

# Impossible Interculturality?

## Education and the Colonial Difference in a Multicultural World

Robert Aman



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## Words of Appreciation

At a poetry reading in Chapel Hill a couple of years ago I listened to a poem whose every second verse comprised the sentence: *I'm grateful for you*. Long ago both the author and the explicit content of the poem vanished from my remembrance, yet now as I am putting final words in place, that humid night in a North Carolina awaiting fall returns to my memory. Powerful, yet simple and nakedly obvious; they embody the message I want to convey in acknowledging a few of the many who, in one way or another, have impacted the making of this dissertation.

Above all, it is a pleasure to recall the intellectual support of my supervisors: Andreas Fejes has untiringly read, and critically commented on, an endless sequence of drafts over the years. I wish to thank him for unwavering enthusiasm, kindness and mentoring. Stefan Jonsson has not only been an astute reader of my manuscripts but his work on, and knowledge of, postcolonial theory have been essential for my own thinking and I feel extremely privileged to have had him at my disposal for all this time. Unfailing in her support during the first years as this project started to take shape, Lisbeth Eriksson's encouragement and good advice have always come to my aid when I needed them most.

A considerable amount of time writing this dissertation has been spent at homes away from home, primarily Duke University and the University of Oxford. The course work, seminars and discussions of the interconnection between modernity and coloniality during my time with the Program in Literature at Duke University helped set the tone for the theoretical backdrop to this dissertation. An invitation to the Faculty of English Language and Literature at the University of Oxford gave me an excellent situation for the final phases of this thesis. During my time at Oxford, I also benefited from the weekly meetings of the Postcolonial Writing and Theory Seminar hosted at Wadham College. For these reasons, I am very grateful to Walter Mignolo and Peter McDonald, respectively, who not only gave me the

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Finally, I owe a special debt of appreciation to my mother and my father.

*I’m grateful for you (all).*

R.A.



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# Introduction

At the centre of this dissertation stands a simple yet fundamental question for education: is it possible to learn from the Other? If we confine ourselves to biblical allusions, the possibility of even speaking of a capitalized Other in relation to education is the result of one single historical moment: Babel. A tower made of bricks to reach the topmost heaven, a tower so high that its pinnacle is face to face with Jehovah, is blasted to punish the overweening pride of its architects. As the eleventh chapter of Genesis makes clear, the punishment for defying God is confusion; a certain disorder deriving from a sudden multiplication of tongues: 'Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth' (Genesis, 11:7-8).

In the myth of Babel the birth of difference grows out of geographical displacement and linguistic separation as people are scattered to various parts of the world and, due to their lack of a common language, are unable to reunite. A foreshadowing of the great multicultural capitals to come, the fall of Babel not only created different languages, it also generated a language of difference, as the word 'like' as in 'I am like you' stemmed from 'like' as in the likeness of one's own race, ethnicity or culture. While God's wrath may have irredeemably transformed the world, explanations of more recent vintage for infusions of diversity tend to point to technological advancements, economic globalization, and the ever-increasing blending of populations. Without ignoring those reactions to current global transformations that are sceptical or even downright hostile – from the Right's ethnocultural arguments for closing borders, to the Left's emphasis on the capitalist logic underlying global inequalities – Perry Anderson argues that the period we live in 'is not one of delimitation, but intermixture, celebrating the cross-

over, the hybrid, the potpourri' (1998, p. 93).

Directed as we all are towards an Other and others, education must keep up with the times as social relations and processes transcend borders, thereby making it impossible to restrict teaching and learning to the nation-state. As keeping cultures neatly hived off from each other no longer seems to be a serious option, there is now a proliferation of *interculturality* in education, a paradigm whose global relevance reveals itself in public policy, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist intervention, and international security. Projecting transcendence, a cross-cultural dimension, interculturality appears to be based on the view that we have obligations to others, a certain responsibility that stretches beyond those to whom we share formal ties of a common passport, religious affiliation or citizenship. Additionally, the same notion holds that we have to take seriously the value of specific human lives, to have similar standards for other people's children, by taking an interest in beliefs and practices that lend those lives significance (Appiah, 2006). According to its advocates, interculturality can provide the basis for new democratic projects working for the mutual thriving of all humanity. This is because, as Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood (2012) argue, it is allegedly able to reconcile universal values and cultural specificities.

Interculturality, as a rallying point of educational policies and the academic humanities, became increasingly prominent from the mid-1980s on. To commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Association for Intercultural Education (IAIE) in 2008, Jagdish Gundara and Agostino Portera edited a special issue of the journal *Intercultural Education*, in which interculturality was cast as the most important educational initiative for addressing problems of inequality – racism, xenophobia, socio-economic marginalization – throughout the world (Gundara & Portera, 2008). As anthologies, educational literature and the considerable number of academic courses devoted to interculturality propagate its importance, citing the *Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* (2009, p. xiii), as a

means ‘to better understand others’ behaviours to interact effectively and appropriately with others and, ultimately, to become more interculturally competent’, the disciplinary construct has secured its foothold in both the academy and mainstream publishing.

The IAIE is not alone in its promotional efforts; its anniversary year was also marked by the European Union (EU) and its institutions, which in the very same year, 2008, celebrated the year of intercultural dialogue. Without claiming any direct causal connection, it was also around the time the IAIE was founded that interculturality made its broader entrance into the vocabulary of supranational bodies, including, besides the EU, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe (CE). It has been suggested that a key moment came when the European ministers of education unanimously passed a resolution for the schooling of migrant children in 1983, in which the importance of promoting interculturality was strongly underlined (Portera, 2008). Paying close attention to the details of policies on culture, the labour market and trade reveals the now widespread use of interculturality as a strategy for dealing with otherness; but it is, above all, in education that the term has found a home.

Education is, to paraphrase UNESCO, the primary arena for understanding interculturality and generating the skills necessary for everyone living in today’s culturally diverse and globalized world: ‘Intercultural Education provides all learners with cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills that enable them to contribute to respect, understanding and solidarity among individuals, ethnic, social, cultural and religious groups and nations’ (2006, p. 37). In viewing education as an instrument for interculturality, however, there is a tendency to read interculturality as a problem of knowledge; that is to say, interculturality is often framed in educational terms as what *we* need to know in order to eradicate the borders that grew up between us after our separation at Babel. Thus, the question of interculturality gets rerouted along an epistemological path. Determining what constitutes the *right* kind of knowledge now

becomes highly significant to teaching and learning since the basic premise of such a stance is that the more *we* know about *them*, the easier it is for *us* to approach *them*, to respond to *them*, to integrate *them*. While the focus inevitably is on the Other as the object of *our* knowledge, it must be remembered that knowledge, from this point of view, is conceived as available to everybody everywhere, regardless of place of birth, skin colour, belief, educational trajectory, sex and sexuality.

Against this background, the present work seeks to map and explore what constitutes such allegedly *intercultural* knowledge: what does one need to know in order to become intercultural? Treating the issue of what it means to be intercultural as an open-ended question, an inquiry into a concept that is epistemologically loaded in many ways, seems inevitable given the broad range of debates on interculturality, spanning from peace studies to translation theory, and from multicultural policy-making to teacher training. This dissertation interrogates the different ways in which intercultural knowledge is negotiated and defined on distinct yet interrelated levels: the first essay<sup>1</sup> analyses policy writings on interculturality with a focus on education at the level of supranational bodies; the second draws upon interviews with students who have completed a university course on interculturality in Sweden; the third examines academic literature on interculturality; and, finally, the fourth shifts geopolitical focus to the Andean region of South America where interviews were conducted with students and teachers in a pan-Andean educational initiative run by indigenous movements. In that part of the world the notion of *interculturalidad* – translation: interculturality – is not only a subject on the educational agenda, it has also become a core component of these social movements in their struggles for decolonization.

Unlike much previous research and writing on the subject, this study thus brings other translations of interculturality into the picture. Even if interculturality acts as code for a fluctuating

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<sup>1</sup> Although occasionally ‘paper’ or ‘article’ is used to describe the four studies in this dissertation, ‘essay’ is the usual word of choice throughout the book.

and unbordered world brought about through a commitment to inclusiveness, it seems unlikely that it would have the same signification and equal appeal to all of us. Essentially, it begs the question of whether it is possible to have respect for the many faces of humanity while concomitantly expecting everyone to become intercultural in a particular prescribed way. What I am pushing for is to open up the possibility of other ways of thinking about interculturality depending on where, by whom and in what language it is being articulated. Moreover, this also entails contemplating the ways in which otherness is defined and how engagement with alterity leaves intact or challenges the very differences that categorize the Other as other.

Several educational theorists have diagnosed the intensified preoccupation with the Other as part of a broader turn towards difference in education, anchored in ethics, tolerance and cosmopolitanism. These include, most importantly, Gert Biesta (2006), Thomas Popkewitz (2008), and Sharon Todd (2003), who have all done highly significant work on issues related to interculturality. In *Learning from the Other*, Todd takes her cue from Emmanuel Levinas in order to explore the ethical possibilities of education. It is against the backdrop of the lived realities of racism, sexism, and even genocide, that Todd puts forth her argument for a focus on ethics in education, arguing that it is by juxtaposing ethics with education that we might ‘explore hopeful possibilities for living well together’ (2003, pp. 1–9). With a particular interest in social justice education, Todd goes on to challenge the predominant idea that knowledge about the Other is the way forward to a responsible relationship anchored in ethics. Rather, the possibility for an ethical dimension in education, she continues, lies in its ‘disruptive, unpredictable time of attentiveness to the Other’ as it cannot be codified as a set of prescriptions for practice. Accordingly, what is of central importance in teaching is not to acquire knowledge about the Other, but to consider ‘its practices themselves as relations to otherness and thus always already potentially ethical – that is, participating in a network of relations that lend themselves to moments of nonviolence’. Todd warns that there is

an overwhelming risk that learning *from* will become restricted to learning *about*.

Popkewitz, drawing on Michel Foucault, focuses in *Cosmopolitanism and the Age of School Reform* on the regimes of power operating within the project of cosmopolitanism as it unfolds in contemporary discourses on schooling, policy and research. By bringing into view the politics of knowledge mobilized in the project of cosmopolitanism, Popkewitz uncovers a system of reason that governs the subject – first the child, later the citizen – in terms of who it is, who it should be, and who fits the narratives of that subject. In tracing its roots to the Enlightenment, Popkewitz argues that cosmopolitanism entails normative ideas of reason, rationality, and freedom that tend to differentiate between *us* and *them*, self and Other, in its attempt to produce a subject who acts and thinks in a certain way based on ‘fears of those who are not “reasoned” and reasonable’ (2008, p. xiii). Seen in this way, the pedagogical project of cosmopolitanism can be explored historically as linked to the making of citizens of the republic in the name of universal and cosmopolitan values – to civilize the uncivilized, to tame the untamed. For Popkewitz, this very impulse to enlighten carries in itself an unspoken double quality that, albeit through a vocabulary in constant keeping with the norms of the time, divides the ‘civilized’ from those outside its unity. In short, cosmopolitanism is paradoxical by its own nature as it includes all individuals inside the limits of normalcy while excluding those deemed irrational and unreasonable.

As for Biesta, his main concern, in *Beyond Learning*, stems from the question of how to ‘live with others in a world of plurality and difference’ (2006, p. ix). With Zygmunt Bauman and Jacques Rancière among his primary sources of inspiration, Biesta argues that a chief problem of education is its reliance on traditional humanism, which creates a norm for what it means to be human by adopting a pre-conceived idea of the human essence. Disputing the possibility that it is even feasible, much less desirable, to identify the essence of humanity, Biesta stresses the need to reformulate – or rather, re-conquer – education, which he

regards as synonymous with socialization as it prohibits the Other from radically altering our understanding of what it means to be human. It is only by discarding the view of education as necessarily based on a humanist understanding of human subjectivity that we can approach an answer to the question of how to live peacefully with the Other, Biesta concludes.

For all the important insights deriving from these theoretical projects that seek to reconstruct and reformulate epistemic norms, I am, however, uneasy about their almost exclusive reliance on Western texts and authors. Given that they all agree that the Other is an integral part of our identity, in the sense that our identity is always created through negation, it is surprising that they do not highlight the fact that Europe, as an identity and culture, has been formed in a dialectical relationship with a non-European alterity (Bhabha, 1994). Reliant on what Walter Mignolo (1999, p. 41) has called ‘the “normal” procedure in modern epistemology to delocalize concepts and detach them from their local histories’, these texts risk preserving a latent Eurocentrism, especially as they do not conduct any geopolitical analysis in relation to knowledge. For Mignolo, the analysis of epistemology must be done in relation to its function in conforming to and sustaining a hierarchy of knowledge and knowers particularly adapted for colonialism, in which the most relevant distinction concerns one’s cultural identity.

To bring colonialism into the picture is to acknowledge the darker side of modernity; to disclose that the populations in the colonies provided the mirror in which Europe could perceive itself as, using the terms proper to the concepts in play above, ‘Enlightened’, ‘human’ and ‘civilized’. Broadly speaking, the vital insights and critical finesse that Biesta, Popkewitz and Todd offer converge on an acknowledgment of epistemological diversity and of the ways in which certain perspectives hold sway. Yet, they overlook the consequent subordination of non-European modes of knowing, conceptualization and representation. In restricting themselves to a diversity of interpretations within a Western framework of knowledge, they fail to fully respond to the task of making epistemology geopolitically case-sensitive in ways that

avoid reproducing colonialist cartographies.

### **In Other Languages, or the Language of the Other**

In taking the hierarchies within epistemologies as a point of entry, I seek to wean interculturality from its comfort zone of flat substitutability between sameness and otherness by pressing the question of what determines the culturally different in light of Europe's colonial past. For all the seductive possibilities it offers in term of bridging cultural specificities, it must be remembered that interculturality, relying on its root-word, 'culture' and recognizing it as a force in the world, with the added prefix of 'inter' suggesting movement across borders of various kinds, is a perspective that demands, as does any other theory, assimilation to its own point of view. Given the significance of historical factors in forming ethnic, racial and cultural relations, what must be taken into consideration are the structural, as well as the wider social, political and economic, forces at work in all cultural relations.

To speak of a hierarchical approach to culture, however, is not to dispute the existence of different conceptions of culture; that there are prevalent strains in contemporary intellectual debates that derive from either anthropology, where 'culture' generally refers to 'ways of life' inclusive of common beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours basic to a group of human beings; or from literature, music and art, where 'culture' is frequently associated with the sum of achievements related to what are perceived as refined features of 'civilized life' (Chow, 1998). Rather, what I am questioning here is the presumption that the movement of history is always a progression from one or another unified past to a more diverse and pluralistic future (McDonald, 2011).

It is necessary to emphasize that such scepticism should not be confused with ethnocultural arguments for the coherence and homogeneity of national cultures. Quite the opposite: what I want to suggest is that all cultures, including dominant ones, are less unified and more blended than is often believed to be the case or than the governing ideology of a particular moment may

presuppose. Against this background, what might prove tricky, then, is to distinguish between self and Other by way of culture. Akin to the arbitrary nature of cultural relations, this point can be concretized by drawing attention to a complex issue seldom explored in relation to the Babel myth: where is the border drawn between vernaculars?

Although states legitimize themselves through official languages, it is impossible, for someone standing at the border, to say exactly when and where Catalan begins and Spanish stops, where Swedish starts and Norwegian ends, especially considering that languages in themselves are products of flows and encounters that leave their marks in, for instance, vocabulary, syntax and proverbs. ‘What is French but bad Latin?’, Marcel Proust famously asked in *In Search of Lost Time*.<sup>2</sup> If, as Abdelkébir Khatibi (1993, p. 10) has suggested, nations tend to mask the fact that they are in themselves ‘a plurality, a mosaic of cultures, if not a plurality of languages and genealogies’, others have gone to great lengths to emphasize the sheer hybridity<sup>3</sup> of all cultures. Edward Said writes (1994, p. 261): ‘The history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowing’; and Stefan Jonsson adds (1993, p. 224): ‘All cultures are not only multicultural; they are also transcultural’.<sup>4</sup> Although I acknowledge that there are

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<sup>2</sup> The quotation is from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1990, p. 60) who in an interview with Sneja Gunew comments on identity politics, representation and the dangers of homogenizing when discussing multiculturalism by stating that ‘Proust in *A la recherche*, when someone is criticizing Françoise’s French, writes, “What is French but bad Latin?” So from that point of view, one can’t distinguish, you can’t say that this is a French position or a Roman position.’

<sup>3</sup> ‘Hybridity’ is far from a coherent concept, giving rise to multiple interpretations as it has travelled from linguistic theory (Bakhtin, 1981) to cultural criticism (Bhabha, 1994). The way the term is employed here is to suggest the impossibility of essentialism as hybridity turns sameness into difference, and makes difference into sameness, but in such a way that what is considered the same is no longer the same just as the different is no longer merely different (Young, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> ‘För samtliga kulturer gäller att de inte bara är mångkulturella; de är dessutom transkulturella.’ My translation. Jonsson also makes the point that this is a theoretical objection to all forms of identity politics. ‘Whenever a

powerful forces eager to deny or resist this, a trait we all – both *us* and *them*, same and Other – share, one might say, is the fact of already being intercultural before making any commitment to the paradigm carrying this name.

As a practice that lends itself to pedagogy, interculturality poses questions not only about who the radical Other is, and what to teach and what to learn about – essentially, what is defined as intercultural knowledge – in such encounters, but about the language in which the Other is approached and called upon. If the Other in the myth of Babel is recognizable because it speaks in an unfamiliar language, interculturality would then have to rely on assumptions of translatability. With translation operating under the pretence of enabling communication across languages, cultures, time periods and disciplines, several postcolonial scholars have pointed out the tendency to homogenize difference, flatten forms, and minimalize the culturally untranslatable, not to mention its overlooked dimension of a hierarchy of languages (Mignolo & Schiwy, 2003; Spivak, 1985).

By means of a multifaceted blending of languages and genres, Assia Djebar's (1993, pp. 180-185) novel *Fantasia* intertwines the history of her native Algeria subject to France's colonial violence with anecdotal episodes from her own childhood. As the violent clash between two idioms, two cultures, and two nations constantly resonates throughout the text, Djebar describes her own dual position as an Arab within a French educational system: 'I write and speak French outside: the words I use convey no flesh-and-blood reality', she admits, 'I learn the names of birds I've never seen, trees I shall take ten years or more to identify, lists of flowers and plants that I shall never smell until I travel north of the Mediterranean.'

The ambivalence expressed in the quotation is part of a running theme in her book, as the French language, on the one

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representative of any given group makes claims of particularity, one can be certain that what is being invoked is nothing more than a 'mare's nest', writes Jonsson.

hand, functions as a point of entry to another rationality away from the local patriotic structures. On the other hand, French is an imposed language; it is the language of those who have conquered the territory, the idiom of the colonizers. Torn between cultures – navigating through the interculturality inside herself – Djébar confesses that she, as part of her coming of age, preserves Arabic as her religious language; it is her means of communication through prayer to a higher power (*‘Arabic for our stifled aspirations towards God-the-Father, the God of the religions of the book’*), while it is French that offers emancipation, the language of modernity and Enlightenment (*‘As if the French language suddenly had eyes, and lent them to me to see into liberty’*). While the generalities of Djébar’s autobiographical account attest to what a number of critical studies have pointed out; namely, that control over language was a major feature of imperial impression (cf. Ashcroft *et al.*, 1989), she also manages to capture the specificity of certain concrete ways in which the colonial text aligns the French language with modernity and civilization and Arabic with ignorance and savagery. In this respect, imperialism could be described not as being about acquisition, accumulation and dominance, but as an endeavour in the service of humanism to spread modernity to the less fortunate.

However, to emphasize a minority position within a language is not to suggest that its speakers are merely passive victims caught in the gridlock of a (former) imperial order. Although the colonial wound cannot be healed, cannot be erased from historiography or expunged from cultural memory, in different parts of the former colonies the metropolitan languages are also turned against the colonial ideology as a language of resistance is created *within* the imposed language of the Other. Martinican poet and author Édouard Glissant (2005, p. 35), on the fringes of the French-speaking world, invokes the Creole language and creolized idioms to invade the French language with other stories and other subjectivities, other voices and dialects, other translations and rewritings, with the aim of dethroning the privilege of

interpretation which the master code has bestowed upon itself. 'All prose becomes leaf and accumulates in the dark its bedazzledness. Make it leaf of your hands, make it prose of obscurity, and bedazzled by your breakings.'

Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize recipient Rigoberta Menchú (1984, p. 1) decides in her early twenties to properly learn the Spanish language which has previously been forced upon her; a conscious decision to tell stories that have gone unheard, to speak from the perspective of a Quiché peasant woman in order to break the silence imposed on her and other indigenous groups.<sup>5</sup> 'I'd like to stress that it's not only *my* life, it's also the testimony of my people'<sup>6</sup> she explains in the first paragraph of her biography, 'My story is the story of all poor Guatemalans. My personal experience is the reality of a whole people.' As a weapon in her struggle, Menchú turns the Spanish language, the Bible and the trade unions against their original owners.

In their own distinctive ways, both Glissant and Menchú create a vernacular *within* the vernacular, a script *within* the script, that from a position of being *outside inside* can generate new ways to manoeuvre, reinterpretations and transcendences. It is by making another language conform to one's own tongue, ripping it out of the hands of the master, that it becomes possible to grammatically formulate an 'I' as part of oneself within a violently imposed language (Azar, 2006).<sup>7</sup> By reflecting hybridity, *mestizaje*, and creolization, Glissant and Menchú illustrate that

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<sup>5</sup> Spivak (1990, p. 59) has made the important point that when it comes to the subaltern, possibly voiceless and written out of historical records, the question of who should speak is secondary, or rather 'less crucial than "Who will listen?"'. According to Spivak, if the subaltern cannot be listened to without 'that kind of benevolent imperialism' she often associates with being turned into a representative of a group by others, then what the subaltern might say lacks impact.

<sup>6</sup> Italics in original.

<sup>7</sup> For an elaborative discussion in more general terms of languages within a language see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1986), *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*; for a more specific account of Édouard Glissant and creolization, see Michael Azar (2006), *Den koloniala bumerangen*.

language cannot be separated from its locus of enunciation. While I am not making an attempt to argue that there are any great similarities between the lives of a male Martinican writer and an indigenous woman in Guatemala, or, for that matter, an Indian immigrant in London or a Chicano in New York, people inhabiting these positions, according to Aníbal Quijano (2000), are more likely to acutely experience the logic of power inherited from the imperial projects – coloniality<sup>8</sup> – than those who are privileged by it and remain outside its workings. If social relations are not necessarily ordered in similar ways worldwide, but always in ways that ensure that some are elevated in comparison to Others, it seems plausible to contend that interculturality is charged with different meanings and contents depending on the enunciator's outlook on the world. After all, alterity implies alteration, and it is unlikely that a theory, a methodology, or even a technique will be appropriated in different cultural circumstances without itself undergoing radical modification.

Thus, what this dissertation will argue is that the act of translating interculturality into *interculturalidad* in some regions of the world is more than a shift of semantic content between English and Spanish. For indigenous movements in the Andes, *interculturalidad* relies on another logic, another rationality that in certain respects sets it apart from interculturality. Neither can interculturality and *interculturalidad* be reduced to mere *faux amis* – words that sound the same across languages but that have completely different significations – as the two notions operate across an epistemic divide; a rift that will be theorized as a

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<sup>8</sup> As defined by Walter D. Mignolo, Aníbal Quijano, Arturo Escobar, and other members of the loosely connected Modernity/Coloniality/Decoloniality collective, coloniality should not simply be equated with the possession of colonies. ‘While “colonialism” refers to specific historical periods and places of imperial domination (e.g., Spanish, Dutch, British, the US since the beginning of the twentieth century)’, explains Mignolo (2005, p. 7), “coloniality” refers to the logical structure of colonial domination underlying the Spanish, Dutch, British, and US control of the Atlantic economy and politics, and from there the control and management of almost the entire planet. [...] Coloniality is the logic of domination in the modern/colonial world, beyond the fact that the imperial/colonial country was once Spain, then England and now the US.’

colonial difference.<sup>9</sup> Having been represented as inferior, indigenous people in Latin America have not been in a position to present their own epistemic credentials, much less judge European ones (Alcoff, 2007), and as a result, *interculturalidad*, as will be seen, greatly emphasizes the historical and socio-political conditions under which it prevailed, based on histories that do not necessarily begin in Ancient Greece, or with Adam and Eve, or with the genesis of difference as a consequence of the destruction of Babel. In short, to speak of *interculturalidad* in place of interculturality may be considered a shift in the geography of reason pointing towards other constellations of meaning, understanding and transformation.

### Interculturality as Interculturalidad

A late December day in 2005 marked a forceful emergence of indigenous people on the political scene as Evo Morales was elected Bolivia's first president of indigenous origin. In his inaugural speech before the congress in La Paz, Morales declared that '[t]he indigenous communities, which are the majority of the Bolivian population, have historically been marginalized, humiliated, despised, doomed to extinction.'<sup>10</sup> But 'today,' he continued, 'begins the new year for the originary peoples of this world, a new life in which we search for equality and justice, a new millennium' (El Diario, 2006; La Razón, 2006).

More than five centuries had elapsed since Europe cut the veins of the indigenous populations (*los pueblos indígenas*) open,

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<sup>9</sup> The concept of 'colonial difference' was first coined by historian Partha Chatterjee in *The Nation and Its Fragments*. Despite claims that colonialism could incite colonial subjects to modernization and development in order to elevate them from their primitive state to become more rational, colonialism is in itself legitimized by positing an absolute difference between colonizer and colonized, between ruler and ruled. For Chatterjee (1993, p. 33), this distinction is the 'rule of colonial difference' as the colonized, by virtue of biology, were represented as 'incurably inferior'.

<sup>10</sup> 'Los pueblos indígenas, que son mayoría de la población boliviana, históricamente, hemos sido marginados, humillados, despreciados, condenados a la extinción.' My translation.

by initiating the destruction of their empires, societies and communities, demanding labour from their bodies and confessions to a foreign God. As part of the bloodletting, the indigenous populations were unavoidably drawn into the emergence of a new global division of commerce – from merchandise to human cargo – that saw both Latin America and Africa stripped of memories, exuberance and manpower (Aman, 2009). By concentrating on the numbing ghastliness of colonialism, Morales’ speech conveys 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 in the process of their inscription onto European maps.

Akin to Morales’ attempt to reveal the geopolitical perspective from which history tends to be written, Eric Wolf (1982) uses ‘People without History’; a metaphor that emphasizes the epistemic power differential that placed both continents and people outside of history before the advent of European eyes to testify to their existence. In this sense, to be part of history is a privilege of European modernity; excluding every society which does not use alphabetic writing or communicates in a vernacular other than the imperial languages of modern Europe (Mignolo, 2005). This is visible not only in the re-naming – 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 its literal inscription into another sign system. ‘I learned to love this land’, notes Colombian author William Ospina (2005, p. 1), ‘through the words of someone who did not love it.’<sup>11</sup>

Given this state of affairs, the Morales government emphasized the need to decolonize the educational system. The purpose was, on the one hand, to break down the racial structures imposed by colonialism and, on the other hand, to implement the knowledge systems, histories and languages of the

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Aprendí a querer esta tierra por las palabras de un hombre que no la quería.’ My translation.

indigenous communities as an integral part of the curricula to put an end to the privileging of European thought as a universal model. According to the first article of *Nueva ley de la Educación Boliviana* (The New Bolivian Education Act), education is now centred on the objectives of decolonization and multilingualism under the name of *interculturalidad*. It is intercultural ‘because it articulates a Multinational Educational System of the state based on the fortification and development of the wisdom, knowledge and belonging to our own languages of the indigenous nations’, the article reads; it is intercultural ‘because it promotes interrelation and living together with equal opportunities with appreciation and mutual respect between the cultures of the Multinational State and the world’ (Article I, p. 8).

In the Andean region, *interculturalidad* has been on the agenda of indigenous organizations 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, but also as a demand for unity in order to transform the present structures of society which, they argue, have been preserved from the time when an alien power established itself as ruler, imposed its own laws and educational system. However, it was not until Morales took office that *interculturalidad* became as significant in state discourse as it historically had been for indigenous movements in their efforts to move toward decolonization (Walsh, 2009).

On a rhetorical level *interculturalidad* gains its legitimacy by invoking the past as the reason for another future beyond the logics of modernity that have concealed histories, repressed subjectivities, subalternized knowledge systems and silenced languages. ‘The best way to decolonize Bolivia,’ Morales stresses, ‘is to recover our culture and ways of living’,<sup>12</sup> which conveys an

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<sup>12</sup> ‘La mejor forma de descolonizar a Bolivia es recuperando nuestra cultura y sus vivencias’ (Los Tiempos, 28/12/2009). My translation.

understanding of how Bolivia – as has any other part of the region with its diverse indigenous populations – has always been multicultural but represented as monocultural by the Spanish rulers and, later, the Creole elites. Subsequently, *interculturalidad* is intertwined with an act of restorative justice for the way in which the nation-state for centuries has turned the indigenous populations into its blind spot.

As ‘fruits of the conquest’, Peruvian author José Carlos Mariátegui (1975, p. 87) writes, the educational systems in the Andean nations have ‘a colonial rather than a national character. When the state refers to the Indians in its educational programs, it treats them as an inferior race.’ Against such a background of historical circumstances that continue to inform the present, *interculturalidad* seems to mark a movement towards a future articulated from the perspective of Aymara, Quechua and other languages subjugated by Spanish, led by indigenous needs and principles of knowledge. Thus, *interculturalidad* does not refer to the universality of a certain phenomenon; on the contrary, it denotes the singularity of the perspective from which cultural encounters – epistemic, political, ethical – are conceived.

From here we can go on to establish, in more precise terms, that there are several translations of interculturality in play simultaneously. Although each is the other’s equivalent in their respective language schemas, interculturality is not *interculturalidad* – just as Latin America is not Abya Yala. As I henceforth will distinguish between the translations of the notion, the emphasis on the medium of language makes the contradictions that separate the two – interculturality contra *interculturalidad* – yet more apparent: where 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’ (2007, p. 10), indigenous movements target the colonially-imposed structure of society that has delegitimized and

mutated their knowledge systems and languages.<sup>13</sup> One ascribes importance to local languages that became global through colonialism, while for the other, those very languages echo the imperial orders that *interculturalidad* is an attempt to overcome. In sum, the diverse peoples, geographies and political histories invoked by interculturality are linked to *interculturalidad* via Europe's colonial past.

## **Aims and Scope of the Study**

Guided by insights on the hybridity of all cultures (cf. Said, 1994) and epistemological dominance as a trait of coloniality (cf. Mignolo, 2005), the aim of this dissertation is to answer the question: what happens to interculturality when it is framed in terms of a colonial difference, rather than in terms of cultural differences? In order to reach this goal, I seek to inquire into the definitions of intercultural knowledge given by EU policy discourse, academic textbooks on interculturality, and students who have completed a university course on the subject. This examination will support my general argument: that approaches to interculturality have to be attentive to how the colonial difference plays out within the spatial and socio-historical setting that serves as the locus of enunciation of interculturality. In claiming that knowledge production is situated or context bound, I align myself with a decolonial approach that makes its central concern the ways in which differences are formed and sustained through references to cultural identities, as coloniality is, it is argued, 'alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). For all

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<sup>13</sup> According to Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson (2011), colonialism played a major part in the construction of the EU. Challenging the common assumption that decolonization was a precondition for European unity, represented by the founding of the European Economic Community (i.e. today's European Union), Hansen and Jonsson demonstrate that a future European community presupposed the transformation of the colonies held by different European nations into a joint colonization of, primarily, Africa.

the benevolent intentions invested in interculturality, what I want to show in this dissertation is that any claim that reconciling differences is part of some overarching interculturality must be understood in relation to the overriding European tendency to affirm its own singular outlook on the world, and to elevate that outlook to a universal law. By not attending to the colonial difference, interculturality may in fact, contrary to its self-proclaimed goal of learning from the Other, contribute to the repression of the Other by silencing those who have already been muted by the dual process of modernity and coloniality.

It is hardly necessary to mention that *Impossible Interculturality?* is not a recipe – a ‘how to’ book – for teaching interculturality (or *interculturalidad*). Nor is it a comprehensive census-taking of the field of interculturality and intercultural education with pretensions to all-encompassing regional coverage or exhaustive cataloguing of language distribution or social classifications in terms of race, class and gender. Rather, it is a dissertation that examines the many differences that are perpetuated through power and geographical location. Consequently, my approach to interculturality as formulated in Europe is marked by a radical critique of what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988a, p. 308) has labelled ‘the danger of appropriating the Other by assimilation’; that is, exercising my knowledge over the Other, reducing the Other to myself as the object of my discovery, my comprehension, my world. Put differently, any attempt to turn the Other into a self has to come to terms with the fact that the project of colonialism intended to do the very same thing, refracting ‘what might have been the absolutely Other into a domesticated Other that consolidates the imperialist self’ (Spivak, 1985, p. 253).

Against this background, to invoke *interculturalidad* as part of the analysis adds another layer; it is another conception of interculturality with its roots in the particular and with strong reverberations of the historical experience of colonialism. Reliant on a theoretical backdrop that points out the ways in which epistemological, historiographical and political discourses are interwoven and work together to sustain an order that allows

European cultural patterns to universalize themselves, *interculturalidad* offers the possibility of decentring the discourse of interculturality and its Eurocentric outlook. Throughout the world there are diverse forms of knowledge, ideas of society, life and spirit, not to mention many and distinct concepts of what counts as knowledge and the criteria used to validate it. In this way, the argument pursued throughout the dissertation is that emancipation – or rather, making the effort to delink – from the colonial legacies requires that we discard a culture-oriented language of phantasmatic differences and start seeing interculturality as inter-epistemic rather than simply intercultural. As Quijano (1989, p. 447) states: ‘[e]pistemic decolonization is necessary to make possible and move toward a truly intercultural communication; to an exchange of experiences and significations as the foundation of another rationality that legitimately could claim some universality.’<sup>14</sup>

The first essay on which this is based, ‘The EU and the Recycling of Colonialism: Formation of Europeans Through Intercultural Dialogue’, examines the construction of sameness and otherness by the European Union in policies on education, culture and intercultural dialogue. It argues that interculturality, as articulated by the EU, consolidates the differences between European and Other, thus contradicting its purpose of bringing subjects together.

The following piece, ‘In the Name of Interculturality: On Colonial Legacies in Intercultural Education’, analyses how students who have completed a university course on interculturality in Sweden define, configure and mobilize the word in relation to alterity. I argue, among other things, that the students separate themselves from otherness by way of several hierarchies: power (dominant versus subaltern), time (present versus past) and space (centre versus periphery).

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<sup>14</sup> ‘[L]a descolonización epistemológica, para dar paso luego a una nueva comunicación inter-cultural, a un intercambio de experiencias y de significaciones, como la base de otra racionalidad que pueda pretender, con legitimidad, a alguna universalidad.’ My translation.

The third article, ‘Three Texts on Intercultural Education and a Critique of Border Drawing’, scrutinizes academic literature on interculturality to ask how the implied reader of this literature is characterized and, consequently, who it speaks about rather than to; the article thus charts the conditions for ‘becoming intercultural’. The general thrust of the argument is that interculturality, in its current articulation, remains caught up in the idea of the nation-state or other uniform entities and rarely addresses multiple identities – as opposed, for example, to national ones.

Moving away from accounts of interculturality, the fourth essay, ‘Why Interculturalidad is not Interculturality: Colonial Remains and Paradoxes in Translation between Supranational Bodies and Indigenous Social Movements’, dwells on formations of *interculturalidad* within indigenous educational initiatives in the Andean region. By engaging in a discussion about the potential for *interculturalidad* to break out of the prison-house of colonial vocabulary – modernization, progress, salvation – this essay problematizes the universalizing claims implicitly embedded in supranational bodies’ articulations of interculturality. In this essay I use specific material from interviews with teachers and students participating in the same course on *interculturalidad* spanning Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru is therefore primarily methodological. I do this not with the purpose of providing a full account of Andean *interculturalidad* but in order to illustrate that this body of learning contains an alternative methodological approach to the general problem I raise in this dissertation. Out of all possible routes, invoking the Andes enables an understanding of the assumptions with which interculturality produces meanings by revealing that the concept is situated within a paradigm of knowledge that, in spite of opposing interpretations within it is based in the geohistorical location of Europe (Mignolo, 2005).

As innovative as this study might be in bringing *interculturalidad* into the conversation with interculturality and vice versa – two frameworks that have been treated as separate in previous research – it is also noteworthy 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 translated to the Western theories and presuppositions commonly used in this scholarship (Young, 2012). At the same time, it must be acknowledged that there are cultures and communities in Latin America whose lives, histories, memories and customs have a complexity that cannot fully be encapsulated in European modes of expression. To that fact, this study has very little to contribute; except to acknowledge it. Thus, I make no representational claims for either Europe or the Andes. Also, I want to stress that neither interculturality nor *interculturalidad* have coherent significations spared from inner contradictions and ambiguities. As such, this dissertation is necessarily selective and partial in its scope, concentrating on major themes, rather than aiming to show the available material in all its variety.

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At this point, and before steering towards an elaboration of the theories and methods that have guided the analyses in the essays, I should insert a cautionary reminder about the dangers of the differentiations that I have allowed myself to make by using a crude terminology that includes ‘the West’, ‘Europe’ or, for that matter, ‘Latin America’. All too often such regionalized concepts are cast as uniform entities, rendering invisible local differences as well as the long history of internal contradictions and class struggles (Hardt & Negri, 2009). Nevertheless, as labels are inevitable in writing, and to avoid entering into a debate on meta-geography and geocultural cartography, I will for the most part in the essays use ‘Europe’ – eventually becoming the ‘West’ – to denote the origin of knowledge that was built and sustained on categories and concepts rooted in Greek and Latin languages and the modern/imperial unfolding of that knowledge (Mignolo, 2005). For pedagogical reasons, however, I have throughout this introductory chapter strived to be consistent in my use of ‘Europe’ when referring to the locus of modernity. Although the

‘West’ certainly would have been apt from time to time, I predominantly stick with ‘Europe’ as a generic term since it is the designation most used in the material under scrutiny. In sum, what is called ‘Europe’ or the ‘West’ is thus, primarily, the place of hegemonic epistemology rather than a spot on the map.

As mentioned, this dissertation consists of a collection of essays written for academic journals and hence subjected to the demand for brevity and condensation characteristic of that genre. As a result, my deployment of theory and method has to some extent not been given the space it deserves in each essay. In what follows below, therefore, I will describe and discuss the theoretical approaches that underpin the analyses in each of the ensuing texts. The remainder of this introductory chapter will also discuss some general methodological considerations, as well as outlining a summary of the essays. But first of all I will account in more detail for the previous research on interculturality and *interculturalidad* and present an overview of the term in various fields.



## Survey of the Field

The broad and far-reaching spread of interculturality opens up several avenues for discussing the ways in which the notion is being interpreted, translated, and deployed. Rather than seeking to provide an all-encompassing overview of interculturality, this section will concentrate on major themes that are discernible in the literature. Given that this is a dissertation in Education, and the subfield of Adult Education, there is reason to focus on the educational implications of interculturality. For the same reason, possible connections or potential inter-changeability between interculturality and other concepts used to bridge the culturally specific, such as ‘cosmopolitanism’ (Appiah, 2006), ‘transnationalism’ (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998), or even ‘World Literature’ (Damrosch, 2003), will not be brought up as this would require acts of translation between concepts that are all as contested and varyingly coherent in themselves as interculturality.

I will begin by presenting an overview of more general research on interculturality and will then discuss what has been written on the topic within the field of Adult Education. Finally, and before going into literature on *interculturalidad*, I will examine a few contributions that have used a postcolonial outlook on cultural encounters outside as well as inside the classroom.

What first strikes any reader engaging with the body of literature on interculturality is its employment alongside multiculturalism. Arguably, the particular appeal of interculturality in the many domains where it has gained momentum – from policy writings to curricula and scholarship – becomes more comprehensible when situated within a wider framework, in which the growing lack of enthusiasm for multiculturalism plays a part in the attractiveness of interculturality. For instance, Germany’s Angela Merkel, Great Britain’s David Cameron and France’s Nicolas Sarkozy all recently labelled multiculturalism an ‘utter failure’ (Weaver,

2010). Clues to the feelings of disappointment expressed in relation to multiculturalism are identifiable in the conceptual confusion surrounding it. On the one hand, multiculturalism often serves as a catch-all for a multitude of minority histories irrespective of gender, sexuality or ethnicity (Kymlicka, 1995). It may thus serve as a descriptive label for cultural pluralism or diversity in any given society and the ways in which the state supports and recognizes that pluralism; it also refers to educational issues and reformations of curricula and to policies and strategies adopted to govern and manage diversity; finally, multiculturalism refers to the normative justification of those very policies and strategies (Murphy, 2005).

On the other hand, interpretations of multiculturalism vary greatly between the socio-political contexts in which the term is being deployed: in North America, for instance, multiculturalism encompasses the historical exclusion of a wide variety of groups all marked by difference, from the disabled to indigenous populations, from sexual orientations to speakers of languages other than English. In Western Europe, by contrast, multiculturalism is considered to have a more limited meaning, usually encouraging hospitable attitudes towards new generations of immigrants (Meer & Modood, 2012). Different in meaning, united in consequences: part of the critique that the concept generates is that each of these variations fosters its own simplifications, generalizations or collective amnesias (McDonald, 2011). For instance, any distinctions between the Algerian in Paris, the Northern Irish in London and the Sámi in Stockholm are blurred, which in turn does not take into account disparities within each grouping. In summation, multiculturalism has become an empty signifier, a conceptual void, onto which ‘a range of groups projects their fears and hopes’ (Bhabha, 1994, p. 31).

It seems fair to say that the complexity and confusion surrounding multiculturalism has played a part in its retreat; and this is of course also part of the reason why it has largely been replaced by interculturality in governing policies and public debates that address different forms of pluralism both on a

supranational level (European Union, UNESCO, Council of Europe) and within various national polities in Europe (Leeman, 2003). Although multiculturalism remains in use, the impetus for the lexical change from one prefix (*multi*) to another (*inter*) derives, as some advocates of interculturality have suggested, from the way in which multiculturalism tends to reify and preserve cultural identities, while interculturality acknowledges that cultures are endlessly evolving in a society, with the potential to be exchanged and modified (cf. Dei, 1996; Sleeter and Grant, 1987). Consequently, wherever interculturality is primarily used it is employed distinctively from multiculturalism: the latter is seen to be a descriptive term for the factual co-existence of people of diverse cultures in a given space, whereas the former is said to characterize actual interaction between people once impediments to relations have been removed (Camilleri, 1992; Gundara, 2000). Hence the positive connotations of the notion of interculturality are at war with the negative associations of the word multiculturalism. Or, as argued by academic commentators, where multiculturalism both begins and ends by making a diagnosis, intercultural education offers a cure: 'learning to live in an ethnically and culturally diverse society' (Leeman, 2003, p. 31).

### **Research on Interculturality**

In terms of previous research, each of the essays contains an account of the literature relevant to the topics and issues under scrutiny in that specific paper. Leaving that aside, and to speak in more general terms, in the English-speaking body of literature on interculturality three major strands can be discerned. The first can be characterized as containing normative approaches that assert the value of interculturality for business communication (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson, 2003; Cheney, 2001); the construction of national and regional identities (Brewer, 1999; Petkova, 2006); inter-religious dialogues (Jackson, 2004; Shaked, 1995); language learning (Bryman & Fleming, 1998) and foreign aid (Bauer *et. al.*, 2006). Against the background of economic, demographic, and political imperatives to learn about similarities

and differences between cultures, Laura Perry and Leonie Southwell (2011) suggest that interculturality can provide models for the acquisition and use of a particular type of comprehension and knowledge. The authors underscore the point that one can never be fully trained in interculturality as it is in itself an ongoing learning process that includes cognitive, affective and behavioural components. They do, however, assert that the knowledge to be acquired includes language skills, exposure to otherness and the accumulation of facts about a given culture. While developing these skills and acquiring such knowledge may serve as a foundation for the process of becoming intercultural, Perry and Southwell conclude by remarking that there is no guarantee of success due to the inherent complexity of cultures in and of themselves.

A second major theme of research on interculturality is the investigation of the ways in which the concept of interculturality is translated into concrete practice. Most of the ground covered here is in relation to educational settings including, to mention a few, teaching methods (Cohen, 1994; Batelaan & van Hoof, 1996); the fostering of intercultural dialogue in the classroom (Crozet, 1996; Fiedler, 2008); the construction of intercultural curricula (Daniel, 2006; Dunne, 2011); the implementation of interculturality within various school subjects (Corbett, 2003; Roux, 2005). In general terms, these studies suggest that educational settings constitute the most appropriate arena in which to learn about cultural differences. Through a meta-study of research literature on interculturality, Jessica Walton, Naomi Priest and Yin Paradies (2013) argue that the development of intercultural understanding requires both students and teachers to engage in on-going exposure to cultural diversity, as well as having critical cultural awareness and self-awareness when interacting across cultural groups. They propose that interculturality benefits all students since it imparts an understanding of, and respect for, other cultures, and brings with it a responsibility to pass this on to the rest of society. As such, interculturality should therefore be included at all levels within educational settings, rather than being a term that is simply

applied to the surface of the curriculum in a light sprinkling.

Whether or not this is a direct consequence of the (almost universally affirmed) rising prestige of interculturality, a third category of studies encompasses critical interventions that hasten to point out the sparse quantity of critical studies of the concept (cf. Chaudhuri, 2002; James, 1999; Kymlicka, 2003). Here it is often argued that studies on interculturality and intercultural education suffer from ‘theoretical weakness’ (Coulby, 2006, p. 254), but also that the overwhelming majority of work on intercultural education, ‘relies on “hunches” and attempts to do “good”’, as Jagdish Gundara and Portera (2008, p. 465) argue. In accordance with this, other academic commentators have concluded that researchers interested in this field implicitly assume the value of interculturality, in which they are often themselves engaged as activists or practitioners, and are therefore reluctant to propose any critiques of the concept in attempts to justify, elucidate and legitimize its ubiquity (Chaudhuri, 2002).

Rare exceptions within this strand of critical approaches to interculturality, to which this dissertation also aims to contribute, are political scientist Alana Lentin (2005) and literary scholar Peter McDonald (2011). Lentin suggests that the shift from multiculturalism to interculturality is merely cosmetic, concealing the ways in which ‘culture’ offers a safe cover for speaking of ‘race’. While Lentin’s study captures the strong inclination to construe sameness along national lines in discussion of cultural diversity, interculturality plays only a modest role in the background as her purpose is rather to make an argument for exclusion on ethnocultural terms as a continuous story whether it is called multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism or something else.

Inspired by translation theories, Peter McDonald (2011) warns against the reifying tendencies of interculturality, which can lock subjects into distinctive cultural enclaves. To avoid this, McDonald proposes a turn from the political sciences, which have influenced both multiculturalism and interculturality, to literary studies. As part of such an inversion, the adverbial formulation of ‘thinking interculturally’ is advocated as a replacement for interculturality. The merit of such a grammatical alteration,

McDonald stresses, lies in the emphasis on the singularity of every individual who in turn belongs to a multiplicity of cultural clusters that permeate one another. Despite our differing aims and disciplinary identities, McDonald's innovative theoretical contribution overlaps, from time to time, with my own work in discussions of cultures as entities that are never final, infinitely in process without fixed borders.

### **Research on Interculturality and Adult Education in Sweden**

While there is a modest body of work on interculturality in Swedish, it is worth mentioning that the first and second strands outlined above are the ones that are prevalent in the Swedish literature on interculturality; that is, normative approaches to interculturality and the ways to translate it into practice. Consequently, the literature tends to be packaged in the form of an anthology, generally written with the course syllabus in mind, and issued by the publisher *Studentlitteratur*. An illustrative example is *Interkulturella perspektiv*, edited by Hans Lorentz and Bosse Bergstedt (2006), and described in the paratext as a book intended as course literature in academic courses on education for anyone interested in 'postmodern pedagogical questions in multicultural learning environments.' Different scholars, through different analytical lenses, shed light on the ways in which, they argue, today's globalized and multicultural societies demand increased awareness of how knowledge is acquired and identities are constructed. In their introduction, the editors argue that a shift to a postmodern outlook in education is necessary to break from the dichotomous thinking that characterizes modern society. By doing exactly this, Lorentz and Bergstedt emphasize, interculturality can generate a shared language, through which commonality and social inclusion is created by participation, self-consciousness and mutual learning requirements.

In another anthology, *Möten i mångfaldens skola*, edited by Pirjo Lahdenperä together with the above-mentioned Lorentz (2010), the theoretical abstractions are slightly toned down to give way to a more concrete discussion based on classroom experiences. According to the editors, Swedish society has

changed over the last thirty years and schools are nowadays populated by a multiplicity of languages, ethnicities, cultures, religions and value systems. The editors also underline the idea that the focus on interculturality must be intensified to avoid conflicts with pupils and parents who may be regarded as different. Interculturality is thus a way to develop a school based on diversity.

In a complementary vein, Jonas Stier and Margareta Sandström Kjellin (2009) add that interculturality is about communication in cultural encounters; encounters that are the rule rather than the exception in today's multicultural Sweden. In *Interkulturellt samspel i skolan*, the aim is to shift the perspective from framing meetings between cultures in terms of problems, conflicts, and quarrels, to a more profound understanding of the process of mutual impact in play between cultures. By way of conclusion, interculturality in this analysis is part of the long-term work of developing the skills and competence to interact with pupils with different cultural backgrounds.

What this research makes apparent is a general lack, in the literature commonly assigned for academic courses, of critical interventions on interculturality, and even less frequently discussed are the ontological and epistemological assumptions ingrained in interculturality concerning what, precisely, constitutes sameness *vis-à-vis* otherness. While this speaks for the relevance of my own contribution to intercultural studies, it does not imply that this dissertation represents the Swedish academy's first engagement with cultural encounters from a postcolonial perspective. There exists a fairly large body of studies on the relations of coloniality and culture in Swedish academia (cf. Azar, 2001, 2006; de los Reyes, Molina, Mulinari, 2002; Grinell, 2004; Helgesson, 2004; Jonsson, 1993, 1995, 2001; Lorenzoni, 2008; Lundahl, 2005; Manga, 2003; Peralta & Moaven Doust, 2002; Tesfahuney, 1998). As for the specific field of Adult Education, Ali Osman (2013) has interrogated the way institutions of popular education in Sweden conceptualize their function and role in facilitating the social inclusion of immigrants. Drawing on

Foucault and Stuart Hall, Osman explores the knowledge that immigrants are asked to acquire and internalize in order to be granted entrance to the community of popular education and, by extension, Swedish society. Through his readings of various policy documents, the author draws the conclusion that the Other – the immigrant – is evaluated against a certain norm, and that a gap is identified between these two positions. According to Osman, this is perceived as a problem since the gap is translated in terms of a certain lack – what the Other does not know or have, but needs to be taught or given.

In close connection with the second article in this dissertation on the ways in which students of interculturality, with experiences of the ‘Global South’ use its language in order to bridge otherness, Magnus Dahlstedt and Henrik Nordvall (2011) have investigated a large-scale attempt to export the ‘Swedish model’ of popular education; that is, study circles and folk high schools, to other parts of the world. Exploring this phenomenon in the context of Tanzania in the 1970s and 1980s by analysing the way the project is described by Swedish popular educators, the authors go on to conclude that embedded in the process of ‘exporting’ an educational form is an on-going formation of national self-images. Dahlstedt and Nordvall are able to discern that coloniality tends to be reproduced in these self-images as the Swedes associate themselves with development, democracy, and modernity; ideas and beliefs that set them apart from their Tanzanian partners who come to appear less advanced.

In a similar way to my own attempt to read interculturality against *interculturalidad*, Bernt Gustavsson (2010) has also sought to transcend the limits of different traditions. Starting with a critique of recent policy formulations from the EU and the OECD, in which education is reduced to an investment in human capital and knowledge to a commodity, Gustavsson’s aim is to counter this trend by invoking another logic of knowledge. By marrying the concept of *Bildung*, rooted in a European intellectual tradition, with the notion of *ubuntu*, prevalent in a South African context, Gustavsson sets out to grasp and analyse the relationship between these two traditions in terms of unity

and difference. Read in a hermeneutical tradition of transposing the particular to the universal, the understanding of *Bildung* can widen into a more universal concept, Gustavsson asserts, if related to other concepts from other parts of the world. Searching for the possible points of transition and dialogue between traditions, he argues that established borders can be disrupted in the act of conjoining *Bildung* and *ubuntu* as the latter allows a reconsideration of the former – and vice versa. According to Gustavsson, it is within such a space between the familiar and the unfamiliar, the particular and the universal, that possibilities for new understandings emerge.

### **Research on Interculturalidad**

Although *interculturalidad* may appear, on first glance, simply to be the direct Spanish translation of interculturality, the two concepts have very different histories. Given that the Latin American region is comprised of several epistemological, linguistic and ethnic constellations spreading across extensive geographical junctions and arbitrary borders, there is no comprehensive definition of *interculturalidad* to be found. Without attempting to homogenize articulations of *interculturalidad* among, for example, black communities in Colombia (Grueso, Rosero & Escobar, 1998), Guaraní in Paraguay (Boidin, 1999) and the Zapatistas in Mexico (Cerdeña García, 2007) and without deciding whether it refers to a rhetorical, public policy-oriented or educational practice, it may nonetheless be said that all the discourses of *interculturalidad*, in the hands of various indigenous communities, address the experience of coloniality (Mignolo, 2005).

In the more influential work on *interculturalidad* there is no way around Catherine Walsh (2005, 2009) who describes *interculturalidad* as a political project with an ideological principle indicative of other modes of thinking. With the chief preoccupation in Walsh's work being the continuing dependency on Eurocentric paradigms inside as well as outside educational settings, *interculturalidad* is then put forward as a possible way of moving outside the logics of modernity and allowing knowledge

systems that have been colonized and delegitimized to co-exist. This conforms very much to my own argument in this dissertation. Yet, unlike, Walsh, who points out the relevancy of *interculturalidad* through meta-discursive elaborations, my own approach seeks a theorization of *interculturalidad* that is in constant dialogue with both practitioners in the Andes and the concept of interculturality.

Catalina Vélez Verdugo (2006) argues in her book, *La interculturalidad en la educación reformas curriculares de Ecuador, Perú y Bolivia* that the implementation of *interculturalidad* in recent educational reforms in the Andes is merely cosmetic. With the exception of Bolivia, the appropriation of *interculturalidad* by the governments in the region has more to do with appeasing intensified demands from various indigenous movements on a policy level than with actually transforming the structures of the education system and curricula. This is shown, for instance, in the way that the different sections of the population are continually described in dichotomous terms. Vélez Verdugo thus criticizes the representation of indigenous identity as fixed in time, unaffected by historical, social and political processes. She underlines the fact that *interculturalidad*, in its present state, remains synonymous with multiculturalism.

A seminal work for an English-speaking audience is *New Languages of the State* by Bret Gustafson (2009) who through fieldwork among the Guaraní has explored the introduction of indigenous languages alongside Spanish in Bolivia. Tracing two decades of indigenous resurgence and educational politics, Gustafson describes the process by which the social movements that later would form the MAS (*Movimiento al socialismo*), through intense protests and uprisings, managed to press the liberal government of the time to eventually officially recognize the existence of Aymara, Guaraní, Quechua and other languages spoken before colonial rule. According to Gustafson, the Guaraní, together with other indigenous groups, are through *interculturalidad* challenging colonial racism and neoliberal reforms of education by actively defending their languages and knowledge systems.

Finally, the practical nonexistence of scholarly literature dealing with both interculturality and *interculturalidad* needs to be pointed out. Just as *interculturalidad* is neglected in European writing on interculturality, so is interculturality overlooked in Latin American debates on *interculturalidad*. While the existence of the two is on rare occasions fleetingly mentioned in passing (cf. Bernal, 2003; Solano-Campos, 2013), this study can be said to be the first in which interculturality and *interculturalidad* are thoroughly scrutinized and related to each other.



## Theoretical Considerations

Enrique Dussel's touchstone *Frankfurt Lectures*, originally delivered in 1992, provide a compelling point of departure for the analysis of 'modernity' and 'coloniality' as interconnected keywords in postcolonial studies and decolonial theory.<sup>15</sup> Dussel (1993, pp. 65-66) begins by stating that:

[m]odernity is, for many (for Jürgen Habermas or Charles Taylor) an essentially or exclusively European phenomenon. In these lectures, I will argue that modernity is, in fact, a European phenomenon but one constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-European alterity that is its ultimate content. Modernity appears when Europe affirms itself as the "centre" of a World History that it inaugurates: the "periphery" that surrounds this centre is consequently part of its self-definition. The occlusion of this periphery (and of the role of Spain and Portugal in the formation of the modern world system from the late fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries) leads the major contemporary thinkers of the "centre" into a Eurocentric fallacy in their understanding of modernity. If their understanding of the genealogy of

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<sup>15</sup> As regards the on-going debate on whether or not decolonial theory and postcolonial theory are the same thing, Mignolo (2007, p. 452) has argued that a distinction is important because the two terms have different genealogies: 'Coloniality and de-coloniality introduces a fracture with both, the Eurocentered project of post-modernity and a project of post-coloniality heavily dependent on post-structuralism as far as Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida have been acknowledged as the grounding of the post-colonial canon: Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. De-coloniality starts from other sources. From the de-colonial shift already implicit in *Nueva corónica and buen gobierno* by Waman Puma de Ayala; in the de-colonial critique and activism of Mahatma Gandhi; in the fracture of Marxism in its encounter with colonial legacies in the Andes, articulated by José Carlos Mariátegui; in the radical political and epistemological shifts enacted by Amílcar Cabral, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Rigoberta Menchú, Gloria Anzaldúa, among others. The de-colonial shift, in other words, is a project of de-linking while post-colonial criticism and theory is a project of scholarly transformation within the academy.' For examples of this diversity see the following edited collections: Vinayak Chaturvedi (2000) and Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carlos A. Jáuregui (2008).

modernity is thus partial and provincial, their attempts at a critique or defence of it are likewise unilateral and, in part, false.

Dussel thus immediately disputes the standard narrative of modernity: that it emerged in Europe to confront in the colonies the pre-modern, whether conceptualized as barbaric, primitive, or natural. For Dussel, modernity lies between these two positions; that is, in the hierarchy that links the colonizer to the colonized, grounded in the evaluative binary structures of Eurocentric thought, such as centre/periphery, tradition/modernity, and primitive/civilized. By questioning the idea that modernity represents emancipation and tracing its development within the context of colonialism, Dussel enables an understanding of modernity as the result of a Eurocentric organization of time.

Dussel then shifts focus to the ways in which non-European modes of knowing, representation and conceptualization continue to be subordinated by philosophers and theorists who are blind to the fact that Eurocentric categories of thought carry the seeds both of emancipation and of oppression. 'If modernity is understood essentially as a European phenomenon,' elaborates Mignolo (2007, p. 457), 'then the "emancipation" of people in the non-European world has to be planned, dictated and executed from Europe or the US itself only.' Though Dussel has been criticized for zooming over the speed bumps of modernity's inner contradictions and complexities in his effort to make his argument accessible to a larger audience, his marriage of modernity and colonialism opens up new directions for understanding modernity as a result of Europe's overseas ventures. Although the idea of epistemological dominance as a central object of critique flourishes in various other fields – ranging from critical race studies to liberation theology, from indigenous studies to world system analyses – what Dussel's lectures provide is an analytical lens through which to view the part played by colonialism in creating, developing and maintaining a hierarchy of knowledge.

Before proceeding to lay out the foundations of a theoretical framework of modernity as constitutive of coloniality,

I must add that I have gone against the grain of the often customary method in dissertations of sticking with one particular theorist or analytical tool. More precisely, I have taken full advantage of the leverage offered by a thesis comprised of journal articles by drawing on the insights and concepts I found most appropriate to the material under scrutiny in each paper. Rather than regarding the different decolonial and postcolonial theorists that I work with here as mutually conflicting, I see them as accommodating and complementing each other. In what follows, I will flesh out this dissertation's treatment of the fluid concept of 'modernity' and its relation to coloniality. After that, I will focus on how to read 'colonial difference', before closing with an elaboration on the concept of 'delinking' which I use in the fourth and final essay.

### **Modernity/Coloniality**

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* – the most diligently compiled index of English-language usage – modernity is 'the quality or condition of being modern' with the additional definition of 'a modern way of thinking'. In constructing binary opposites, and in alluding to the Enlightenment, rationality, and science, what 'modern thinking' tends to disavow is that 'tradition' – or, 'traditional thinking' – is in itself a creation of the discourse of modernity. Put differently, the dividing line between the modern and those who are not or have yet to become modern was drawn by the very discourse that defined modernity. According to Mignolo (2002a), tradition was a necessary creation, an invention essential to defining modernity as the location in time of the ideals to be attained by humanity and to situating it in the geopolitical space of Western Europe.

However, to say that modernity is an invention is not to say that there is one single interpretation of it. On the contrary, modernity has been conceptualized in numerous ways, with robust waves of polemic and contradictions that target divergent political, intellectual and aesthetic practices. Without turning a deaf ear to modernity's many voices, Arturo Escobar (2010, p. 9), in sketching out the ways to read the term 'modernity' from a

decolonial viewpoint, traces the idea of a ‘modern way of thinking’ to ‘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.’ He continues:

[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.

This quotation also points to the dangers involved in reading – or rather, misreading – modernity as a singular and unchanging phenomenon. Although modernity, for Escobar (2010), refers to a dominant mode grounded in Europe, he adds that there are certainly other modernities that are not shaped by their relation to European modernity (cf. Chatterjee, 1997; Comaroff and Comaroff, 1993). In short, modernity is in constant flux due to its own dynamism and exposure to both internal and external critique.

While Walter Dignolo, taking his cue from Dussel and Aníbal Quijano, does not disregard the existence of numerous subtle approaches to European modernity, he often avoids targeting the content of specific epistemological positions or theories. Instead of tunnelling into the theoretical nuances of modernity, he seems to have his eyes set on the goal rather than the content; that is, in place of attempting to chart and pin down the various elements of modernity, Dignolo concerns himself with the imperial assumptions and scope of application that have allowed certain epistemological positions and theories to

universalize themselves.<sup>16</sup> It would seem fair to note in passing here that a poststructuralist or deconstructive reading might also do the trick, but my decision to read modernity and coloniality jointly rests on this perspective's recognition of the often unacknowledged contribution of the colonized populations in forming modernity. While this dimension tends to be overlooked in scholarly writing irrespective of theoretical schema or even geopolitical location, decolonial scholars have referred to perspectives that rely on European epistemes as 'Eurocentric critique of modernity' (Dussel, 1999, p. 39). Thus, when Linda Martín Alcoff (2007, p. 91) reminds us that '[t]he philosophy of science, for example, never presents itself as the philosophy of Western science, but as the philosophy of science *tout court*', she also reveals what separates an 'internal' critique of modernity from an 'external' one. While there are clearly valid points on both sides of the debate, mainly because decolonial theory and postcolonial studies are deeply indebted to previous efforts by postmodern scholars (Derrida, Foucault, Lyotard etcetera.), Mignolo (2007, p. 454) insists that '[t]he postmodernists criticize modern reason as a reason of terror; we criticize modern reason because of the irrational myth it conceals.'<sup>17</sup> As Mignolo argues, this myth is precisely what he calls the darker side of modernity, the destructive logic hidden underneath keywords such as 'salvation', 'development', and 'progress', or, to put it differently, coloniality. What such a perspective recognizes is the ways in

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<sup>16</sup> Besides the Argentinean semiotician Mignolo, the Argentinean philosopher Dussel, the Colombian anthropologist Escobar, and the Peruvian sociologist Quijano, other prominent members of the collective called Modernity/Coloniality who, in one way or another, have had an impact on the construction of the theoretical frameworks used in the subsequent essays include Santiago Castro-Gómez, Edgardo Lander, María Lugones, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Eduardo Restrepo, Freya Schiwy, and Catherine Walsh.

<sup>17</sup> While often accredited to Mignolo, this quotation is originally from Dussel (1993, p. 66) who in his *Frankfurt Lectures* states that: 'Modernity includes a rational "concept" of emancipation that we affirm and subsume. But, at the same, it develops an irrational myth, a justification for genocidal violence. The postmodernists criticize modern reason as a reason of terror; we criticize modern reason because of the irrational myth it conceals.'

which the colonial text turns difference into subordination by emphasizing the perceived shortcomings of the Other – their backwardness, ignorance, and savagery – whereby coloniality can be justified as a necessary, albeit sometimes unfortunate, step to supersede tradition.

The paradigm of modernity/coloniality – positioned as a nexus to accentuate their inseparability – is grounded in the following premises: an emphasis on locating the origins of modernity in the expansion of geographical consciousness in Europe as part of the conquest of America and the control of the transatlantic trade; a persistent attention to colonialism in the making of a capitalist world system dominated by modern Europe; to the domination of others through social/racial taxonomies, with the simultaneous devaluation of their knowledge systems and cultures; highlighting the tenacious denial of dependency on any external sources, making it seem that European cultural advancements are strictly independent of any encounter with the surrounding world, as well as the justifications of violence in the name of Christianization, civilization, and, more recently, development and free markets; the acknowledgement of Eurocentrism as the form of knowledge underlying modernity/coloniality, through which Europe has been able to claim universality for itself (Dussel, 2000; Escobar, 2007; Mignolo, 2005). In sum, ‘there is no modernity without coloniality’, Mignolo (2005, p. xiii) asserts, ‘because coloniality is constitutive of modernity’. This dialectic can be used as a theoretical linchpin, then, for it implies an inability to be modern without being colonial – coloniality marks the hierarchies at modernity’s heart.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Attempts to bring forth the darker side of modernity are not restricted to postcolonial theorists. In the works of Giorgio Agamben (1999) and Zygmunt Bauman (1989) the death camps of Nazi Germany are not treated as an aberration of modernity but as integral of its logic and thus as continuous with our most cherished liberal values. By the same token, Jean-Paul Sartre (2006, p. 54), in support of the Algerian struggle against France, equates Nazism with imperial dominance as colonialism ‘infects us with its racism [...] it obliges our young men to fight despite themselves and die for the Nazi principles that we

Modernity and coloniality, universalism and particularism, humanism and racism: in reading the words together, in light of one another, rather than as separate concepts, a theoretical framework takes shape that can analyse the ways in which Europe, through the acquisition of the adjective ‘modern’ for itself as an integral part of the story of colonial projects within global history, has gained a degree of universality. What becomes clear here is not just the intimate bond between modernity and coloniality but also the ways in which the universal can be read as rooted in a particular history, loaded with multiple layers of cultural assumptions, ideological choices, and philosophical and religious persuasions that all connect back to Europe. What decolonial theorists suggest is that universality is premised on the affirmation of radical difference between sections of humanity; that is to say, it is premised on a denial of co-evalness, in which one part of humanity is sacrificed in order to assert the universality of those on the other side of the border between European and Other.

In more clear-cut terms, the colonial populations provided the mirror in which Europe could perceive itself as civilized, enlightened and superior in contrast to an uncivilized, primitive and inferior Other. Through the expansion of capitalism and a racial matrix, the colonial powers could impose a devaluation of ways of knowing, representing and conceptualizing that did not fit parameters established by modern knowledge, science and law. ‘Modernity’, Mignolo (1999, p. 93) continues, ‘was imagined as the house of epistemology’; and from the perspective of this ‘house’ the colonized regions of the world – from Latin America to Africa, from India to the Caribbean – were rarely seen as possessing any attributes belonging to ‘human nature’, and were never credited with the ability to produce anything besides primordial objects. From this perspective, then, the colonies appeared as an incomplete, damaged, and unfinished domain, and their histories were reduced to a series of setbacks in the

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fought against ten years ago; it attempts to defend itself by arousing fascism here in France.’

development of human nature (Mbembe, 2001). ‘There is nothing comparable when it comes to the black man. He has no culture, no civilization, and no “long historical past”’, as Frantz Fanon (2008[1952], p. 17) famously put it.

## The Colonial Difference

The concept I use to describe the hierarchy that forms and sustains inter-subjective relationships through European epistemology is ‘colonial difference’. And it is precisely the background outlined above – that is, the ways in which the dominant forms of European modernity have, through coloniality, created a difference from other groups – that makes decolonial theorists hesitant about the conceptualization of ‘cultural differences’ which is predominant in, for example, intercultural and multicultural discourses; they are suspicious of the ways in which these discourses frame difference merely in cultural terms. In their view, this occludes the colonial dimension.

The “differences” between Latin America and Europe and the US are not just “cultural”; they are, well and truly, “colonial differences.” That is, the *links* between industrial, developed, and imperial countries, on the one hand, and could-be-industrial, under-developed, and emerging countries, on the other, *are* the colonial difference in the sphere where knowledge and subjectivity, gender and sexuality, labour exploitation of natural resources, and finance, and authority are established. The notion of cultural differences overlooks the relation of power while the concept of colonial difference is based, precisely, on imperial/colonial power differentials (Mignolo, 2005, p. 36).

Fundamentally, the conceptualization of ‘colonial difference’ recognizes the power dynamics at work in how Europeans have represented their Others. In comparison to a culturist language of differences, to frame certain inter-subjective relations in terms of a colonial difference is to acknowledge that social classifications – race, ethnicity, and even culture – are not horizontal but vertical. Notwithstanding such taxonomies, reading affirmations of difference in intercultural discourses as colonial rather than cultural is a way to break from the logic of the same in which the non-European is depicted as existing on the same historical

trajectory but further behind; their knowledge systems subject to the same standards but less developed (Alcoff, 2007). Thus, ‘colonial difference’ calls into question the process through which the world became unthinkable beyond Western epistemology. Put differently, the colonial difference marks the limits of knowledge production, unless modern epistemology has been exported/imported to those areas of the world where thinking is imagined as impossible (Mignolo, 2002b).

The colonial difference is, at the same time, a source of critical knowledge that in conflicting with dominant paradigms can reveal that any knowledge is attached to a local history no matter its status. From this point of view, it is the spatial organization of time and space that fuels the necessity of critiquing the inability of Western epistemology to acknowledge its role in colonial expansion, without which it seems plausible that it would not have gained its degree of universality. The construction of difference in colonial discourse enabled Europe to legitimize colonialism on a rhetorical level, insofar as it consciously set out to modernize, develop, instruct, and civilize. ‘Imperialism’, Said (1994, p. 269) states, ‘was (or claimed to be) an educational movement.’ The legacies of educational institutions, hospitals and missions around the globe all testify to this history, which over time established a rhetoric of modernization and development that concomitantly silenced the harsher logics of coloniality in the process of ‘civilizing’ the ‘native’ populations (Said, 2000). More than anything, a colonial education is a double-edged sword: the colonizers represented their culture as universal and accessible to all, but at the same time made sure that no ‘native’ was able to pass its tests, thus preserving the divide between native and European.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> This is not, however, to suggest that the imperial powers ran the educational system in their colonies in identical ways. In an interview with Gauri Viswanathan, the late Edward Said (2001, p. 263) discusses the differences between Britain and France in terms of colonial education. According to Said, the teachers in the British colonies tried to teach the local students that they ‘can acquire some knowledge of England and its poetry and language, but you

These examples from the colonial archive shed light on the reasons why the narratives of modernity almost universally, point to Europe as the principal site where, to borrow from Homi Bhabha (1994, p. 301), ‘newness enters the world’. This is not to say that the recognition of certain parts of Europe as the original source of modernity is the work of Europeans alone; the colonies decolonized themselves by embracing modernizing ideologies of nationalism as formulated within European institutions and have therefore been partners in the process (Jonsson, 1995). However, this does not justify a rejection of those core notions of science, reason, and liberal values that helped define Europe as the principal home of the modern. The point is not that European modernity is unreasonable in itself, or that those grand narratives of citizenship, rights, and nation-state produced within this discourse are merely culturally specific. The key issue is rather that these narratives have been able to come across as natural and desirable far beyond the realm where they originated (Chakrabarty, 2000). To disregard the fact that modernity is a product of a particular place, a particular time, and particular people, also entails a denial of those social, historical, and geographical circumstances that produced modernity, which implies a denial of the possibility that universal ideas can be realized in other times, by other people, in other places (Jonsson, 2009). The merit of Mignolo’s (2005) conception of modernity/coloniality as a horizon of comprehension is that it manages to capture the darker side of modernity; the violence and repression that is instrumental in the victory of modernity, yet hidden in the rhetorical power of ideas such as ‘progress’, ‘civilization,’ and latterly ‘development’.

It is not only the colonized’s perception of itself that has been changed by coloniality in the construction of an inferior Other. As Spivak (2008, p. 23) argues, Eurocentrism and cultural

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can never *be* English, which is quite different from the French system of imperialism, where they trained people to assimilate to France.’

supremacy has also produced a sense among Westerners, inside as well as outside of educational settings, that they live in the centre of the world, have a responsibility to help others, and that ‘people from other parts of the world are not fully global’. The rhetorical strength of modernity, then, manifests itself in the naturalization of European dominance and supremacy, in which coloniality is either ignored or securely placed in the past. By disavowing the history of coloniality and the unequal power balance that straddles what are commonly referred to as the ‘First’ and ‘Third World’ in the global capitalist system, the growth patterns of the ‘First World’ are then sanctioned as a historical path for the rest of the world to follow, with the accompanying supposition that this can only be made possible by extending a helping hand to the Other (Kapoor, 2004). Help, according to Spivak (2008, p. 15), often serves as a cover for the social Darwinism implicit in ‘development’; framed as ‘the burden of the fittest’. Such colonial echoes in the West’s striving for global solidarity have been uncovered in, among others, feminist movements (Mohanty, 2003) and foreign aid (Eriksson Baaz, 2005).

## **Delinking**

Working from the assumption that knowledge is colonized, the task ahead then is to decolonize it. To use Mignolo’s (2007, p. 458) own summarizing words, decoloniality amounts to ‘ethically orientated, epistemically geared, politically motivated and economically necessary processes.’ The ethical and the epistemological are thus intertwined; according to Mignolo, the ethical impulse coincides with an effort to foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding – and by extension, other forms of ethics, politics, and economic life – as alternatives to European modernity. Decoloniality thus removes itself from the idea of a singular modernity with universal reach and embraces the possibility that there is a plurality of modernities. Such a perspective, which recognizes discrepant modernities, also prompts the recognition of incompleteness; that is, the recognition that no single type of

modernity or particular kind of epistemology can account for all possible interventions in the world.

This finally brings me to the project of *interculturalidad*, which is dealt with in the fourth, and final, essay. Routinely theorized in the abstract, with allusions to the Zapatistas' dictum of creating a world where many worlds can co-exist, this project may now rather be conceptualized as a concrete step towards decolonization, in the sense that it brings forth dissident voices and ways of knowing that have been insufficiently recognized by modern science and knowledge. Taking up Samir Amin's proposition that certain peripheries should 'delink' themselves from the economic and political systems of the West, Mignolo extends the concept of 'delinking' by adding epistemology to the project. Mignolo problematizes Amin's project by arguing that it could certainly bring about a polycentric world, but not an epistemic shift.<sup>20</sup> Attempting to correct what he discerns as blindness to the colonial difference in Amin's argument, Mignolo argues that it is necessary to go around European history to 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). From this angle, delinking is a passage to a decolonial alternative and it is dedicated to the constitution of other modes of modernization by bringing to the fore knowledge systems that have been colonized and delegitimized but that nonetheless enable us to move outside of the logics of modernity.

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<sup>20</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, Mignolo's understanding of the notion derives from Aníbal Quijano (1989), 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.

However, 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 etcetera – as it existed before the arrival of Europeans, with its traditional modes of social organization and authority. Embedded in the project of delinking is rather an acknowledgment that it is possible to transcend or overcome modernity only by approaching it from the perspective of the colonial difference, for even if one sought to reconstruct, for instance, Aymara and Quechua frameworks of knowledge and categories of thought, this effort would have to pass through the very European categories that have denied them legitimacy. In this sense, Mignolo asserts that delinking entails a move towards ‘a geo- and body politics of knowledge that denounces the pretended universality of a particular ethnicity (body politics), located in a specific part of the planet (geopolitics), that is, Europe where capitalism accumulated as a consequence of colonialism’ (Mignolo, 2007, p. 453). Since recognition of cultural diversity does not necessarily translate into recognition of epistemological diversity, epistemic decolonization is necessary to make possible sustained and dynamic interconnection across cultures. While this is a thread to be developed in the upcoming discussion, it must be made clear in closing that delinking refers to an epistemic shift that has yet to occur; it is therefore only possible to speak of it in a way that emphasizes what it *could be*, rather than what it *is*.



## Methodological Considerations

As may be observed in the foregoing section, my survey of the theoretical approaches underpinning my analysis also includes a number of methodological considerations. Although a few general questions of methodology have been raised, the greater part of my discussion until now has focused on ways of reading interculturality against the backdrop of decolonial critique. From this perspective, theory and method appear inseparable from one another. Additionally, scholars working within this theoretical framework generally concern themselves with analysing broad patterns at a rather high level of abstraction, at the expense of smaller empirical samples, whereby a methodological blueprint, a general framework of rules or a toolbox with a set of procedures to be followed remain out of reach.

The questions guiding decolonial readings begin with asking when, why and by whom knowledge is being constructed. In this theoretical strand, the aim is to establish that universal norms that have come to be perceived as valid for all humanity are but a reflection of their own geohistorical locations. Thus, decolonial readings take as their point of departure the belief that inter-subjective inequalities are shaped and sustained by the colonization of knowledge that has turned a regional locus of enunciation into a universal one. More specifically, coloniality is seen as participating in the formation of Eurocentric epistemic relations in order to ensure the perpetuation of its own control and dominance, visible not least in the construction of binary opposites that distinguish between modern and traditional, progress and backwardness, science and belief. From this perspective, Europe not only affirms itself as the centre of space and the site from which newness emerges, but also has the epistemic privilege of being the centre of enunciation (Mignolo, 2002a).

For a more concrete example of what epistemic privilege implies, one can turn to the ambiguous label of 'ethnic food'.

Whether at a supermarket, a fair, or merely browsing the lists of surrounding restaurants in a local guidebook somewhere in Europe or the United States, the only food to be regarded as ‘non-ethnic’ would be the dishes that are identified with European or US cuisine. The banality of the analogy is part of its purpose; its very banality reveals an underlying logic that distinguishes between the foods defined as ‘ethnic’ (a label most probably aligned with folklore and tradition) and the ‘non-ethnic’, where the latter is simultaneously taken as the non-place, the transparently universal, locus of enunciation (Mignolo, 2002b).

Seen as inevitably configured by the logic of coloniality, albeit often hidden underneath the rhetoric of modernity, the locus of enunciation is thus the central concern for my readings; that is, the site from which a statement is being articulated and how it relates to – or even neglects – other possible loci to speak from (cf. Mignolo, 1999). Accordingly, my analytical approach is a deeply affirmative mode of critique attentive to the enchantment of binary oppositions in the texts, rhetorical blind spots, what is taken for granted in the transaction between text and implied reader. But with a view to modernity/coloniality as a horizon of comprehension, my readings are also attentive to the ways in which other founding concepts of Eurocentric thought such as space, time, history, and language are mobilized in the material scrutinized.

Now, to say something about the diverse empirical material upon which I draw in the essays. In response to the circulation of interculturality in numerous ways, this thesis employs a range of different sources that link several contexts which are usually compartmentalized: policy documents, interviews, and textbooks. Before giving a detailed account of the empirical material and methodological procedure of each article, I should say something about my reasons for working with these ‘texts’. I stated above that several supranational bodies have adopted interculturality as a central dimension of their aims to, as formulated by the European Union, ‘increase the understanding of other cultures [...] in a diverse, pluralist, solidarity-based and dynamic society,

not only in Europe but also in the world' (2007, pp. 1-3). Against this background, a study of the EU policy in this area allows not only a grappling with the ways in which the EU, from its supranational position of power, attempts to pursue the promotion of interculturality, but it also permits an analysis of how sameness and otherness are interpreted from the EU point of view. Or to put it simply, this policy reveals where European culture, in the eyes of supranational bodies, begins and ends.

Since education is emphasized as the key domain in the process of becoming intercultural, and it is claimed that the dividends of these policy formulations can be seen in the rapid growth of interculturality as an educational subject in Europe (cf. Dahlén, 1997; Dewey, 2008), I have also chosen to study a university course on interculturality. The interviews with students who have completed one of these academic courses demonstrate how people educated on interculturality invoke its language in order to bridge otherness. In relation to policy documents, interviews allow a broadened understanding of the definitions given to intercultural knowledge and, by extension, how the limits of sameness and otherness are established.

In order to elucidate yet another dimension of interculturality, I then scrutinize literature in line with curricula profiles to analyse the ways in which educational texts approach interculturality and the information they hold out to their implied readers. Of interest here is what, in the literature, is coded in terms of sameness and otherness in the transaction between text and reader; that is, what is normalized and what is represented as different. Again, without arguing that there are necessarily many points of correspondence between the materials under scrutiny, this study, in interrogating how intercultural knowledge is defined within various contexts, has aimed to cover a significant amount of ground, thereby acknowledging, and engaging with, the existence of manifold possible approaches to intercultural education, a plurality which previous studies have tended not to emphasize.

To counter and decentre the language of interculturality, however, I have also interviewed students and teachers from a

course on *interculturalidad* in the Andes run by an indigenous umbrella organization. This enables a reading against the grain of interculturality, on the assumption that the discourse on *interculturalidad* can illustrate loopholes in the rhetoric of the latter.

Thus, the opening piece analyses central documents by the European Union specifically assigned to interculturality, to education or to responding to the idea of European culture.<sup>21</sup> In addition, to broaden the discourse I have also sought to weave in policies from the Council of Europe that promote and endorse interculturality within Europe. It should be noted that not only do the EU and the Council of Europe act under the same flag, their close connection as cooperative partners in the cultural sphere is formalized in the Maastricht Treaty, and a result of their collaboration was the ‘European Year of Intercultural Dialogue’ in 2008; a point of reference for both the EU and the Council of Europe in their policy-making on interculturality. My choice to analyse official documents from supranational bodies derives from their important role in the governmental decision-making process. Further, policies can be seen as an important expression of the political power to govern (Fejes, 2006). Thus, the aforementioned documents can reveal the characteristics and knowledge assigned to interculturality, the factors that shape relations to otherness, and the ways in which the EU attempts to bring about its ambition to educate ‘intercultural citizens’.

The next essay is an interview study with students who have successfully completed a course on intercultural pedagogy of 30 ECTS<sup>22</sup> credits at one of Sweden’s major universities. According to its syllabus, Intercultural Pedagogy deals with cultural

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<sup>21</sup> The documents analysed are the following: On a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World [EC, 2007], White Paper on Education and Training [EC, 1995], Sibiu declaration on Intercultural Dialogue and Communicating the European Idea [CE, 2007] and White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue [CE, 2008].

<sup>22</sup> 30 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) equals one semester of full-time studies.

encounters with the purpose of ‘broadening comprehension between people of diverse cultural backgrounds’ and places emphasis on the ‘learning process in cultural meetings’. As part of its aims, the students are expected to acquire an intercultural perspective on ‘cultural encounters in a globalized world’ and the ‘exchange of knowledge between cultures’ and are trained in the ability to ‘act in a concrete intercultural environment’. Moreover, the course at hand is described as being outward-looking; the students are encouraged to study contexts and ‘objects outside of Western majority culture and the multicultural environment in Sweden.’ This was also a reason for choosing this course since it was likely that students enrolled in it would display attitudes that transcended their national context. The encouragement to take an interest in other cultures turned out to be close to the hearts of the students interviewed who had all either studied, worked or gone on long journeys in regions that, in the public imagination of the West, have long been viewed as underdeveloped and different (Said, 1994). These extended visits to other parts of the world were in almost all of the cases also acknowledged as reasons for enrolling in the course.

Scanning lists of students who had completed the above-mentioned course on interculturality during the last three years, I randomly interviewed fourteen of them during spring 2010. Five were males and nine were females, and all were Swedish citizens. The interviewees were first contacted by phone and asked whether they wanted to participate. To facilitate the process, I travelled to their current city of residence and let them decide on a preferred location for the interview to take place, in order for them to feel comfortable. These locations varied between coffee shops, libraries, or even at their kitchen tables. To avoid rigid constructions in advance of the phenomena I aimed to study, the interviews were semi-structured (Kvale, 2007). As a data collection technique, semi-structured interviews have the advantage of allowing similar questions to be asked to all the respondents, while at the same time giving them room to bring in other perspectives, views and questions that the interview guide may have overlooked. As such, interviews serve as a way to access

stories and capture lived meanings as the respondents describe their everyday world and reveal attitudes toward certain issues and situations (Krippendorff, 2004).

As I do not believe in the existence of an objective external world, I am not particularly concerned with the truthfulness of the informants' accounts. Rather my understanding of the research interview is informed by Tim Rapley's (2004, p. 26) assertion that the qualitative interview is not about establishing the truth of respondents' experiences, actions, and feelings, but rather 'how specific (and sometimes contradictory) truths are produced, sustained and negotiated'. From this point of view, it is also important to emphasize that the interview is a construction site of knowledge, where the interviewer, to a certain degree, is an accomplice to the respondent in the knowledge-producing process (Kvale, 2007). Such an approach acknowledges that the transcribed interview text is as much a product of the social dynamic that was at play between myself and the respondents as an accurate reflection of the questions asked and the answers given. Not only are the researchers and the research participants structurally positioned in domination and subordination, where their respective social positions may influence the interview process and the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, there is also a risk that the respondents may give answers that they think will please the interviewer, or in other cases, try to conceal information to prevent the researcher from learning something about the topics discussed (Bradburn, 1983). In short, knowledge produced in the interview is a joint construction in and through interaction between the researcher and the respondent, where the insights gained, to a large extent, depend on the relationship established between the parties involved.

For the actual interview process, I prepared an interview guide with broad questions structured around three larger themes. Firstly, I began by asking the respondents if they could tell me a bit about what they did before enrolling in the course. Connected to their replies, I followed up by wondering what made them interested in questions of cultural encounters and why they decided to study interculturality. Having established what the

respondents' reasons for enrolling in the course were, I moved on to the second theme, focusing on the ways in which the interviewees defined interculturality, why and when they considered it to be important and how it related to other concepts such as multiculturalism. Finally, I asked if they could give any practical examples of interculturality, and also what they conceived to be important to teach and learn in such encounters with otherness. With the consent of the respondents, I used a tape-recorder to record the interviews. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the interview at any time if they wished. All the interviews were individual, ranging between 30 minutes and an hour depending on the length and complexity of the respondents' answers.

Since I will come back to the essay on *interculturalidad* at a later stage, the final piece I will discuss here analyses academic literature on interculturality. The material for this essay was determined by selecting three titles that are often assigned to courses on intercultural pedagogy and which are also widely circulated and frequently cited: *Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross-Cultural Training Handbook* by L. Robert Kohls and John Mark Knight (1994), *Kulturmöten: En introduktion till interkulturella studier* by Jonas Stier (2009), and *Interkulturell pedagogik i teori och praktik* edited by Pirjo Lahdenperä (2004).<sup>23</sup> While citation numbers are an arbitrary instrument and a dubious indicator of quality, they do at least say something about whether or not a certain text has been picked up as part of an on-going debate. Two of the textbooks are in Swedish and one in English, and they are united by the fact that they all address students of interculturality in today's globalized and multicultural world as their main readership. It is necessary

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<sup>23</sup> In March 2014 *Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross-Cultural Training Handbook* had 186 citations in Google Scholar; *Kulturmöten: En introduktion till interkulturella studier* (Cultural Encounters: An Introduction to Intercultural Studies) had 94, and *Interkulturell pedagogik i teori och praktik* (Intercultural Pedagogy in Theory and Practice) had been cited 111 times.

to mention that the objects of my readings are only the actual texts, not their authors (cf. Said, 1994; Spivak, 1985). Moreover, the texts are also posited as examples of a broader discourse on interculturality in the West.

For concrete examples of how the empirical material has been read and interpreted, I will here offer a brief description of the analytical approach and chain of arguments laid out in each one of the essays. The first article explores articulations of identity in EU policy on interculturality, particularly with respect to the areas of education, citizenship and culture. I highlight the fact that the EU's eagerness to form a European identity relies on an ethnocultural understanding of identity, by borrowing analytical tools from Bhabha (1994), who has usefully identified the construction of national identities as the pedagogic and the performative.

The pedagogical relates to tradition, the conservative desire to stabilize, whereby the nation and its population are filled with cultural significance such as shared history, common language, joint values, national literature etcetera. The objective is to authenticate the inside of a space in relation to the outside by projecting the cultural space as homogenous, with the people possessed of an *a priori* historical existence. The performative articulates the cultural space's constant need for reinvention, the disruptive cultural praxis as the 'scraps, patches, and rags of daily life that must be *repeatedly* turned into the signs of a coherent national *culture*' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 209).<sup>24</sup> Anthems, national holidays or pledging allegiance to the flag are all part of a register of historical inventions that are produced, acted and lived on a daily basis and can both stabilize and destabilize the historicist narrative of the naturalistic continuity of space. Another way of putting the point would be that the people of a nation or a cultural space are doubly inscribed as pedagogical objects and performative subjects as identities are a matter of *becoming* as

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<sup>24</sup> Italics in original.

well as *being*, belonging to the past as much as the present and the future.

To turn yet again to the policy documents under scrutiny, the essay will analyse the European Union's attempts to ascribe itself a common identity on a pedagogical level, by inscribing the history of Europe as equivalent to the history of the Union. In the founding document that is the Maastricht Treaty, the following can be read:

European civilization has a long history and is very complex. It is today divided between a deep thirst for research and knowledge, the legacy of a tradition which made Europe the first to bring about a technical and industrial revolution and thus change the world (EC, 1992, p. 53).

On the basis of the theoretical backdrop, the excerpt is read as a pedagogical move on behalf of the EU in appropriating an acclaimed past, evoking specific moments and symbols to suit a particular purpose; in this case, to give the EU legitimacy as the present and rightful inheritor of Europe's past. Consequently, being a citizen of the EU is to be part of Europe; being part of Europe's past is, implicitly, to be a citizen of the EU. Nonetheless, in defining science and progress as European characteristics, since the continent, as it is phrased, qualitatively changed the world by bringing about a shift in the methods of manufacturing, a side effect of such an articulation is a stated superiority of Europe over other entities in terms of traits such as knowledge and understanding – also the major premises of Eurocentrism. Through such pedagogical narrations, Europe's past is described as something quarantined, independent of any encounter with the surrounding world, beyond political influences and isolated from diasporas, and performativity risks excluding subjects not able to fully relate to such a narrow and fixed perception of history.

A similar instance of carrying the industrial revolution in one's pocket can be found in the second essay, which investigates how students who have completed an academic course on the subject produce interculturality. Among the crucial questions that guide my readings is how an Other is differentiated from a self, and one aspect of that process which this analysis reveals is a

strong tendency on the part of the students to perform binary oppositions, as time is seen to be experienced differently depending on locality. Statements that illustrate this are, for instance, the following references to the speakers' experiences in either Africa or Latin America: '[w]hen I was there, it was more or less like going back to the 1950s' and '[e]fficiency is one of those key aspects that one seeks to help out with, to seize time. Otherwise nothing happens, one does not get anywhere.' What my analysis then proposes is that these excerpts can be read as tangled up with modernity, as either an industrialist logic, which defines time as something possible to 'save' and 'value', is invoked as the preferable mode of development, or a coherent linear narrative of history is written within which the contexts being compared are ascribed different positions. Measured and judged in relation to modernization, the informants' locus of enunciation is herein read as the yardstick of the present.

A similar logic repeats itself in the third essay, which scrutinizes academic literature; specifically, it is apparent in sections of the literature which aim to offer the implied readers concrete scenarios in which interculturality is inadequate, times when histories, value systems and codes inevitably collide. One of these examples is brought from South Korea, as the American woman narrating the story laments being caught in a context of traditional and backward values which eventually led her and her husband to feel alienated:

Now, our only Korean social companions are our language tutors – a Korean couple our age, well educated. He had been to the United States. They are extremely unusual as they enjoy going to dinner, the movies, and parties as a couple (Kohls & Knight, 2004, p. 103).

Aside from the sweeping generalizations and homogenizations of South Korean society, I draw particular attention to the production of binary pairings that separate the modern subject from a primordially paternalistic context as the South Korean couple are turned into a metaphor for progress, the potential to modernize, essentially linked to the attainment of an American university diploma. Without ignoring the feelings of unease

experienced by the couple, the undercurrent of these statements can be read as a tendency to ignore important cultural and class differences while construing themselves as both socially and culturally superior to South Koreans.

A few caveats. Although what I have presented above is merely one facet of the larger analyses conducted in the essays, these examples are meant to serve as explicatory notes to accompany the essays themselves. This being said, I am not proposing that there is a single way to interpret the texts; of course, another theoretical perspective would have offered other insights and understandings. Nor do I wish to imply that there are causal connections between the empirical materials under scrutiny or that these texts constitute the only valid objects of study. What I seek to describe, however, are not accidental occurrences in policies, academic courses and literature but broader trends influencing the way in which 'appropriate knowledge' is defined in intercultural education, therefore each essay can be understood against the background of the others. Aside from the purpose of comparing and contrasting discourses of interculturality, the inclusion of *interculturalidad* is not intended to expose errors of perception, but simply to question the production of a universal grammar for what might be context-bound.

Speaking of *interculturalidad*, in the final 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 models. Academic legitimacy is imparted by four universities that operate as collaborators: the students enrolled are given academic credits on completion of the course.<sup>25</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

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<sup>25</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.

using 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 three teachers and eight of the students from the course. The teachers were all male, while among the students interviewed the gender distribution was even. The interviews took place during fall 2011 and spring 2012 as I visited and revisited classes, seminars and other educational activities organized within the framework of the course. Given the gap in translation between *interculturalidad* and interculturality, one reason for conducting interviews is the possibility of learning from indigenous agents about the historical experiences affecting the way *interculturalidad* is articulated in a micro-political context beyond policy formulations on interculturality; an approach that, following Françoise Vergès (1999, p. xii), may allow for ‘comparisons, analogies, contrasts with other colonial experiences.’

The interviews were held in Spanish, and were from 35 minutes to an hour and a half in length, depending on how elaborative and complex the respondents’ accounts were. Given the background to the course with its emphasis on decolonization, I am well aware of the apparent paradox of using Spanish as a means of communication. 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, on the one hand, that students may speak mutually unintelligible languages, 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 Evo Morales himself lamented in a recent interview, when enrolled in school, he gradually lost his earlier fluency in Aymara (Peñaranda, 2011).

All interviews were conducted individually, recorded by a digital recording device and later transcribed, and I only translated those quotations that I included in the essay into English from the original language of the interview. These interviews were also semi-structured to open a space for discussing the notion of '*interculturalidad*', its status and significance and the ways the term can be understood as a strategy for decolonization as proposed by the course syllabus. Having formulated an interview guide structured around broad themes, I began on a more personal note by asking the interviewees where they were from, their current employment and previous studies, in order to get a background and short biography for each one of the respondents. As the interviewees, in general, spoke of upbringings in which their indigenous status had designated inferiority, such descriptions were helpful as a backdrop to the second theme of the discussion. Here I inquired about the reasons for enrolling in the course on *interculturalidad*, if there were any particular experiences that made them interested in these issues, what questions were of particular interest to them, and what their plans were after having finished the course. The third theme involved discussion of what *interculturalidad* meant to the interviewees and how they would define it. Their replies were all followed by a question regarding how they make use of the concept in order to get a picture of different circumstances and areas where *interculturalidad* is conceived to play an important role.

In terms of analytical approach, I have previously described how *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. Regarding *interculturalidad* as a horizon of comprehension rather than a concrete analytical tool, I place emphasis on symptoms of modernity/coloniality and map articulations that run counter to a framework deemed to be Western. To provide an example of this complex yet crucial operation, the following statement by an interviewee describes *interculturalidad* as:

a tool to re-recognize 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 for who I am and not try to copy ways of life that are outside of our reality.

Read against a theoretical backdrop that emphasizes claims of particularity as possible resistance to colonial vestiges, I argue that the interviewee speaks from a locus that targets negated elements of identification with ancestors. This in turn can be interpreted as an attempt to delink from prescribed identities by underlining the need to write a biography rooted in memories other than those of the imperial dominant. As is put forward in the above quotation, essential to 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.

Given the immense intricacy of this question, however, I have no intention of pushing for generalizations nor have I sought to offer a comprehensive account of approaches to *interculturalidad* among indigenous alliances in the Andes. What must be kept in mind when assessing my results is that these findings are based on a small sample of students and teachers, and also that this educational initiative is only one among many in the region. But, and as highlighted in the syllabus, 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). In this regard, I can only assume that the general tendencies of the argument pursued in this essay, which the literature accounted for in the text tends to confirm, reflect the general tendencies of the articulation of *interculturalidad* among indigenous movements in the Andes.

Although what is uncovered in the three preceding essays may be reason enough for invoking the counter discourse to interculturality that is *interculturalidad*, there are three crucial points that need to be addressed. Firstly, as the language of the interviews is not my native language, even though I am fluent in it, the risk of mistranslation or misunderstanding in the quotations used to illustrate my findings can never be fully erased.

This is especially the case when words, as in this particular instance, not only have to travel between language schemas but also must cross an epistemic divide. The possibility of arbitrariness in the excerpts as the result of the sensitivity of words and meanings to geopolitical contexts and frameworks of knowledge also accentuates the limitations of translation and my own inability to break away from the use of Western terminology that *interculturalidad* in several respects attempts to criticize. To be more precise, the very notion of epistemology, alongside other categorizations (for example, ontology) and technologies (for example, alphabetic writing), in addressing issues related to indigenous ways of knowing is not unproblematic. While it may be inevitable in uncovering the colonial difference that places knowers and knowing in a hierarchical scheme, it must be acknowledged that the grammar of the West is reinforced in the process. Hence, this is a double bind to which even the most prominent postcolonial scholars and theorists have yet to find a solution.<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, the term ‘indigenous’ deployed in this dissertation is 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 in the context of the Andes it 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.

Thirdly, the work with indigenous source materials inevitably comes with a muffling historical echo of the perpetuation of imperialism through the process by which

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<sup>26</sup> While the problem has been acknowledged, there seems to be no way around it. In what may be another example of the spread and dominance of Western epistemology, Mignolo (2002b, p. 60) himself tends to explain his use of certain concepts with an emphasis on ‘borrowing’ (i.e. it does not really belong to him, the concept is not part of him) or simply by referring to ‘pedagogical convenience’ (i.e. the ends justify the means as it makes the argument more comprehensible to a larger audience). I align myself with the second sentiment.

knowledge about indigenous peoples has been collected, classified and then represented in various ways back in Europe, and thereafter, through European eyes, sent back to the colonized (Smith, 1999). While some are firm critics of the way in which collecting data in the former colonized areas of the world, to be interpreted through the lens of Western high theory, tends to reproduce imperial patterns (cf. Said, 1979), others argue that:

[s]tarting research from the standpoint of the oppressed is valid because it is often the lives and experiences of oppressed people that provide significant insight and perspective. Complex human relations can become visible when research is started at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Hesse-Biber, 2004, p. 16).

For all its merits, however, I remain cautious about the latter position since the locus of enunciation is by definition a privileged one as it speaks for someone else, from above, for people with whom the researcher does not identify. Although done with benevolent intentions, there is a constant risk among Western commentators of attempting ‘to save the masses, speak for the masses, describe the masses’ as the Other remains speechless (Spivak, 1990, p. 56). In reference to this methodological dilemma, Robert Young (1991) comments that the white European scholar – like myself – is presented with a double bind as engagement with issues outside the realm of the West risks reproducing coloniality; ignoring the very same issues is Eurocentric. While the complexity of relations between Europeans and non-Europeans can never be ignored, I have positioned myself alongside Conrad Hughes’s (2009, p. 138) proposition that:

[t]he most effective texts are not necessarily those that come from cultural backgrounds other than Western ones, but rather that the most effective texts are those that grapple with dilemmas and situations that dramatize crucial elements of the postcolonial world such as perception of the ‘Other’, identity in a nation-state environment that assumes cultural homogeneity.

Whether or not I have accomplished this is at the same time unanswerable as the answer must come from elsewhere, from

silent judges; the price I pay is uncertainty, never knowing what is right and therefore having to, as formulated by Spivak (2012, p. 3-4), ‘learn to live with contradiction’ as the scholar situated in the West who aims to ‘use material that is historically marked by the region’ – hence, there is no other escape route from this double bind.

Having summarized this dissertation’s stance on method, I will go on to discuss the main arguments and findings that characterize the essays.



## Summaries

As has been said, the four essays that follow do not present an exhaustive survey of all the possible areas where articulations of interculturality come to the fore. However, by discussing and analysing the domain of education, where the concepts emerge with particular salience, the essays, taken as a whole, still provide a relatively comprehensive picture of the definitions given to intercultural knowledge and, by extension, how the limits of sameness and otherness are established. After sketching the broad contours of the problematic in the first essay, the subsequent pieces proceed through interconnected areas of intercultural education; a progression that culminates in the final essay which shifts the geography of reason in order to decentre interculturality by discussing the notion in relation to *interculturalidad*. Since I have sought throughout this introductory chapter to weave in bits and pieces from the ensuing essays – and because I will come back to them in the forthcoming discussion – the summary of each of piece will be succinct, revolving around the material analysed and main arguments pursued.

### **Essay I: The EU and the Recycling of Colonialism: Formation of Europeans Through Intercultural Dialogue**

The first essay focuses on problematizing the European Union's claim that intercultural dialogue constitutes a desirable method of talking through cultural boundaries – inside as well as outside the classroom – based on mutual empathy and non-domination. More precisely, the aim is to analyse who are being constructed as participants in intercultural dialogue – same and Other – through the discourse produced by the EU's educational policies. To do this, the theoretical framework focuses on the two aspects of nationalism that Homi Bhabha has identified as the pedagogic and the performative. Such a perspective draws attention to the way discourses are produced to provide the inhabitants of a given

space with a common identity, which needs to come across as determined, historical and unproblematic. As part of the essay's delimitations, the documents analysed are those that respond to intercultural dialogue or education, and those in which the idea of European culture comes to the fore: On a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World, White Paper on Education and Training, Sibiu declaration on Intercultural Dialogue and Communicating the European Idea and White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. The last two are from the Council of Europe, a policy body I have sought to include to broaden the discourse. The close relationship between the EU and the Council of Europe was formalized in the Maastricht Treaty, and the two bodies are collaborative partners in the endorsement of intercultural dialogue. Given that the purpose which the EU assigns to intercultural dialogue is that of an inclusionary mutual bridge between individuals and cultures, the analysis points out a contradictory state of affairs. Within the Union, Europeans are portrayed as having an *a priori* historical existence, while those excluded from this notion are invoked to demonstrate their difference in comparison to the European subject. The results show that subjects not considered to be Europeans serve as markers of the multicultural present of the space. Thus, intercultural dialogue seems to consolidate differences between European and Other – the *we* and *them* in the dialogue – rather than, in line with its purpose, bringing subjects together.

## **Essay II: In the Name of Interculturality: On Colonial Legacies in Intercultural Education**

The second essay scrutinizes the ways in which students who have completed a university course on interculturality distinguish between sameness and otherness in attempts to integrate, relate to, and build a bridge to those deemed culturally different. It makes use of interviews to analyse the factors that shape the interpretation of otherness and difference in the students' definitions of interculturality, as well as their statements about the relationships between *us* and *them*, and descriptions of

instances of learning and teaching that have taken place between parties in different parts of the world. Theoretically, the essay is based on a postcolonial framework, highlighting the continuing influence of colonialism and Eurocentric ways of reasoning inside as well as outside the classroom in today's society. That is, the ways in which Europe, and later the West, have been able to – and continue to – represent their Others as existing on the same historical trajectory but further behind, to assert that we all share the same objectives but not everyone has achieved them to the same degree; and that our knowledge is subject to the same justificatory procedures and schemes, but others are less developed. As part of the analysis, differences influenced by the colonial legacy appear in descriptions of the Other, visible in the ways that space and time are mobilized to distinguish between *here* and *there*, *now* and *then* (measurements of development: modern versus backward), and in what the informants consider to be their contribution *vis-à-vis* that of the Other in an intercultural dialogue ('concrete knowledge' versus 'human warmth'). One of the main conclusions of the essay is that in the process of transferring knowledge, there is a risk that the history of modern Europe will be sanctioned as the historical trajectory for the rest of the world to follow, with the accompanying supposition that this can only be made possible by extending a helping hand to the Other.

### **Essay III: Three Texts on Intercultural Education and a Critique of Border Drawing**

The third essay explores the ways in which boundaries of estrangement are produced in the academic literature assigned for courses on interculturality. As the existence of interculturality is dependent on the ascription of content to culture, since the notion, by definition, always involves more than one singular culture, this essay seeks to provide an answer to the question of what this literature implicitly defines in terms of sameness *vis-à-vis* otherness and thereby to chart the conditions for becoming intercultural. This question is especially important because the

self in interculturality has to be, in principle, generalizable: it should be such that it signifies a position available for occupation by anybody with proper training in this approach. Having surveyed literature lists assigned for such courses, three texts are selected which are not only in frequent circulation but also heavily cited: *Developing Intercultural Awareness: A Cross-Cultural Training Handbook*, *Cultural Encounters: An Introduction to Intercultural Studies* and *Intercultural Pedagogy in Theory and Practice*. The texts are to be regarded as examples of a broader discourse on *interculturality* in the West, and my analysis focuses on identifying, in these texts, manifestations of difference produced through the coding of culture as an invisible norm for sameness. Starting from the assumption that different experiences, languages and identities, under the name of culture, already intersect, and are contaminated by, one another, and are therefore already intercultural before being subjected to study under the auspices of ‘interculturality’ as an educational topic, the essay goes on to argue that interculturality seems caught in a double bind as the construction and maintenance of cultural identity involves the establishment of a competing alter ego, so that interculturality risks maintaining that which is deemed to be Other as other by transforming it into a representative for that very otherness. Against this background, the essay problematizes the way in which interculturality tends to construe sameness and difference along national lines and concludes by arguing that the concept does little to cater for multiple, as opposed to national, or other unified, identities.

#### **Essay IV: Why Interculturalidad is not Interculturality: Colonial Remains and Paradoxes in Translation between Indigenous Social Movements and Supranational Bodies**

The fourth essay dwells on the fact that interculturality has come to dominate the debate on cultural diversity among supranational bodies such as the European Union and UNESCO in recent years. 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. Through interviews with students and teachers in a course on interculturality run by indigenous alliances, the aim in this essay is to study how the notion is translated in the socio-political context of the Andes. Many of the reference points are drawn from the works of Walter D. Mignolo and the concept of delinking; that is, to go around European history to 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. The essay engages 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. As the interviewees emphasize the insufficiency of Western knowledge and continental philosophy, a strong argument is made that *interculturalidad* expresses an alternative framework for debates on modernity, development and ways of life. 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. By way of conclusion, the essay argues 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.



## Coda

One of my aims in this dissertation has been to analyse the definitions of intercultural knowledge given by EU policy discourse, academic textbooks on interculturality, and students who have completed a university course on the subject. On this point, the four essays clearly share many themes. In the first three essays I have identified a tendency to think of interculturality as an abstract meeting ground, on which universal values are reconciled with cultural specificities. Drawing on different empirical material, I have also – as a second aim of the dissertation – attempted to critically scrutinize the epistemological foundation of this notion of interculturality. My readings have here been guided by an examination of what happens to interculturality when it is not framed in terms of cultural differences but in terms of a colonial difference. As my examination has indicated, there are reasons to be sceptical towards all presumptions of flat substitutability between cultures, a kind of asymmetrical interrelation that allows everything to be translated into a universal idiom. Instead, I have pointed out the conditions that make the subjects who are able to acquire the knowledge necessary to become intercultural more likely to come from one part of the world than another. In this way, my interpretations have exposed another side of interculturality; a side that reveals the particularity of its ‘universal’ language as the product of a certain place, at a certain time, by certain people – a strictly European outlook on the world. In this final chapter, I will begin by focusing on the points of close correspondence between the essays on interculturality before moving on to discuss the core issues and attributes associated with interculturality in relation to *interculturalidad*.

## Language, Knowledges, and (National) Border Drawing

Reading the essays in the light of one another, a larger generic pattern appears, revealing the extent to which the concepts on which our understanding of sameness and difference is founded – language, national identity, and knowledge – are intertwined. In terms of the significance of language, nowhere does this manifest itself more clearly than in the case of the EU, in which interculturality, among other characteristics, is equated with the continent’s cultural and linguistic attributes which have been spread around the world. The pragmatic identification of the 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 an imperial legacy in the form of a subtle imperative to mould linguistic apparatuses in accordance with a European frame of reference (Aman, 2012a).

However, this process can also work the other way around; it is the absence of a specified language in which to communicate with the Other that suggests shared languages or, at least, the ability to converse in similar vernaculars. In the case of the educational literature analysed, the absence of translation from the communicative act privileges the presence of the written languages in which the books under scrutiny were composed. Language, then, seems to be the basis of the affiliation that the text holds out to a fit reader; it is the choice of language that ensures that the words reach their proper addressee: the invoked subject of interculturality. Among the manifold possible reasons for the linguistic dimension of interculturality having failed to become a regular topic of discussion is the likelihood that the textbooks scrutinized here have been produced under the assumption either that the migrant who has settled within the nation will eventually have to learn a dominant local tongue, or that the implied reader already has the linguistic tools shared by a

sufficient portion of the world's population through the growing power of English as a global lingua franca. This is a point that is, indeed, broadened by the EU to other colonial languages whose metropole and periphery are geographically distant but politically integrated; languages in which the very act of speaking is a continuous reminder of the imperial legacy the postcolonial subject carries within.

Without drawing any causal connections between the EU policies and the academic literature, in both cases the Other is subjected to the requirement to learn the language of interculturality, and a double bind starts to kick in as two conflicting subject positions are constructed: on the one hand, interculturality is dependent on otherness through the establishment of absolute alterity; on the other hand, a prerequisite for being addressed by interculturality as Other is to resemble, however minimally, the self by communicating in *our* language – it demands a certain prior degree of assimilation, since the sign system in use belongs to *us*. This rather abstract reasoning instantly becomes more concrete when set alongside other references – both implicit and explicit – to markers of identification. A dominant reason for engaging with interculturality among the Swedish students interviewed was for the sake of meaningful interaction with people in other parts of the world, but it was also seen as necessary due to the alleged change in the demographic make-up in their own backyards; the fact that Sweden has become multicultural, or to paraphrase the literature, that it is no longer about Sweden in the world, but the world in Sweden. As the EU provides a similar argument – that the continent has attracted migrants from across the globe – as an underlying motive for its focus on interculturality in policy, these statements unavoidably reflect a certain perspective on the part of the implied reader to whom the written, as well as verbal, texts reach out. By speaking in terms of ‘us’ while simultaneously pointing out another group, that group is inevitably placed outside of the collective ‘we’ (Aman, 2013).

Now, defining cultural origins along national lines may or may not be a simple baseline for explicating sameness and

difference; a certain idea of pedagogical convenience may even be embedded in such methods of reasoning. This tendency, however, carries with it a risk: the presupposition of essence. In such a view, the nation – even the region or the continent – is presumed to form given identities with fixed rather than porous boundaries. In the policy writings mentioned above, the subject that emerges is explicitly tied to Europe, born within its borders (since the Other in the texts are those who either live in other parts of the world or have immigrated to Europe), identifies with the history of the continent (since interculturality is perceived to rest on values produced within a European intellectual tradition), and is a speaker of one of the modern European and imperial languages (since those are the only languages acknowledged). In reference to the EU's previous attempts to call forth a collective sense of identity amongst people in the member states, Peo Hansen (2000, p. 63) convincingly sums up this point by underscoring the fact that fully included in a European identity are 'only those who fully embody the history, the roots, the cultural tradition, the (Christian) civilization and who can take pride in the (colonial) era.'

It is worth mentioning that the issue here has less to do with the EU's, the Council of Europe's or any other body internal to the continent's attempts to formulate an identity for itself, nor with the fact that academic literature or its student readers begin from a given geopolitical context as their locus of enunciation when addressing otherness. Rather, the problem emerges when such an identity is written in such narrow and frozen terms that it prompts a portrayal of cultures as coherent, homogenous and unblended and hence leaves no room for the multiple or hybrid forms conspicuous in, among others, the previously mentioned writings of Djébar or Glissant. Failing to attend to this, interculturality becomes exclusively an act of learning about those who, in the case of the EU, either were not born inside Europe and so cannot take pride in its history, or do not verbally communicate in an imperial idiom (Aman, 2012b).

To speak in more general terms, the essays in this dissertation seem to support Spivak's (2012, p. 147) verdict that

‘characteristic of the dream of interculturalism [is] the easy traffic in ethnicity’. Not only does this presentation of interculturality deny the hybridity, blending and mixture – the internal interculturality – of all cultures, but such a stance is also paradoxical in relation to what Robert Young (2004) has gone to great lengths to show; that is, how complex and internally contested even dominant cultures can be. Another consequence of privileging the fully recognized national subject (English and Dutch; Estonian and Danish) while at the same time denying validated participation to those who fail to fulfil this criteria of authorized cultural origin, those whose exclusion is inscribed already in the signifier (‘migrant’, ‘second-generation immigrant’, ‘Turkish-German’), is that any dialogue in the name of interculturality risks becoming a conversation between *us* about *them*.

Perhaps this manifests itself most clearly when interculturality is routed along an epistemological path, making pronouncements on the type of knowledge which it is desirable to gain from the Other. The most concrete examples in this dissertation are to be found in the answers of students interviewed in Sweden, in which learning from the Other is characterized by a certain ambivalence. As we have seen, the interviewees tend to use personal examples from visits to either Latin America or Africa – for study, work or extensive travelling – to describe how they set out to bridge otherness. The most significant factors that determine sameness and otherness in these examples tend to be space and time, as the travelling subject – the interviewee – seems not only to have gone to another geopolitical space but to have crossed the frontier of modernity. Time can be said to have two functions: it is used to describe the context of which the Other is a part by way of comparisons to the perceived *here* and *now* of the enunciators. This is done by referring to other geographical contexts as ‘going back in time’ or asserting that what *they* are experiencing now was *our* reality decades ago. While the students express indecision about certain effects of modernity, the use of these models of temporality gives rise to an outside that belongs to another time or stage of development.

Given the emphasis on learning in intercultural discourse, this would then imply that learning needs to cross both temporal and spatial frontiers.

However, this should not be confused with a lack of tolerance for ways of being and living that are deemed un-modern. For many of the students, experiencing life in the ‘Third World’ has furnished them with new perspectives and outlooks on life. These include a recognition that people in Africa and Latin America are generally less fixated on time; their days are less structured in accordance with the clock, which is perceived to be an admirable virtue of the Other. But some interviewees also assert that exposure to poverty may be emotionally challenging, and they underscore the point that gaining such experiences is important in order to contemplate one’s own privileged yet stressful modern life. In the eyes of its spectators, the Other’s lack of material resources might even be a great asset: by not having, it can be reified as an object of therapeutic benefit for its Western observer. It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the students states that the contribution of the Other is more related to the human side of life, while their own contribution – as part of the West – is ‘more scientific knowledge’ (Aman, 2013). A frequent answer is also that ‘scientific knowledge’ implies learning about efficiency, structuring and organizing. As efficiency is a value created according to modernity’s ordering of time and industrialization, relying on the belief that time can be saved, an intricate paradox emerges in such an approach to the Other. To make the Other efficient is, contradictorily, to remove from the Other that unfixed relationship to time that was not only one of those values viewed as desirable from a European perspective but which was also one of the very values that *they* could teach *us*. From this angle, interculturality seems to be less about learning from the Other than about teaching *them* how to live like *us*; a stance that not only overwrites *their* contribution but also ignores the fact that there are those who chose to live their lives quite differently from *us*.

While these pedagogical imperatives may come across as mechanical and asymmetrical, it must be said that some of the

students are hesitant about such educational efforts and acknowledge that ideas based on assumptions that *we* know better than *them* are always problematic. These ambivalent feelings are brought to a point when an interviewee stresses that *they* probably could acquire this desirable knowledge on *their* own, before adding that our task as Westerners in relations between the 'First' and the 'Third World' is therefore to give *them* a helping hand, to ensure *they* reach the right path. While insisting on our sameness by underlining that we all have the same capacity to learn, this very ability on the part of the Other is thus not fully trusted. What is unavoidably privileged through the idea of progress is the pre-eminence of Western ways of knowing and doing in solving social issues in the 'Third World'. All of this risks serving the idea of the West as more developed, as a linchpin for the rest of the world to follow, which, in turn, lends legitimacy to the belief that *they* too can reach *our* level of development through following in *our* footsteps. As seen in these particular scenarios, whenever the colonial difference is not kept in view, teaching risks becoming part of the problem rather than the solution.

The blessings of modernity, however, are not only represented by the advent of scientific reasoning. It is also about knowing what is *right*; knowing how we ought to live. In the academic literature analysed here, the ideals, and the assumption of the universality of those ideals, that policies explicitly promote – democracy, justice, human rights – tend to be implicit; lurking inside teaching examples aimed to describe situations where histories, value systems and codes might collide. Among Western neighbours, the examples range from descriptions of the serious and humourless German to the Portuguese's casual relationship to time. While these examples may come across as harmless portrayals allied to national stereotypes, descriptions brought in from other parts of the world disclose that, for the authors, conflicts of values grow with geographical distance. Moving from instructing the implied reader, depending on where one is in Europe, not to take offence at late arrivals or to avoid being facetious, examples from outside the realm of the West increase in

seriousness, revolving around religious conflicts in a Middle Eastern classroom, hierarchies in family life in Thailand or gender roles in South Korea. Without entering into each example in detail, it is important to recognize that the choice of samples reflects, unknowingly or even knowingly, phenomena that are at odds with the assumed normality of the implied reader; and also, that the choice of samples reveals the authors' position in relation to the geopolitical context they describe. Thus, an example that revolves around the paternalistic structures of another country does not merely highlight a problem in that location, it also implies that this is not a problem – at least not to a similar degree – among *us*. Since progress cannot exist in a vacuum, the particular self-representations of *us* as modern, egalitarian and secular require backward people against whom *we* can define ourselves.

This is more apparent in the case of the EU, which in its policies on interculturality underlines its claim that the supranational body embraces democracy, humanism and industrialization as part of its legacy. Without dismissing the importance of such contributions, Europe's effect on the course of history might equally be framed in terms of colonialism, fascism and slavery, although this is never mentioned by the Union (Aman, 2012c). In turning itself into a moral agent through a highly selective use of history, the EU stresses that it sees interculturality as a way to safeguard values for the mutual benefit of all humanity. Through these historic values and the acknowledgement of a common destination, everyone living inside as well as outside the frontiers of the Union – including 'immigrants' – will eventually be able to enjoy those ideals that Europe, according to the EU, originated. Hereby interculturality emerges as a resource with which to neutralize doctrines conflicting with the idea of 'European values', stipulating a plea to the Union to come to the rescue both of the people living inside the EU and of those outside it. A refusal of intercultural dialogue would, from this point of view, come across as a direct threat not merely to the idea of the Union, but to humanity at large; a discourse that gains legitimacy by proclaiming certain values

ascribed to Europe to be, at the same time, universal. As such, the terms of the conversation between those who embody European values and those who do not are set in a paradoxical dialogue between the monologue of civilization (the local history of Europe with its global design) and the silence of barbarism (the local histories from elsewhere) (Mignolo, 2005). From this viewpoint, interculturality is a method for reconciling of cultural differences without attending to colonialism. Yet what this dissertation has attempted to unpack is the extent to which, whenever interculturality is framed in terms of cultural differences, its language inescapably reproduces the colonial difference.

### **Interculturalidad Speaks Back**

A major argument pursued throughout this dissertation is that an alternative conception to interculturality can be found in *interculturalidad*; a perspective borrowed from indigenous social movements in their struggle to gain recognition, to share power, in the public arena in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru. By bringing *interculturalidad* into the picture, with its roots in the historical experience of colonialism and in the particular, rather than in assertions of universality, I have made the case that *interculturalidad* offers a potential decentring of interculturality and its implicit Eurocentrism. From this angle, interculturality and *interculturalidad* signal different perspectives while being constituted by the same event; the historical foundational moment that allows the EU to identify the possibilities for intercultural dialogue in the language links between Europe and its former colonies. Where interculturality in the hands of the EU illustrates the ways in which the rhetoric of modernity operates by diverting attention from the linguistic legacy of colonialism, *interculturalidad* introduces another perspective that excavates coloniality; that is, a perspective grounded in the historical, ethical, psychological, and theoretical consequences of imperial violence (Mignolo, 2002b).

What I am criticizing here, making use of the EU as a singular example of a broader pattern, is the tendency to ignore the colonial wound by dismissing the weight that certain

languages carry in the memory and in the knowledges of people inhabiting that particular language in other parts of the world. As Mignolo (2005) never ceases to remind us, the conquest and colonization of America was, among other things, a colonization of existing knowledges coded in languages of ‘non-literal locution’. Consequently, *interculturalidad* is a perspective grounded in the memory of how representations of the world in, for example, Aymara or Quechua were replaced by ‘civilizing’ Spanish representations, as America was inscribed onto European maps. A conspicuous operation that not only handcuffs its speaker to a world that emanates from Europe – Christianity, Western science, modernity – but also signals a conviction of the rightfulness of colonial presence. It should not be taken lightly, then, when the interviewees assert that the indigenous communities are losing their identity as Spanish has replaced – and continues to replace – languages spoken before the arrival of Europeans.

In the name of *interculturalidad*, a notable change imposed by the MAS in Bolivia is the requirement for public officials to speak at least one indigenous language – monolingualism is no longer appropriate for public service. In an interview with the German weekly *Der Spiegel*, Morales himself goes on to comment on the rationale underlying these measures as part of the linguistic component of *interculturalidad*: ‘If we already speak Spanish in Bolivia, we should also be fluent in our own languages’ (Glüsing & Hoyng, 2006). When reading the above in terms of cultural differences, it may seem as if this hardly differs from the scenario that I criticized earlier in relation to interculturality; that is, a certain essentialist understanding of sameness *vis-à-vis* otherness related to the spoken vernacular. While the personal pronoun ‘we’ proves fundamental as it distinguishes a collective residing within Bolivia, what is revealed if the same passages are re-evaluated through the lens of a colonial difference, rather than in cultural terms, is a social classification established in the colony that named and homogenously grouped in negative terms indigenous peoples as ‘Indians’, in which one’s ethnic or racial

identity determines one's epistemic justification or the status of one's beliefs.

While it is certainly necessary to point out the potential limitations and downsides to the forms of identity politics mobilized in articulations of a 'we', regardless of whether it is grounded in ethnicity, race or sexuality, it should also be remembered that such a stance, generally speaking, is enabled by a privileged position. Whereas 'for those for whom colonial legacies are real (i.e. they hurt), [...] they are more (logically, historically, and emotionally) inclined than others to theorize the past in terms of coloniality' (Mignolo, 1999, p. 115). Against this background of the relational and epistemic violence of coloniality, Spivak (1988b) has introduced the concept of 'strategic essentialism', which has the purpose of allowing subordinated groups to foster their agendas in order to 'speak back' to hegemonic powers. Nevertheless, Spivak (Danis & Jonsson, 1993) has also lamented in retrospect that the 'strategic' dimension of the notion tends to be neglected among those who are in the process of promoting agendas that could challenge imperial powers. Although evaluating what is and is not purely essentialism in accounts such as the one above may seem premature at the present time, this does not, however, limit our ability to comprehend that grounding essentialism in indigenous languages – strategically or not – may be indispensable in order to delink from what Escobar (2010, p. 25) has called 'the monocultural, monoepistemic, and uninational state'.

In this context, however, recognition of languages does not necessarily imply the inscription of indigenous vernaculars alongside Spanish in the list of the state's official languages, nor does it necessarily signal the undoing of the linguistic legacy of Spanish that persists in the Andean nations. Rather, in this context, to make use of a collective 'we' is part of the struggle for acknowledgement of the existence and contribution of languages that have been disqualified as tools for thinking. It is a radical claim for epistemic rights rather than cultural ones – or put differently, for *interculturalidad* rather than interculturality, whose recognition of cultural or linguistic diversity does not

necessarily translate into epistemological diversity. A firm emphasis on epistemology suggests, by contrast, the privileging of the locus of enunciation over the vernacular; that is, paying greater attention to the socio-historical position from which someone speaks than to the language in which their communications are made. By the same token, as *interculturalidad* is articulated in the language of the former imperial dominant, Mignolo (2005) stresses that to subvert the geopolitics of knowledge it is crucial to think in and from a language historically considered obsolete in epistemic terms, such as Quechua or Aymara, even though this is done by writing or speaking in an imperial language. Thus, languages cannot be separated from their locus of enunciation.

In contrast to previous excerpts from Morales, what is noteworthy about the interviewees' claims of particularity is that they are generally made through the adoption of the noun 'Andean' which, then, does not limit the fostering of a common agenda to a particular nation-state or indigenous grouping. This is not to suggest that such opinions or tendencies do not exist (a concrete example being the construction of university institutions affiliated to an indigenous group), but to underline a stronger inclination among the informants that signals a broader affinity to different ethnic groupings and to a territory overlapped by arbitrary and violently imposed frontiers, regardless of whether it is today named Bolivia, Ecuador or Peru. In this context, then, it may be possible, as Mignolo (2009) proposes, to speak of politics of identity rather than identity politics – while the latter tends to be bounded by the definition of a given identity, the former is open to a broad range of voices sharing a common goal. In this sense, 'Andean' can be seen as an organizing category of political resistance among groups and communities with different histories, languages, traditions and identities – yet with the common trait of memories and experiences of coloniality.

## Local Histories With(out) Global Designs

An experience shared with populations in many other regions of the world marked by imperial imprints, this double-positioning of the indigenous populations in the Andes on the fissure of Western epistemology opens up the possibility of advancing a critique in different directions. If the lion's share of that criticism up to this point has revolved around the fact that the Andean states have never invoked the indigenous populations as part of the national body, as it is written in and from the language of the colonizers, which, in turn continues to exacerbate the colonial wound, it should also be noted that many indigenous organizations view state-centred measures, including those of the Morales and Rafael Correa administrations in Bolivia and Ecuador, on *interculturalidad* as inadequate; that is to say, not radical enough to enable a structural transformation of society (Escobar, 2010; Walsh, 2009).

Despite what, at the time of writing, can be characterized as a not unproblematic relation to different indigenous movements, both the Bolivian and Ecuadorian governments have endeavoured to pave the way for the development of a state design that theoretically goes beyond the national elite's identification with, and reproduction of, the economic and cultural logic of the former colonial regime. In 2008 and 2009, respectively, Bolivia and Ecuador rewrote their constitutions to create plurinational states. Based on the conviction that lived experiences and languages in the Andes are not always compatible with European models, the genealogy of the plurinational state as a communal system is grounded in indigenous memories and experiences. The longstanding requests for decision-making rights over the territories inhabited by indigenous groupings are not made in the name of co-existence *within* the European-modelled state that has denied them participation, but rather of the right to co-existence *of* the state (Mignolo, 2005).

Since a plurinational state disputes the ways in which the past and the present plurality of the Andean nations continues to be disavowed within a model of state and society founded on uniformity, it does not necessarily undermine the state as an

administrative and political unit. Rather, a plurinational state can be conceived as the product of an amalgamation of Western political theory and indigenous frameworks of knowledge which potentially creates another space for living beyond the weight of coloniality. What we see here is, one might say, an inter-epistemic relation or the sharing of a paradigm, rather than a slavish mimicry.

Ideally, a plurinational state recognizes that knowledge is geopolitically and geohistorically located across the epistemic colonial difference, since *interculturalidad* knows from the outset about the inherent incoherencies of the Western knowledge system: that it, too, is a local history despite claiming universality for itself. For those very reasons, it is also possible through *interculturalidad* to trace those moments when cracks in Western ways of knowing reveal themselves. On the preceding pages, I have criticized the ways in which interculturality is formulated around ideas of modernization, with reference to the industrial revolution as part of the intellectual legacy that produces interculturality, and how this manifests itself in a desire to teach the Other, among other skills, efficiency. By contrast, within the Andean tradition in which *interculturalidad* is formulated, language and knowledges are not only tangled up with each other, they are in turn not fully distinguishable from the territory (Lenkersdorf, 1996). In this outlook on the world, the common Western opposition between nature and humanity lacks a signifier; *Madre Tierra* cannot be conquered and dominated or exploited for the sake of monetary profit. Humans, living systems, nature and – in Western eyes – lifeless objects are not distinguished, but are rather all conceived as part of a network of living interactions (Mignolo & Schiwy, 2003). Within this logic, life becomes circular rather than linear; modernity's firm emphasis on development and progress lacks a proper equivalent.

Thus, when the informants remark that *interculturalidad* is a way to reconquer the territory ('the fight has always been about the territory') and that the territory is a source of identification ('The basis of life is in the territory and it defines everything'), such statements should not be read through a capitalist lens,

where recovery is equated with ownership. Rather, they refer to the right to live in harmony with the territory to which the speaker feels an attachment. In other words, the dominant paradigm of modernity, which, in providing legitimacy to the capitalist logic of exploitation, regards nature as lifeless and mechanistic is here untranslatable. This is not to suggest, however, the absence of methods of reasoning or the use of specific technologies, but to underline the way that European modernity is revealed to be irredeemably provincial and context-bound when light is cast on the 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 (Aman, 2014).

Perhaps this is the most concrete illustration of the fact that *interculturalidad* is not part of modernity as it does not signal newness in terms of progress or development, rather it is another option, another paradigm – another space of living (Mignolo, 2010). Having arrived here, it seems plausible to contend that *interculturalidad*, despite the aforementioned differences in meaning and sometimes even colliding points of view, reveals that there cannot be a singular modernity irrespective of time, space, environment or social conditions. As no particular kind of modernity or singular type of epistemology can account for all possible interventions in the world, the forms of modernity will have to vary between different countries depending on specific circumstances and social practices (Chatterjee, 1997).

What can be established here is that *interculturalidad* is a source of critical knowledge that reveals the colonial difference as it conflicts with the dominant knowledges of interculturality. As such, in Western eyes *interculturalidad* is not necessarily an alternative to interculturality, but an alternative way of thinking about alternatives. Based on such an understanding, it is even possible to go on to relate certain aspects of the critique of interculturality provided by *interculturalidad* to the important insights imparted by Biesta, Popkewitz and Todd on

contemporary educational models in the first chapter of this dissertation.

In relation to Popkewitz's critique of the US education system's continuing indebtedness to Enlightenment ideals, *interculturalidad* posits that the so-called discovery and conquest of the Americas should also be taken into account as founding historical moments of the Enlightenment. Seen from this viewpoint, the ideals tangled up with the enlightened, civilized and modern subject as identified by Popkewitz in educational policies and curricula are not only to be understood as European self-descriptions. Here, *interculturalidad* allows for a non-European perspective, belonging to those against whom the ideals of the Enlightenment were construed. As such, if Popkewitz and *interculturalidad* are read jointly, the first permits an understanding of how rational, civilized and modern citizens are constituted by tracing the descent and emergence of the descent and emergence of Enlightenment ideas down to the present day, while the latter complements this by highlighting that these constructions need to be understood in relation to the imperial structuring of space.

We have also seen that Biesta's critique of education's reliance on traditional humanism and its preconceived norm of the human essence is provided with a concrete example in the eschewal of the human-nature binary within the project of *interculturalidad* (since such a division is untranslatable within an Andean tradition). From the perspective of *interculturalidad*, humanity and nature are inseparable, always locked in an intersubjective relationship in which both parties have the capacity to be affected by the other. Moreover, Biesta concludes by suggesting that we regard the human as a radically open-ended question, rather than restricting the possibilities of what can be human and live a human life; a position that, in the realm of *interculturalidad*, has already resulted in direct action, since the impossibility of distinguishing nature from humanity in Andean cosmology has led to the conferral of legally enforceable rights on nature in Ecuador (Dussel, 2012). Therefore, *interculturalidad* represents a realization of certain aspects of Biesta's critique of

the conception of the human essence within Western epistemology; one which is, however, only made possible by shifting the geopolitical locus of that critique.

Finally, in the case of Todd's rethinking of the ethical possibilities of education, *interculturalidad* gives flesh to the unnamed Other in her account. As *interculturalidad* centres on subjects whose bodies and epistemic contributions have been marked by racism, this paradigm becomes a concrete example of Todd's warnings that knowledge about the Other is not necessarily the way forward to a responsible relationship anchored in ethics, since violence is enacted on the Other whenever the Other is thought of as understandable, as the Other is reduced to the enunciator's point of view. While *interculturalidad* highlights the importance of adding questions about coloniality and spatiality to Todd's reflection on ethics, this framework also joins forces with her overarching thesis that approaching the Other by adhering to predefined principles of what is desirable and ethical, and fixed ideas of what counts as knowledge and reality, represents epistemic violence – or, in the terms central to the argument of this dissertation, risks repeating the epistemic violence of colonialism.

Nevertheless, Todd's critique can equally be directed towards myself. To a certain extent, this dissertation is an illustration of the ways in which I have myself attempted to exercise my knowledge of, and about, the Other in order to translate that very otherness in terms that are comprehensible to a Western readership. It is, however, with the nexus of modernity/coloniality as a horizon of comprehension that it is possible to understand the underlying factors that make it of the utmost importance to consider the geopolitics of knowledge. As I have written elsewhere (Aman, 2014), there is no need to go further than to try to describe the governance of the Inca Empire without using a concept of government modelled on modern Europe in order to be confronted with the severe difficulties of embracing a paradigm not constituted by modernity. The unlikelihood of being able to do so illustrates not only the way that certain local knowledge systems have acquired global reach,

in contrast to others that remain local, but also a permanent dependency on an imperial legacy. Again, this is not to disregard the contribution of European thought: the footnotes of most scholarly writings – including this one – are ample testimony to our indebtedness to that intellectual history. Rather, it is to acknowledge the joint constitution of the world as both modern and colonial, in which one was the prerequisite of the other, and which has enabled Europe to transform its own local histories into a global pattern – the ideas of enlightenment, civilization, and modernity as the goal and norm of all humanity (Mignolo, 1999).

### **Inter-epistemic Dialogue, or Learning from the Other**

What I have highlighted here is a tendency to overlook the fact that when interculturality is exported to places whose experiences do not correspond, or correspond only partially, to the framework of knowledge within which the notion is produced, the other side of modernity reveals itself; that is, coloniality, which has historically hidden, silenced and forced itself upon non-European cultures. These non-European locations have been classified in imperial epistemology as non-places, the places of the barbarians, the inferiors, the primitives who had to learn to think through modern European imperial vernaculars (Mignolo, 2009). In comparison to interculturality, to speak of *interculturalidad* is thus to emphasize the colonial difference; a difference that is also a source of critical knowledge with the potential for delinking as it makes visible co-existing paradigms of thought that have been silenced and disavowed. More precisely, to delink means to construct, alter, and spread knowledge that is not dependent on the epistemology of European modernity – that is, the models and the problems of the West – but that, on the contrary, responds to the need of the colonial difference (Mignolo, 2009). In short, the notion of interculturality overlooks the relation of power, while the concept of *interculturalidad* is explicitly based on colonial power differentials.

Put to work in intercultural education, *interculturalidad* can help us to hold off the impulse to believe that *we* (as individuals

and collectives) always know better than *them*, and also to recognize *our* own privilege of possessing dominant categories of thought by means of which Others and the rest of the world can be described, classified and educated. Part of the challenge is to think seriously about Damascus, La Paz, Port-au-Prince, and Rabat, not only New York, Oxford or Paris as possible sites of knowledge. As seen in this dissertation, there is much to learn in the world from those who have been reduced to invisibility and silence by the dual process of modernity and coloniality. In short, and phrased in crude terms, *interculturalidad* may be able to curb the universalizing arrogance of interculturality, while offering the potential, and underlining the necessity, to start seeing interculturality as inter-epistemic rather than simply intercultural.

At the interface between different knowledge systems, inter-epistemic dialogue involves understanding the social-historical power relations that imbue knowledge production. Accordingly, to invoke different frameworks of knowledge implies that inter-epistemic dialogue is not limited to simply understanding otherness, but can recognize agency in the Other – can learn *from* rather than merely learning *about*. Thus, to make interculturality inter-epistemic is to acknowledge that a decolonized intercultural dialogue is not to speak *the same logic* in different vernaculars, but *different logics* put into collaborative discussion. Against the background of the inescapable legacy of imperialism, what I have sought to underscore is that an inter-epistemic dialogue remains impossible whenever a local history is given a global reach, when a singularity is elevated to a universal law. ‘Even a good globalization (the failed dream of socialism) requires the uniformity which the diversity of mother-tongues must challenge,’ Spivak (2012) writes, ‘the tower of Babel is our refuge.’ And in the case of interculturality, one might say, *interculturalidad* is that tower.



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