completion of the course. To ensure the informants' anonymity, the name of the pan-Andean organization will not be disclosed; however, the fact that four universities have agreed to impart academic legitimacy by acting as collaborators of the course in awarding credits to the students reveals not only that the organization is strongly positioned within the indigenous communities but also that the course in itself is deemed to conform to a certain standard.<sup>10</sup> According to the syllabus, the aim of the course is to retrieve and construct knowledge in direct relation to Andean culture and identity in local languages and terminology based upon indigenous methodology. Both the heterogeneity encapsulated by the terms 'Andean' and 'indigenous' and the common experience of negated identities, ways of thinking and interpretations of the world are acknowledged. Interviews were conducted individually with the three teachers and eight of the students from the course, focusing specifically on definitions of *interculturalidad* and its practical significance. All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed verbatim.<sup>11</sup> In the analyses, how and with whom the specific interviews were performed will be clarified.

First of all, it needs to be said that I have no intention of pushing for generalizations or offering a comprehensive account of approaches to *interculturalidad* among indigenous alliances in the Andes. In drawing

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<sup>10</sup> For reasons of anonymity, the universities will not be disclosed. However, they are located in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru and Sweden. The course is 30 ECTS, which equals one semester of full-time studies.

<sup>11</sup> All interviews were conducted in Spanish. Although I am aware of the limitations of such an approach, the reasons for this undertaking are related both to my own linguistic limitations in Quechua and Aymara and to the use of Spanish as the official language of the course. The explanation for this is that, on the one hand, students may carry different languages with them, meaning that Spanish offers a common ground, and on the other hand, that there are those who identify themselves as, for example, Quechua without having training in the language because of the dominance of Spanish throughout the educational system. As Morales lamented in a recent interview, when enrolled in school, he gradually lost his earlier fluency in Aymara (cf. Peñaranda, 2011). Although contradictory to the course's aims, support can be found in Mignolo's (2005) writings which stress the importance of thinking in and from a language historically disqualified as a tool for thinking, such as Quechua or Aymara, while still writing in an imperial language, in order to subvert the geo-politics of knowledge.

on material that also potentially contains internal disparities (of class, ethnicity, gender), I want to make it abundantly clear that only a few threads of a much larger tapestry are accounted for here. Nor should Morales' ascension to power, in the case of Bolivia, be read as a guarantee that *interculturalidad* for the government now means the same thing as for the grassroots movements that supported his campaign – not even a certainty that there is agreement on the meaning of *interculturalidad* within the MAS (*Movimiento al socialismo*). On the contrary, Escobar (2010, p. 25) claims that the Morales administration have failed to accomplish profound and satisfactory changes in the social structures that underlie 'the monocultural, monoepistemic, and unicultural state', which, he continues, highlights how *interculturalidad* as an attempt to transform the existing order is more likely to be struggled for from below than above. What, then, may be a sign that *interculturalidad* risks losing some of its subversive edge in the hands of the state also suggests that to speak of *interculturalidad* as a unified discourse may at times be as inaccurate as to claim a single interpretation of the word 'multiculturalism.'

Despite the lack of a harmonious definition of *interculturalidad* and the sometimes conflictive space between government and social movements, what unifies the diverse expressions and experiences existing among the indigenous populations in different parts of Latin America is the condition of being out of place in relation to modernity – the awareness of coloniality (Mignolo 2005). Given the gap in translation between *interculturalidad* and interculturality, on the one hand, and, the potential internal difference between 'above' and 'below', on the other, a primary reason for conducting interviews is the possibility of learning from indigenous agents about the historical experiences affecting how *interculturalidad* is articulated in a micro-political context beyond policy formulations on interculturality (and *interculturalidad*). This is an approach that, following Françoise Vergès (1999, p. xii), allows for 'comparisons, analogies, contrasts with other colonial experiences.'

In terms of analytical approach, I have previously outlined the way in which *interculturalidad* can be conceptualized as an attempt to delink from the historical, demographic and racial experiences of the modern/colonial world that linger on in official memory. Using modernity/coloniality as a horizon of comprehension rather than a concrete analytical tool, I place emphasis on articulations that run

counter to a framework deemed to be Western.<sup>12</sup> Engagement in such an interchange of experiences, memories and significations not only reaches toward the possibility of non-Eurocentric modes of thinking but also may contribute to an understanding of how any attempt to invoke a universal reach for interculturality, as in the case of the EU and UNESCO, risks appropriating a rhetoric produced by modernity with the hidden logic of coloniality. The starting point is provided below: a chapter that focuses on the struggle over territory, which immediately reveals itself to be interconnected with language and epistemology and foundational for *interculturalidad*.

### **One Territory, Several Peoples**

In the first instance, *interculturalidad*, as coded among indigenous alliances, has less to do with the condition of living in ethnically and culturally diverse societies, since that would presuppose the mutual recognition of diverse parties. Rather, the indigenous populations found themselves on the other side of the wall which separates the visible from the invisible part of the social space, officially excluded from the national borders now crossing the land they had cultivated before the arrival of Columbus. *Interculturalidad* was, therefore, a watchword for indigenous movements in their political mobilization, demanding to be fully recognized as citizens (Angel & Bogado, 1991). Under increasing pressure from the social movements that later would form the MAS, the liberal government of Bolivia at the time could eventually no longer ignore the protesters and in 1994 the existence of Aymara, Guaraní, Quechua and other languages spoken before colonial rule were officially recognized. In the wake of the developments in Bolivia, the other Andean nations eventually followed, as Ecuador and Peru went on to revise their constitutions - the former in 1998, the latter in 2011 - in order to acknowledge indigenous languages as part of the state alongside Spanish.

To further add to the conceptual bewilderment, another consequence of the waves of unprecedented popular uprisings in Bolivia

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<sup>12</sup> The 'West' does not entail a geographical space, but is instead an expression of modernity, a product of knowledge that was built on categories and concepts rooted in Greek and Latin languages and the modern/imperial unfolding of the West (Mignolo, 2005).

was the rewriting of educational policies in accordance with a new concept: *interculturalidad*. Nevertheless, when adopted by the government, *interculturalidad* came merely to signify bilingual education, and the decolonial dimension, which was profoundly emphasized by the indigenous movements in their articulations of the concept, was effectively erased. Although these governmental measures allowed for the organization of education in indigenous vernaculars around the country, in the eyes of the MAS, it was purely a preventive political move: an appropriation of the notion of *interculturalidad* that aimed to appease the indigenous populations while disavowing the elements that might have posed a risk to the privileges of the ruling elites. Under these conditions, Spanish continued to be the *lingua franca* of the nation, as indigenous languages were merely transformed into yet another school subject – similar to the study of a foreign language (Angel & Bogado, 1991). As is clear in this particular case, it is solely the indigenous populations that are expected to become bilingual – not the Creoles.

While these distorted versions of *interculturalidad* merely paid lip service to alterity, it is indeed evident by now that for many indigenous alliances the request for educational rights in indigenous vernaculars in the name of *interculturalidad* extends beyond language learning; this demand is a call for the inscription across subjects and curricula not only of languages but also of knowledge systems, values and beliefs that have been silenced within official discourses ever since the conquest. Thus, in reaction to state policy initiatives, indigenous alliances began to develop in-house intercultural education, a concrete example of which is the course under scrutiny.

At the office of a local indigenous umbrella organization in Ecuador, a student stresses that as a way of thinking, *interculturalidad* is constituted by coloniality. ‘It’s important to understand that the indigenous processes (*los procesos indígenas*) are processes of continuity from the *conquista* to now’, she says as we meet in Quito, before adding the following:

There has never been a moment when there was a good relationship between the indigenous population and the colonial state and later on the republican one. In this sense, I think that *interculturalidad* in itself as a concept is already marked by the colonial relation. For me, there are strong veins (*vetas fuertes*) linked to the very structure of the nation-state and the colonial structure that is maintained by the state. There you have terribly racist arrangements (*disposiciones terriblemente racistas*).

In an act of historicizing, the student describes both how, in the words of Karl Marx (1998[1848], p. 5), the colonial enterprise ‘creates a world after its own image’ and how part of the logic of the modern/colonial world is the construction of racial hierarchies in which not only skin colour but also language and religion become part of a classifying matrix. In the quotation above, the past informs the present in the student’s awareness of the way indigenism has come to symbolize inferiority since the conquest; the struggles of the present are linked to the aftermath of the colonization of the continent five centuries ago. Also apparent in the statement are the marginal effects that independence from Spain has had on the situation faced by the indigenous populations – the structures imposed by colonialism were preserved by the ruling Creole elites. Against this background, as the student continues to argue, *interculturalidad* is constituted by colonial difference, as invented when the territorial landmass of America was inscribed onto European maps; as a site of the reproduction of differences through colonialist interventions, the nation-state has the indigenous populations of today walking in their ancestors’ shoes.

‘The fight has always been about the territory’, one of the teachers explains when I ask him about *interculturalidad* near the urban centre of Cochabamba, located at the feet of the Andes in central Bolivia. Broadening the scope of his argument, he repeats that among indigenous groups throughout Latin America (*por toda la América Latina*), the struggle against the state has always been about the recovery of territory (*la lucha siempre ha sido por la recuperación del territorio*). Hence, territory – translated as territoriality (*territorialidad*), further emphasizing attachment to the earth (*la tierra*) – emerges as fundamental for interculturality:

What we’ve always been fighting for is the issue of political decisions about the territory. The basis of life (*la base de la vida*) is in the territory and it defines everything (*define todo*). Of course, it also has its proper manner (*manera propia*) of expression; in this case it also signifies a way of life (*la forma de vivir*) and the conservation of life itself (*conservar la vida misma*) and this we express in our own languages (*nuestros propios idiomas*). The major problem has been one culture’s negation of all other cultures (*de las demás culturas*) and this is what has happened here with the construction of the state (*la construcción del estado*).

It is clear that the territory over which the modern state spreads its arms is interconnected with life itself for the enunciator. With one element being interrelated with another, life becomes inseparable from territory, cosmology and language. Against this background, this quotation is intended to bring to the surface the ways in which the singular negates the existence of plural others. Given that the modern nation-state is a mono-cultural - *one* territory, *one* language, *one* religion - entity (Jonsson, 2009), any ways of life modelled on another framework are relentlessly suffocated. What must be mentioned is that the interviewee does not speak in terms of separation; rather, a story of exclusion in which the current fight is for a place within the nation is central to the statement. Additionally, he describes the ultimate objective of the struggle: 'we're fighting for a plurinational state (*un estado plurinacional*).' In using the word 'nation', the same rhetorical weapon wielded by the state itself, indigenous movements seemingly couch their ideological positions in identical terms - *x is our language, x is our territory, x is our religion* - for recognition as a political entity. Shifting from the singular to the plural is not only a manoeuvre for delinking from the authority of the prescribed positions of subjectivity enabled within the state's framework but also a communal manoeuvre to decolonize the Western-modelled state by rewriting it from another viewpoint.

Nevertheless, there are no implications of a complete eradication of the enemy - destroying everything considered to be 'Western' - in order to replace one political model with an equivalent produced in another vernacular, as is the case in translation between languages. A plurinational state is neither a rejection of the nation-state as an organized political system nor merely a minor reconfiguration. Based on the conviction that lived experiences and languages in the Andes are not always compatible with European models, Mignolo (2005) clarifies that the genealogy of the plurinational state as a communal system is grounded in indigenous memories and languages through which a claim is made for the right to co-existence *of* the state, rather than co-existence *within* the Western-modelled state that has denied them participation. Subsequently, a plurinational state can be conceived as the product of an amalgamation of Western political theory and indigenous frameworks of knowledge which creates another space for living. Armed with this insight, it becomes clearer why indigenous intellectuals and the leaders of social movements resist and discard bilingual education

designed by former governments, as previously mentioned: such educational initiatives would result not in co-existence but in a monocultural state with a slightly different design. What merits attention, then, is that bilingual education is not limited to language training *per se* in its attempt to speak the same logic in different vernaculars; rather, as touched upon above, language has a wider function, being interrelated with territory, cosmology and knowledge. The subsequent sections are dedicated to this issue.

### **Indigenous Face, Spanish Voice, Lost Identity**

*Interculturalidad*, explains a middle-aged student whom I interviewed in Urubamba, a small town in the Peruvian highlands, allows different indigenous cultures to view and interpret the world through the lens of their own beliefs in their own languages. The importance of this manoeuvre of reconstruction appears to stem from the interference of coloniality in the initiatory pedagogy of school and society:

On a general basis we have sometimes rejected our culture, we who come from indigenous cultures (*los que provenimos de culturas indígenas*). This is because of prejudices, of ignorance; we believe that we're inferior, we become ashamed of our culture (*tenemos vergüenza de nuestra cultura*), we become ashamed of our language, ashamed of our mother tongue. They have taught us this (*nos han enseñado eso*), that the European culture (*la cultura europea*) is the superior one, that it's the most developed, supposedly. Education here clearly has an occidental format wherein they teach us to value what is European (*a valorar lo europeo*) and not what is ours.

By diagnosing core symptoms of the effect of European influence on life in the Andes, the interviewee describes a colonial difference in which being indigenous is equated with lack, synonymous with inferiority in relation to what is ascribed to Europe. Although she is describing these issues in a predominantly general manner, the student's articulation of negative emotions in relation to being indigenous - an experience of shame leading to gradual rejection - is significant. The process described is that of identification and disavowal, in which pretensions to be part of the nation's univocal subject require the adoption of a perspective on life, knowledge and subjectivity (among other things) derived from modern European models, in order to gain entrance to, as Paz has previously phrased it, a living order. In locating the dissemination of European texts in an impersonal 'they' related to the

educational system, the student describes a two-stroke process: the schools bind pupils to a state written in and from the language of the colonizers, which in turn, continues to exacerbate the colonial wound.

A recurring theme in the postcolonial works of José María Arguedas (1987, p. 79) is the idea that the instruments applied to conserve the power balance between Europe and its others are eventually idealized and appropriated by its victims. In his novel *Deep Rivers*, set in the Peruvian highlands, a schoolboy laconically justifies his lacklustre effort to learn Quechua in this way: 'I am not in the habit of speaking Indian', before adding, 'I am thinking of living in Lima or abroad.' A defensive strategy used to escape the agony of inadequacy, this character's words closely resemble those spoken by the student above. Both quotations touch upon the way in which speaking in an indigenous language emerges as a shameful sign of failure and brutishness, while Spanish appears to be a symbol of development and supremacy. Symptoms of coloniality are not limited to the language itself; colonialist vestiges are equally ingrained within languages. In the case of Spanish, imperialist attitudes have found a home in the realm of the idiomatic negative imperative - ¡*No seas indio!* (*Don't be Indian!*) - in everyday speech that encourages the recipient to stop acting ignorantly and instead be civilized. Against such a background of exposure to a language affiliated with domination, a student interviewed in El Alto outlines how *interculturalidad* offers:

tools to re-recognize (*para volver a reconocer*) in my memory what my grandparents had: the language, the forms, the traditions. [...] Thus, to live my reality and accept myself a little bit more (*aceptarme un poco más*) for who I am and not try to copy ways of life that are outside of our reality (*que son ajenas de nuestra realidad*). I think that this is *interculturalidad*, to accept ourselves as we are (*aceptarnos como somos*).

This remark substantiates the argument pursued above regarding colonialism's rupturing of the developmental patterns of indigenous populations. Resistance occurs in the form of claiming particularity, a way of being that, as the argument goes, differs from those who were originally external: indigenous communities are losing their identity in learning Spanish (*pierdan su identidad al aprender el castellano*), another student interpolates. Speaking in a single European language becomes not merely a reinforcement of historical power structures that oblige the addressee to communicate in the idiom of the *metrópoli*: the very act of speaking is a continuous reminder of the imperial legacy the

postcolonial subject carries within - *lengua*, Spanish for both language and the physical tongue (Azar, 2006). Based on such consciousness of alienation from the body, resistance signals the construction of a surface of projection to brace against in writing a biography rooted in memories other than those of the imperial dominant. Thus, targeting negated points of identification with one's ancestors marks an attempt to radically rupture (and delink from) identities prescribed from above. Essential in such an operation is a language to which identity can be connected and which is capable of communicating views and values true to the enunciator.

To speak in clearer terms, in the quotations above, resistance is provoked and enabled by negative dialectics: the same weapon of negation used by Europe against the colonies is appropriated by its victims. Colonial populations provided the mirror with which Europe could theorize and imagine modernity as a scale of advancement that placed them not only at the forefront of history but also at the centre of the world. As is inherent in such an operation, negativity determines identity by establishing deviation from what the subject is not - *I am x because I am not y*. The national chronicles from which indigenous presence has been erased are appropriated as confirmation of the particularity of indigenous groupings - *We are x because we are not y (the y we were never allowed to be)*. The attempt to convert the negative pole inherited by colonialism into a sense of belonging that indigenous populations can be proud of, something positive, marks the first movement toward delinking, or according to a student in Ecuador, 'the possibility of establishing a horizontal platform for discussion' (*un escenario horizontal de discusión*).

However, symmetrical interchange requires a tongue that enables the enunciators' priority of interpretation, so in this respect, resistance is a practice of shifting the geo-politics of knowledge in order to convert 'indigenous' into a noun that can signify and encapsulate the subject as agent. Educated and trained in the West, my first impulse would always be to question any attempt to define the true and real nature of a given culture. However, transforming the status of 'indigenous' from merely an adjective for characteristics that are absent from, and which therefore define, the category of 'European', requires a horizon of comprehension to work towards, and the process of reconstructing points of identification is indispensable to delinking. Only then, as Gloria Anzaldúa (1999, p. 44) states in *Borderlands/La*

*frontera*, can sufficient leverage be obtained ‘to carve and chisel my own face, to staunch the bleeding with ashes, to fashion my own gods out of my entrails.’

### **Different Histories, Other Types of Knowledge**

With every language comes different concepts, with every concept a certain story; a corollary to this is the fact that the genealogy compressed within the theoretical apparatus of René Descartes is different from that of his contemporary Waman Puma de Ayala; the roots of *Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* evidently differ from the footnotes in *Discours de la méthode*. A recurring theme in the interview statements is the inability to escape European interference and the dominance of Spanish, which handcuffs its speakers to colonialism. Hierarchies are revealed in the interconnection between geo-political location and the language in which knowledge is produced, so that a Peruvian philosopher is condemned to know Descartes because of the universalist propositions underlying modern Western philosophy; a French philosopher, situated in the original home of modernity, would not have to know Waman Puma. For a concrete case in point, there is no need to go further than an attempt to describe the governance of the Inca Empire without using a concept of government modelled on modern Europe. The impossibility of doing so illustrates not only the way that certain local knowledge systems have acquired global reach *vis-à-vis* others that remain local, but also a permanent dependency on an imperial legacy. Continuously lingering on this theme, a course teacher presented *interculturalidad* as a strategy for combatting:

a modernity of industrial capitalism (*una modernidad del capitalismo industrial*) that has been responsible for the conformity of one way of being, of living, of thinking in the world (*una forma de ser, de vivir, de pensar en el mundo*), one way to be in the world, which it has installed as the only possibility. Then, this view of development makes progress the final stage of human evolution (*el último escalon de la evolución humana*), at which we all are obliged to arrive; an utterly colonial benchmark.

In describing the relentless symptoms of coloniality, the teacher’s words speak to the deprivation of agency and recognition in an order dominated by European patterns. With the industrial revolution in its pocket, the key to modernity is a particular understanding of development and progress in which subjects can only be spoken for or

spoken to through a narrative of transition that always privileges the 'modern' - Europe (Chakrabarty, 2008). As explained by the interviewee, all forms of being, knowing and advancing not invoked by modernity are translated in terms of absence, lack and incompleteness. When Fredric Jameson (2003, p. 76) asserts that 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism,' he implicitly underscores how delinking from modernity - circumventing the capitalism with which it is interrelated - is deemed almost essential by indigenous populations, although it may be impossible to envisage from a Western viewpoint. The universal tendencies that modernity and capitalism have achieved together, however, become provincial when another rationale is added to the mix. A student interviewed in Cochabamba describes a logic of resistance to the dominant paradigm of capitalism in relation to territory:

In the big world (*el mundo mayor*) territory is valued as a piece of merchandise (*objeto de mercancía*). In the Andean world it isn't, rather we care for it with respect, as something that gives us life (*como algo que nos da vida*), that is part of... like a person, more (*como una persona más*).

The ellipsis in the quotation above indicates the locus from which the interviewee speaks, part of a general movement of resistance which attempts to reclaim the territory. The planetary metaphor underlines a subjugated position by contrasting 'Andean' and 'Big' - an inclination that bears traces of the dictum *the West and the Rest* - which draws sharp boundaries between the agents and the silenced in a hierarchy both of ontology (European versus indigenous) and epistemology (science versus beliefs) determined by geo-political location. Adhering conscientiously to this reasoning means that the adoption of the noun 'Andean' rather than 'Bolivian' can be read on the one hand as an act of resistance to the territorial demarcations that are a hallmark of the modern state, by signalling a broader affinity to a territory overlapped by violently imposed frontiers. On the other hand, evading the term 'Bolivian' can also be viewed as a subtle critique of the Bolivian state's failure to invoke the indigenous populations as part of the national body. Certainly, the comparative framework applied in the quotation indicates the privileged space I occupy as part of *el mundo mayor* (since the need to define the Andean world in terms of its differences from this other world only arises because of my presence), carrying with me an

academic language that tends to translate otherness as the inhabitation of a marginal position.

Equally important is the way in which the interviewee opposes the split between nature and culture – that is, the structure of modernity – through attempts to ascribe agency to the territory. She articulates a view of territory that equates it with a human subject, in contrast to the dominant paradigm of modernity, which, in providing legitimacy to the capitalist logic of exploitation, regards nature as lifeless and mechanistic. In eschewing the binaries alleged to be central to modernity (cf. Escobar, 2010), the quotation highlights the way in which a firm division between nature and human is untranslatable within an Andean tradition. Persons, living systems, nature and – in Western eyes – lifeless objects are thereby not distinguished; rather, they are all conceived as part of a network of living interactions (Mignolo & Schiwy, 2003). The foundation of this logic is a reading of human and nature as a horizontal juxtaposition rather than a hierarchy of being – territory is the foundation of existence, which gives birth but also death; it is the vital environment of the growth, reproduction and transformation of every subject, culture and community.

‘It’s my territory that gives me my identity’, a student informs me as we stroll in the small garden of her workplace, a short ride from Cuzco. Delving further into this reasoning, she underlines the importance of *interculturalidad* as a return to one’s identity and to respecting Mother Earth (*la Pacha*) because ‘she is our mother (*ella es nuestra madre*) who provides us with our food (*nuestros alimentos*). We also respect our water without contaminating it because the water is life, it has life (*el agua es vida, tiene vida*).’ Surrounded by a dramatic landscape, she points her finger at snow-capped mountain peaks and continues: ‘We also respect our Apus that surround us and protect us (*nos rodean y nos protegen*).’

Notable here is the repeated emphasis on points of identification that were equally apparent in previous sections on both the rewriting of the state and the struggle over language that stems from the indispensable interrelation of ways of life and territory. A claim for the existence of life in the waters and protection from los Apus – symbolically, *Apu* is an honorific for a person in Quechua – signals not only interaction with the landscape and dependency on it but also, as mentioned, a demand for a profound understanding of human and nature as inseparable, always locked in an intricate dance, and in an

intersubjective relationship of co-realization and fertilization. Within this logic, life becomes circular rather than linear; modernity's firm emphasis on development and progress lacks a proper equivalent. This is not to suggest, however, the absence of methods of reasoning or the use of specific technologies but to underline, drawing on the utterances above, the way that European modernity invariably is revealed to be provincial and context-bound when light is cast on loopholes in the universalist tendencies of its rhetoric. From the perspective that life is circular, modernity must be formulated around the establishment of a relationship with the territory - delinked from the view of nature as another conquered object. Just as Waman Puma and Descartes come from different circumstances, meaning that their respective theories are produced in languages that are in turn part of multiple singular histories, a sole modernity can never claim universal validity in a single language.

## Conclusion

Instead of embarking on a discussion of parochialism or essentialism - strategic or not - of the type that tends to characterize writings on claims to non-Western difference, I have sought to draw theoretical attention to the fact that *interculturalidad* is not interculturality by noting how translation of these somewhat conflicting notions requires an understanding of the socio-political circumstances under which they prevailed. Based on the empirical material drawn upon here, *interculturalidad* implies bringing about a new model of society through a different vision of development, nation, identity and territorialization; that is to say, a vision that is not dependent upon or structured by the imposition of one ideal society on another. In keeping with this, taking my cue from Mignolo (2007), *interculturalidad* can be said to represent a horizon that breaks away from the single cultural vision of modernity/coloniality. Furthermore, in articulating the insufficiency of Western knowledge and continental philosophy, a strong argument can be made that *interculturalidad* expresses an alternative framework for debates on modernity, development and ways of life. It is no accident, then, that in her description of the term Catherine Walsh (2009, p. 5) makes use of 'Abya Yala' rather than 'Latin America'; a choice of terminology that emphasizes that *interculturalidad*, in comparison to interculturality, has another genealogy; it is a product of 'the cosmovisions, life philosophies and practices of the peoples of Abya

Yala and the descendants of the African diaspora' that are 'now re-apprehended as guides for the re-founding of the Bolivian and Ecuadorian state and society.'

Having arrived at this point, it is clear that Evo Morales' speech, quoted at the beginning of this essay, on the necessity of recovering the territory is not a statement that should be read through a capitalist lens, where recovery may be equated with ownership, but rather an assertion of the right to live in harmony with the territory to which the subject feels attachment. What is privileged, in other words, is another rationale in relation to territory, one inseparable from knowledge, cosmology and language that questions the exploitative logic of capitalism by moving towards a developmental model that involves a profound ecological dimension (cf. Dussel, 2012). Against this background, *interculturalidad* may be read as a practice of reinforcing resistance to the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality articulated from the perspective of Aymara, Quechua and other languages subjugated to Spanish, led by indigenous needs and principles of knowledge.

Interculturality, however, continues to be written in the imperial languages, as UNESCO reiterates the imperative to embrace their concept of universally shared values. In the same way that *interculturalidad* is not interculturality, the downside of invoking the universal is that it blurs the contextual codification of such values and also the way in which the privilege of universalizing derives from the dominant position ascribed to the West through modernity/coloniality (cf. Mignolo, 2007). Nowhere does this dominance manifest itself more clearly than in the case of the EU, in which interculturality is equated with the continent's cultural and linguistic attributes which have been spread around the world (Aman, 2012b). The pragmatic identification of the potential conditions for interculturality in the European languages into which subjects in erstwhile colonies continue to be born illustrates a continuing exaltation of the colonial difference. In such a rewritten - or rather, whitewashed - version of the colonial archive, historical tools of oppression are transformed into convenient channels of communication in the present that, paradoxically, enforce continued dependence on Latin in the form of a subtle imperative to mould linguistic apparatuses in accordance with a European frame of reference (Aman, 2012c). Consequently, where *interculturalidad* works toward pluriversality, interculturality risks universalizing the particularity that is modernity.

This does not imply, however, that the terms either can or should be regarded as dichotomous, as *interculturalidad* encompasses elements of interculturality via a continuing theoretical dependency on the West. In the name of *interculturalidad*, resistance occurs in the form of claiming particularity, replicating the very instruments of negation used against indigenous populations. Although they can be read as acts of retrieving subject positions in order to delink from the vestiges of colonialism, the separatist programs imbued with *interculturalidad* are seemingly tacit duplications of nationalist ideologies rooted in modern Europe. At the same time, however, the argument can be made that even when it operates within the system of modernity, the strategy deployed by indigenous movements carries seeds of delinking in bringing forward local histories that are constitutive of modernity itself. In this regard, *interculturalidad* signals the possibility of a non-Eurocentric perspective by appropriating the content of the conversation established by the West and changing the terms.

Although some theoretical issues of *interculturalidad* as dealt with in this essay – for instance, reconsideration of the nation-state and of the human-nature binary – have already had practical implications in the rewriting of the state in Bolivia as *plurinacional* and the legally enforceable rights conferred to nature in Ecuador, several academic commentators have stressed the wide gap between theorizing *interculturalidad* and turning these principles into concrete policies and practices (cf. Acosta, 2009; Escobar, 2010; Walsh, 2009). At the same time, it is argued that many indigenous organizations view state-centred measures on *interculturalidad* as inadequate; that is to say, not radical enough to enable a structural transformation of society (Escobar, 2010). Having already mentioned the sometimes strained relationship between local social movements and the MAS-led regime in Bolivia, it is also necessary to add that in Ecuador insufficient inclusion of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in the plans of the state has continued to fuel tensions with the government, which became not least apparent when the Rafael Correa administration decided to suspend the indigenous university, Amawtay Wasi (*Universidad pluricultural Amawtay Wasi*), in autumn of 2013, due to its failure to meet academic quality standards.<sup>13</sup> Since others have already described the university

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<sup>13</sup> The full protocol with verdict (resolution N0. 001-068-CEAACES-2013) can be read online at the homepage of the *Consejo de evaluación, acreditación y aseguramiento de*

system in Latin America, as well as the systems of evaluation, as a ‘colonial wound’ (*herencia colonial*) and commented on the way in which Eurocentric paradigms remain the yardstick against which everything is measured (Lander, 2000, p. 65), this particular event opens up a potential discussion on the criteria of quality used when evaluating indigenous universities such as the aforementioned Amawtay Wasi or the Túpac Katari in Bolivia; especially since it is understandable that indigenous modes of knowledge may preserve something untranslatable in relation to European paradigms. While this is beyond the scope of this paper; it does serve as a reminder of the impossibility of speaking of a harmonized discourse of *interculturalidad* as the term represents a horizon of continuous interaction and dialogue, always under construction, invoking different logics, rationalities and modes of knowledge (Walsh, 2009). Yet despite all its internal differences, a strong argument can be put forth that *interculturalidad* gives flesh to the project of delinking; that is to say, the Andean nations may be moving at the very least beyond the idea of a singular modernity with universal reach and towards a plurality of modernities (Escobar, 2010; Mignolo, 2005).

Lastly, a vital interrogative posed to any text seeking to work across the North/South grammar is that of speaking for someone else, enacting violence on the subjectivity of the Other – forming a ‘people’ rather than a multiplicity of singularities (cf. Spivak, 2008). Aware of the constant pitfalls that threaten such an undertaking, I hope to be forgiven for any errors caused by my outsider status in my confrontation with the texts produced by interviewees in this essay. By bracing against translations of *interculturalidad* from within an educational model in the Andes, my aim has been, on the one hand, to underline the point that the meaning of interculturality as formulated by supranational bodies is a particularity that invokes the universal on grounds that neglect colonial remains, and on the other hand, to bring to the fore a power dimension

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*la calidad de la educación superior:*

[http://www.ceaaces.gob.ec/index.php?option=com\\_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=334](http://www.ceaaces.gob.ec/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=334)

<sup>13</sup> Elsewhere I have elaborated on this point in relation to Swedish students of interculturality by placing emphasis on the categories they use in construing otherness (cf. Aman, 2013).

that is often lost in a relativistic discussion of cultural diversity through conceptualization of the space between interculturality and *interculturalidad* in terms of a colonial difference. Acknowledging the findings of this essay also entails the recognition that any attempt to implement interculturality on the premises of, for example, the EU risks becoming an inadequate cure to its own poison in other parts of the world – the reproduction of a pithy note left on a wall: *la Gran Mentira*. Hopefully, the profits have exceeded the costs in my attempt to, following Gayatri Spivak (2009, p. xi), ‘acknowledge complicity yet walk the walk’, but naturally, I can never be the final judge of this.

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