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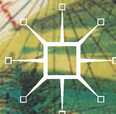
EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES IN LATIN AMERICA

New Modes of Counter-Hegemonic Learning



Educational Alternatives in Latin America

Robert Aman · Timothy Ireland
Editors

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New Modes of Counter-Hegemonic Learning

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Educational Alternatives in Latin America—New Modes of Counter-Hegemonic Learning

Robert Aman and Timothy Ireland

In autumn 1943, in the midst of a burning world war, the map of South America is literally re-drawn—or better still: *one* map. Joaquín Torres-García, a Uruguayan artist and theorist, has finalized in his studio what is set to become his most renowned work of art: *América invertida*. With black ink, on a sheet of paper, he had drawn the "New World," the continent beyond the historically perceived *Finistère* in Bretagne; the landmass that was inscribed on European maps in 1492. In accordance with the Renaissance atlases, this one is also decorated with symbols: A fish, the moon, the sun, stars and a sailing ship are all strategically deployed along the South American continent. Represented as a *Terra nullius* devoid of borders, unfettered by indications of location, Torres-García has made one single exception by drawing, with anything but a steady hand, two latitudinal lines on which the coordination for his hometown,

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Montevideo, has been scribbled across one and the equator close to the other. Here any similarities with conventional conceptions of the world map cease. The italicized “S” that distinctively marks the cardinal direction is not found at the near bottom of the map: Instead, it balances on the tip of the continent—a southern peak that here points toward the north. Now we realize that this is not a conventional map. In relation to those, this one would be considered to be upside down—indeed, even incorrect. In all its simplicity, then, Torres-García’s map is anything but unassuming: upside-down America, foiled America, *Inverted America*.

The subtle logic that characterizes this piece of art is awareness of the map’s substantially fictive status and the power geographical representations possess in producing and construing the world. The effect that Torres-García’s map has on many of us, its instinctive evocation of the view of being upside down, illustrates the map’s rhetorical power where the name puts the different parts of the world, its continents, in their space—“South America” denotes not only the continent’s geographical location but also who gave rise to its name. European Renaissance cartographers performed an act that the world since then has complied with; a deed that in the name of factuality itself creates the world it believes to be neutrally representing. By tweaking those fixed markers against which we orientate ourselves *América invertida* introduced another perspective, the view from the south, a possible southern hemisphere outlook on the world. What the rotation produces is a questioning of from where the representation of the continent derives; a subversive reminder of how the conventional atlas tends to coincide with a strict European outlook on the world.

Torres-García’s artwork can equally serve as a metaphor, although on a modest scale, for the purpose of this collection of essays: *Educational Alternatives in Latin America: New Modes of Counter-Hegemonic Learning* is a collection of original essays by scholars from a variety of geographical contexts, disciplinary backgrounds and theoretical perspectives on educational alternatives, outside mainstream education, setting out to challenge, combat or merely point out other possible directions. On the one hand, many Latin American countries—as in other parts of the world—have experienced modernizing educational reforms under the influence of neoliberal governing and market principles where standardization, accountability and the control over knowledge override social, cultural and linguistic differences (Henales & Edwards, 2002; López Guerra & Flores, 2006; Walsh, 2015). These policies derive

from the broader context of governmental policies targeting various spheres of the economic and social life of most Latin American countries with their aim to decentralize, privatize and enhance competition. On the other hand, after the long years of military dictatorships, civil wars and economic instability, diverse academic commentators are singling out the region as the foremost site in the world of counter-hegemonic processes (cf. Escobar, 2010; Guardiola-Rivera, 2010). Over the last decades, several Latin American communities, in different parts of the region, have strongly countered the implementation of neoliberal policies by forming some of the most dynamic and organized forms of resistance: from the landless movements in Brazil to the Zapatistas in the Chiapas region of Mexico, from the *piqueteros* in Argentina to the *Movimento al Socialismo* in Bolivia, to mention but a few. This holds equally true in the fields of education and higher education where student movements and teacher mobilizations have been at the forefront of social resistance to neoliberalism. Additionally, diverse Latin American countries have given birth to and nurtured a truly endogenous educational approach which has become known as popular education. In many cases, the movements of resistance have developed their own particular brand of popular education as an expression of counter-hegemonic resilience, which has also, in some cases, been accompanied and supported by expressions of the liberation theology movement engendered by the Catholic Church.

Apart from the sustained impact that the works of Paulo Freire have had on education in general and popular education in particular far beyond his native Brazil, other counter-hegemonic processes have generated a new vocabulary. Several of these concepts such as "plurinationality," "interculturality" and "*buen vivir*" are discussed in more detail by, among others, Catherine Walsh, Anders Burman and Nelly Stromquist, in different chapters of this anthology, but we may also add *socialismo del siglo XXI* ("socialism of the twenty-first century") and *revolución ciudadana* ("citizen revolution"). What unifies several of these concepts is their geopolitical and bodypolitical dimension against the backdrop of America's colonial past. Several of these concepts reflect ideas from people in the indigenous movements in Latin America who, for all their possible internal disparities, share the conviction that the legacies of colonialism are not only experienced along economic and political dimensions but also along knowledge lines. According to Ánibal Quijano (1989), the inscription of the American continent onto European maps

meant the abolition of existing local rationalities, which he contends are an alternative epistemology attuned to the experiences of the indigenous peoples of the region. Put differently, the hierarchies instilled by imperialism disqualified colonized populations in different corners of the world from being capable of intellectual labor. Whether the site of production is in the West or elsewhere, then, the knowledge accredited with status as "scientific," "truthful" and "universal" tends to be that created by the modern human and natural sciences, sciences deriving from the European Enlightenment and modernity (cf. Chakrabarty, 2000; Mignolo, 2002; Spivak, 1988). As a direct consequence of the ways in which certain forms of knowing the world hold sway at the expense of others it is important to keep in mind that on the other side of epistemological dominance is epistemological inferiority.

Education has been pivotal in reproducing these differences. After all, as Pierre Bourdieu (1977) reminds us, the education system conducts an act of symbolic violence as it legitimizes certain forms of knowledges at the expense of others. 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). Against this background, then, it comes as no surprise that education in Latin America, not least historically, carries resemblance to the European systems. To use the words of Irma Salas (1964, 73), "Education in Latin America still follows closely its European tradition. It provides a broad humanistic culture, mainly literary and academic, leading to university studies." The biography of higher education in Latin America carries a similar history as the university model was first transferred to the region by the newly installed European masters during the sixteenth century. In this process, institutions of higher education were not invented de novo to accommodate the populations already inhabiting the continent before European arrival; rather they were implants from the European university tradition and its stocks (Rüegg, 1996).

This is not to suggest, however, the inexistence of practices of resistance. On the contrary, conventional academic disciplines and scientific practices were contested, and, in certain contexts, at times even challenged by other ways of producing knowledge. Over centuries of colonial oppression "knowledge otherwise" (Escobar, 2007), "subaltern epistemologies" (Spivak, 1988) or "border gnosis" (Mudimbe, 1988) have persistently been generated from within concrete and situated practices, struggles and experiences. From around Latin America,

central concepts such as "*buen vivir*," "plurinationality," "interculturality" or something else are only a few of the many concepts that seek to provide a name for the ongoing events toward post-liberal societies. Subsequently, such notions have also been assimilated by and interacted with educational discourses producing their own specific terminology in which terms such as dialogue, conscientization or critical awareness, praxis, participation, class mediation, empowerment, emancipatory or transformative education are central. In some cases, as for example Nicaragua in the 1980s, such concepts and practices found their way into educational policies on distinct national levels. Perhaps the most evident current example is that of Bolivia where Evo Morales, when elected the nation's first indigenous president in 2005, went so far as to declare the need to "decolonize education." In his 2006 inaugural address, he declared that "[t]he best way to decolonize Bolivia is to recover our culture and ways of living," which draws attention to the forms in which certain ways of life, realities and knowledges have historically been suppressed within the framework of the nation-state. And educational policies have been key in devaluing indigenous knowledges and ways of life (Aman, 2015). As "fruits of the conquest," Peruvian author José Carlos Mariátegui (1975, 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." In defying the idea of "the two Bolivias"—one modern, civilized and knowledgeable of European descendent; one of backward, ignorant and uncivilized indigenous people—epistemology is at the center of indigenous activism and state politics of decolonization alike by drawing attention to, as in Morales' aforementioned speech, a desire to emancipate the educational system from Western influences. Moreover, there is also an ongoing and highly polemical discussion in Brazil concerning the approval of a national policy of popular education seen as a method of government articulated with a national policy of social participation (Ireland, 2014).

Since the project for this collection of essays was first conceived and accepted for publication, there has been a distinct swing to the right in several North and South American countries, as Walsh indicates in the Afterword to her chapter. Discussions in Brazil concerning the creation of a national policy of popular education seen as a method of government articulated with a national policy of social participation have been completely abandoned after the "white coup" which removed President

Dilma Rousseff from office in August 2016. This apparent "threat" to the establishment was linked with the campaign described by Walsh to denigrate the image of Paulo Freire by, among other means, tampering with his biography published in the online encyclopedia Wikipedia. Among initial measures announced by the incoming government are alterations to the structure and curriculum of secondary education, making disciplines like Sociology, Philosophy, Arts and Physical Education non-obligatory and proposals to limit the number of students accessing higher education. In the field of youth and adult literacy, the goal for the Literate Brazil Program in 2017 is to enroll 250,000 students. During the course of the last three governments, the average enrollment was over one million students per year.

While the above measures are specific to Brazil, they are also symptomatic of a more general tendency within the field of education outlined above to introduce educational reforms heavily influenced by neoliberalism. During the thirteen years between 2003 and 2016 despite all the difficulties and contradictions, successive Brazilian governments took steps to increase social participation and involvement in decision-making. Likewise, educational policy sought to respond to the diverse learning needs of vulnerable groups like street children, indigenous peoples, prisoners, rural workers, fishermen and women, LGBT, etc. Such attempts also tended to generate new and interesting educational alternatives even within the formal education system. An emblematic example of that is the case study presented by Almeida Filho and Coutinho in the field of higher education in the state of Bahia. Meanwhile, the recent proposed reform of secondary education was introduced directly to Congress by means of a Provisional Measure (MP No. 746) with no prior public discussion.

Such measures can also be seen as integrating part of a broader debate which led up to the approval of the two global 2030 agendas for development and education in 2015 and formed the background to UNESCO's recent publication "Rethinking Education: towards a global common good?" This book enhances the vision contained in the earlier landmark publications "Learning to be: The world of education today and tomorrow" (1972) and "Learning: The treasure within" (1996), the "Delors Report," and serves as a renewal of the humanist vision which inspired the original UNESCO Constitution.

Despite the international dimension of the post-2015 debate, its content reflects predominantly a European liberalism and "Western

Paternalism" in which the tension between a more progressive liberalism and a classical neoliberalism is evident. Other southern epistemologies underlining alternative paradigms of development, like "*buen vivir*," with their own specific interpretations of the source of knowledge and the sustainability of relations between human and natural environments found little space. This leads us to suggest that the post-2015 agenda was not so much a debate as to whether market-oriented paradigms of human progress are superior to traditional liberal paradigms but a battlefield in which two essentially conflicting ideologies were confronted: neoliberalism and those which include human well-being and happiness in harmony with environmental and planetary coexistence as a fundamental goal of the development process.

Central to the concept of sustainable development is the search "to resolve common problems and tensions and to recognize new horizons" (UNESCO, 2015, 9). Yet at the same time, despite apparently agreeing upon the need for a common future for the destiny of the planet, embracing the natural and human worlds, widely differing strategies were proposed, which ranged from variations on the green economy to others like "*Sumak Kawsay*" in Ecuador and "*Suma Qamaña*" in Bolivia, which express not an alternative development but an alternative to development founded on the cosmology of the indigenous peoples. The latter express a profound preoccupation with human well-being within the limits imposed by eco-sustainability.

As noted above, neoliberalism as an ideology has had a strong impact on the emerging economies of Latin America during the last decade, especially with regard to values. The spirit of individualism has dislocated the ethos of community and participation to the periphery. From Harvey's perspective (apud, Finnegan, 2008, s.p), neoliberalism has acted in two perverse forms. On the one hand, it transformed the way in which resources and wealth were distributed internationally and deepened and intensified social inequality and, on the other, in David Harvey's (apud, Finnegan, 2008, 57) words "The fusion of ideology and technology formed a new era marked, above all, by its flexibility and compression of space and time which allowed the expansion of the market in areas of social life up until then not commodified." In the field of education, Moosung and Friedrich (2011) suggest that neoliberalism identifies the individual as the focus of education while seeing education as a good to be utilized for participation in the market dominated by capital. Finnegan (2008, 59) goes one step further and affirms that this

reduced version of citizenship constitutes a central part of "learning to be neoliberal"—"a process by which society learns to accept inequality; conceptions of public good are substituted by a restrict notion of private interest; and whatever social dialogue on the question of possible alternatives is completely rejected." There is clearly a conflict between neoliberalism and its vision of development and visions of development which valorize such aspirations as well-being and human happiness, sustainability, in the sense of harmonic coexistence between the environment and planet, development centered on the human being and the right to lifelong learning.

The result is a tension between the two global agendas despite an attempt to avoid conflict by agreeing upon a specific stand-alone goal for education in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, defined as to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (Sustainable Development Goal 4—SDG4). In addition to being a stand-alone goal, education is also contemplated in goals on health, growth and employment, sustainable consumption and production, and climate change. Despite the importance afforded to education, the overall drive of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals with their declared aim of ending poverty, protecting the environment and ensuring prosperity for all is predominantly instrumental, results and market driven. In contrast, the Framework for Action of the Education 2030 Agenda declares that:

> It is rights-based and inspired by a humanistic vision of education and development, based on the principles of human rights and dignity, social justice, peace, inclusion and protection, as well as cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity and shared responsibility and accountability. (UNESCO, 2016, 4)

It goes on to affirm that:

> The new education agenda's focus on inclusion and equity – giving everyone an equal opportunity, and leaving no one behind – signals another lesson: the need for increased efforts especially aimed at reaching those marginalized or in vulnerable situations. All people, irrespective of sex, age, race, color, ethnicity, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property or birth, as well as persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, and children and youth, especially

> those in vulnerable situations or other status, should have access to inclusive, equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities. (UNESCO, 2016, 4)

It remains to be seen which will prevail, the market utilitarian approach backed by financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund or the rights-based humanistic approach supported by UNESCO and many civil society organizations and movements including, among others, the Latin American Council for Popular Education—CEAAL, the International Council of Adult Education—ICAE, the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education—CLADE, the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences—FLACSO and the Women's Popular Education Network for Latin America and the Caribbean—REPEM—to recall only entities better known in Latin America—and the World Education and World Social Forums. Most of these organizations were part of the Working Group in Education, formed during the Rio + 20 Conference, which produced the influential document "*The education we need for the world we want.*"

When the Delors Report was published in 1996, it embodied a counter-position to the utilitarian view of education represented by the World Bank's 1995 report *Priorities and Strategies for Education* and OECD's 1989 report *Education and the Economy in a Changing Society*. UNESCO's *Rethinking Education* recognizes that education is at the heart of our efforts both to adapt to change and to transform the world within which we live and aims to take the debate on education beyond its utilitarian role in economic development. Hence its defense of a humanistic vision which reaffirms "a set of universal ethical principles that should be the foundation for an integrated approach to the purpose and organization of education for all." When discussing briefly alternative approaches to human progress and well-being, the authors acknowledge that the dominant model of knowledge must be explored. "Alternative knowledge systems need to be recognized and properly accounted for, rather than relegated to an inferior status" (UNESCO, 2015, 30). *Sumak Kawsay* is cited as an alternative view of development, and the report concludes by affirming the need for greater attention to be paid in education policy to knowledge, and to the ways in which it is created, acquired and validated. However, the reality of the current international relation of forces is that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development will continue to orientate and mold the praxis of development, solemnly ignoring alternative worldviews.

Hence, the importance of the eight essays collected in this anthology. Not all are founded on alternative worldviews but all seek to explore alternative paradigms of education whether in a non-formal setting or within the formal education system.

The first chapter, written by Anders Burman, revolves around indigenous educational politics in Bolivia. In particular, the ways in which "decolonization" has been strongly embraced as a key concept for the Morales' administration as well as for those indigenous movements that played an important part in the president's ascension to power. While also revealing the disparity—and at times even conflicts—in views between the government and various indigenous groupings and movements, Burman describes how they are united in emphasizing the need to decolonize knowledge, where knowledge in this context, in contrast to the idea of the transcendental subject in Western epistemology, is inseparable from "experience" and "practice" in Aymara epistemology. This in turn has strong implications for education, as the emphasis on decolonization in Bolivia has opened up a vivid debate about the intimacy between educational institutions and the history of imperialism. The lack of recognition for indigenous epistemologies within the educational system dates back to the hierarchies instilled by imperialism where non-European spaces had been deprived of the ability for rational thinking, abstract thought, cultural development and civilization. Based on fieldwork, as well as interviews with local indigenous educationalists, Burman uncovers the ways in which indigenous social movements are widening the community of knowledge production by dedicating themselves to epistemological and ontological disobedience. This, by allowing generations of other knowledges and realities—that is, subaltern knowledges and subjugated ways of being in the world—to unfold.

A paradigm in direct relation to issues of epistemology and ontology is the aforementioned concept of *buen vivir*—"to live well"—which is at the forefront in the following chapter. Nelly Stromquist discusses how this new paradigm for human progress has been emerging in Latin America over the last decades. As she warns us, it is important not to confuse "living well" with "living better" as they are set apart by epistemological differences: where "living better" is confined to European modernity with its emphasis on development, consumerism and progress. Morales himself summarizes *buen vivir* as "to live in harmony with

everyone and everything, between humans and our Mother Earth; and it consequently implies working for the dignity of all" (cited in Canessa 2014, 157). Besides tracing relevant policy changes impacting on education in both Bolivia and Ecuador, Stromquist adds gender to the mix discussing its construction within the philosophy underpinning the idea of *buen vivir*.

Where Stromquist also points out difficulties in implementing indigenous paradigms as part of the structure of the state—not to mention economic and political forces—Bruno Baronet and Richard Stahler-Sholk turn to an educational innovation in Mexico that can be described as the result of a successful amalgamation of indigenous and Western paradigms of knowledge. This chapter centers on the Zapatista movement's struggle to build autonomy in the southeastern state of Chiapas, with a particular focus on the movement's construction of alternative community schools with a pedagogy reliant on paradigms rooted in other realities and modes of learning. Just as the Zapatistas have, for two decades, rejected hierarchical systems and the capitalist economic system, these schools—as we will see in this chapter and, in even great detail, in Walsh's piece—disregard traditional teaching models. Instead of having one single teacher, the school is meant to be an open space in which the community learns together. In an interview, Subcomandante Marcos, the spokesperson for the Zapatista movement, asserted that "it is the collective that teaches, that shows, that forms, and in it and through it the person learns, and also teaches." The roots of this initiative can be traced to the development of the Zapatista movement itself. Communication between the revolutionary army and indigenous communities is confused by attempts to transfer concepts and thoughts inspired by a Marxist tradition. In Marcos' (Marcos & Le Bot, 1997, 63) own words: "You have a theoretical scheme that explains the whole of society, then you arrive in a society and find out that the scheme does not explain anything." Eventually, the Zapatistas came to realize that "property," as in "personal possessions," was a foreign concept for the indigenous communities, without an equivalent in its translated context where land, in contrast to capitalist ideology, is perceived to be unownable—the land belongs to everybody and no one. According to Marcos, mobilization for a proletarian revolution against the national bourgeoisie and federal government could only take off when EZLN adapted their political discourse to invoke indigenous schemes as part of their Marxist spirit. These insights constitute a pedagogical foundation to their political pedagogy according

to Subcomandante Marcos since students attending these schools are required to shift their perspective on, and understanding of, learning and indigenous communities.

With the ongoing peace negotiations in Colombia between government and FARC much attention has been devoted to the long drawn out civil war. Less has been written about Colombia's educational movements which attempt to provide a counterweight and contribute to the creation of a culture of peace and to processes which promote the formation of active citizenship directed at peaceful social relations. It is in this context that the chapters authored by Correa and Murphy-Graham and Luschei and Soto-Peña are situated.

The first of these two studies is the *Preparation for Social Action* (PSA) program developed, since 2006, by the *Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciências* (FUNDAEC), for young people in a non-formal perspective. Based on results from an empirical study, the authors set out to explore the ways in which PSA supports the goal of individual and community transformation. Core elements of the conceptual framework are the interrelated set of Bahá'í teachings on the oneness of humankind and the evolution of society but other theoretical influences such as Freire are present. While the concept of community development has been translated in different forms in equally different contexts, PSA is concerned with contributing to improve community life particularly in the rural areas of Colombia where levels of poverty are more accentuated than in urban areas. Hence, the program advances a strong agricultural and anti-poverty agenda with an emphasis on improving health, productivity, environment, access to credit and social relations. Correa and Murphy-Graham point to two key findings. The first is that students find motivation in action, in service and in the application of their learning. The second relates to the issue of the social relevance of knowledge acquired by students. While developed in the setting of a non-formal program, the authors suggest that these two elements could impact positively on the development of formal education processes.

The second program, discussed by Luschei and Soto-Peña, the *Escuela Nueva* rural school, is considerably older than PSA and was set up in 1975 in rural Colombia. The model has since spread to rural schools across Latin America and parts of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Whereas the PSA program is purposively non-formal, *Escuela Nueva* is essentially formal concerned with both improving cognitive achievements and non-cognitive or "soft" skills like leadership, empathy, peaceful social

interaction and civic participation. This second set of values is the focus of Luschei and Soto-Peña's study. Their concern is to explore whether and how *Escuela Nueva* promotes active and involved participation in personal relationships, civic activities and attitudes and peaceful social relations. In that way, its objectives are similar to those of PSA, again with an emphasis on the rural areas in which the armed conflict was concentrated. However, while PSA was designed to complement the schooling process, *Escuela Nueva* was designed to provide a replicable and scalable model for teachers and community members in rural regions. On the one hand, the authors point to evidence of *Escuela Nueva's* impact on peaceful social relations and, on the other, suggest that the influence of Freire in the theoretical conception of the school particularly with regard to the teacher-centric model and problem-posing education point to its liberating potential.

The focus of Almeida Filho and Coutinho's case study is the Federal University of Southern Bahia (UFSB), the newest Brazilian public university, situated in a remote costal region of Northeast Brazil. The authors describe and analyze the challenges faced in attempting to create a counter-hegemonic institution of higher education in a context in which the reduction of economic inequalities due to introduction of policies of social protection occurs, conversely, in parallel to increasing social inequalities. On the one side, they point to the influence of a deeply conservative and elitist past upon which the public university system in Brazil has been developed and, on the other, point to the failure of the university to face up to the pressures of the new social, economic and technological scenario created by globalization and the failure of the Brazilian system to meet the growing social needs for higher education. They suggest that perhaps the largest challenge is how to make the university socially responsible while reaffirming quality and competence. Moreover, how to create a "popular" university which is effectively oriented toward sustainability, social integration, active learning, "inter-trans-disciplinarity" and intercultural commitment.

Dan Cohen's chapter entitled *Community University of the Rivers: Cultivating Transformative Pedagogies within Formal Education in the Amazon* is also set in Brazil, in a community on the banks of the River Tocantins, about to be irreversibly transformed into a river highway and vast hydroelectric dam. It is based on eight interwoven short stories, from the past 18 months, each describing a micro-project of action-research being coordinated by eight young artist-coordinators,

all co-founders of the Community University of the Rivers. The chapter describes and reflects on the arts-rich intersubjective pedagogical culture that defines this independent initiative, as a network of connected knowledges and potentials, and as a multiple intervention within "high-school" and federal university education, located in a deeply conservative afro-indigenous riverside, urban, former fishing community. The narrative sets out the challenges of pedagogical survival and innovation on the thresholds between a paradigm of market-based, formal education in deep crisis, and an emerging paradigm of eco-cultural community-based formation, in the very specific geopolitical context of the present industrialization of the Brazilian Amazon. Above all, the chapter reflects on these challenges and potentials through post-colonial and self-decolonizing multiple experiences of "indifferent" fatalism about the future, an accelerating disintegration of "the social" into atomized sleepless addicts of social networks, and a reflexive experimentation with sexual identity. These powerful, consuming and "silent" dimensions of "formation," "peer-education" and "pedagogic coordination" permeate all the spaces within formal and popular education and seem to be characterized by an inarticulate excess of visceral knowledge and poverty of theory.

Finally, the chapter that concludes this edited collection is written by Catherine Walsh who brings together several themes that have, albeit not necessarily in relation to each other, been touched upon in many of the preceding texts: the dissident and subjugated knowledge systems of indigenous populations, politics of decolonization, the critical pedagogy movement inspired by the works of leading advocate Paulo Freire, and educational forms of the Zapatista movement. Bringing these ingredients together, Walsh emphasizes the need for a decolonial pedagogy. Revisiting the works of Freire, Walsh mixes autobiographical accounts from the Andes and a visit to a concrete alternative educational initiative called *escuelita* in Chiapas after an invitation from Subcomandante Marcos. As she describes her own processes of "unlearning," that is, a shift that opens up for other ways of being, thinking and knowing beyond universality of capitalism, euro-centered modernity and Western civilization. For Walsh, pedagogy must be understood in relation to its sociopolitical context, where a decolonial pedagogy which allows knowledge systems that have been colonized and delegitimized to coexist.

The lesson we can learn from Walsh's text is that it is not enough merely to twist and turn the map. The conventional world map must be dethroned and replaced by other maps in which our view of the world

is not limited to Western cartography. Together the various contributions to this anthology help us to think of racial and gendered privileges, racism and sexism as environmentally constituted habits and open up a conceptual space for seriously considering the material construction of educational spaces no matter its form. Given that these are sites where learning is supposed to happen, the various chapters provide an itinerary for how we—scholars, activists, artists, students, organizations and social movements—can creatively begin to construct learning spaces in ways that are not simply anti-racist and anti-sexist, but also anti-capitalist, anti-Eurocentric, anti-imperial and anti-colonial seeking to dialogue with a new more horizontal form of participatory democracy and to create a new ethic for "good living." With different scopes, methodologies and geopolitical locus within Latin America, each author provides his/her own thread that becomes part of the larger texture which constitutes the various ways in which educational models are organized in the region today. Hence the need for other maps for orientation. Part of the challenge is to think seriously about Bucaramanga, La Paz, Puno and Chiapas, not only New York, Oxford or Paris as possible sites of knowledge—that is, to recognize Abya Yala alongside Latin America.

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CHAPTER 2

Against the Episteme of Domination and the Coloniality of Reality: Andean Formations of Subversive Subjectivities, Dissident Knowledges and Rebel Realities

Anders Burman

Introduction

Our fingers and toes were numb. The bitterly cold Andean night made us shiver and there was still no sign of dawn at the horizon. To the northeast we saw the street lighting of Achacachi, the historical bastion of indigenous Aymara resistance; far to the southeast, in a bulb of yellowish light, lay the "rebel city" (Lazar, 2008) of El Alto. There was an immense starry sky above us and before us in the dark stood the ancestral beings Ispa Awicha and Ispa Achachila, embodied in the rocks.

It was August 2011 and we were on top of the mountain Pachjiri, a place that attracts urban and rural Aymara people from far and near and to which I have returned many times since I first set foot there in 2001. It is known as a powerful and knowledgeable place—a *wak'a*, a place-being—and Aymara ritual specialists, called *yatiris*, go there to be

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initiated and immersed in the powers and the knowledge of the other-than-human actors residing there. Together with a small group of city-dwelling Aymara people and guided by a *yatiri*, my wife and I had been tripped up by the rock-strewn paths as we climbed the mountain in complete darkness a couple of hours earlier. Now, as dawn drew closer, it was time to hand over the offerings—*misas*—we had prepared in the *yatiri*'s home the night before. Consisting of vegetal, animal and mineral elements, arranged with meticulous care and then wrapped up in the form of a bundle in sheets of paper, the *misa* is a way to communicate with the other-than-human persons of the Aymara world. It is a model *of* and a model *for* the cosmos—*pacha*—displaying knowledge of worlds that have been denied and suppressed by colonial powers, ranging from sixteenth-century inquisition to twenty-first-century educational systems. In rural contexts, this kind of ritual practice is primarily concerned with agricultural practices and health. The *misas* are charged with wishes for rain to fall and for crops to grow according to the annual cycle of *awtipacha* (dry season) and *jallupacha* (rainy season). As I have shown elsewhere (Burman, 2016a, 2011) though, the *misas* take on new meanings in urban settings and especially so within the *indianista-katarista* political movement. Wishes for prosperity, well-being and health increasingly intersect with practices related to the generation of dissident subjectivities as ritual practice emerges as a form of activism by which a landscape of anticolonial resistance is disclosed; ritual practice becomes a means of reasserting a denied world and a denied self and, furthermore, a way to reconceptualize knowledge production by widening the community of beings within which knowledge is produced.

Certainly, Aymara people do not live in an Arcadian animist world of ritual practice. El Alto is the second largest city in Bolivia and the home of the majority of those Bolivians who identify as “being Aymara”; hence, noisy street life, commerce and hard work are much more dominant features of everyday life than ritual practice in the mountains. Still though, in the midst of exhaust fumes, incessantly beeping cars and the everyday problems of modern urban life, other-than-human persons such as the rocks on Pachjiri are in one way or another a patent part of many Aymara people's lifeworlds. Working in a rural Aymara community not far from Pachjiri in the 1960s, Carter and Mamani asserted that the “community is not only surrounded by spirits; it is totally invaded by them” (1989, 287, my translation). In charge of dealing with these “spirits”—*ajayu uywirinaka*—are the *yatiris*, the Aymara ritual specialists.

Since 2006 and the coming to power of Evo Morales and his Movimiento al Socialismo (MAS), "indigeneity" has been at the core of the "decolonization politics" implemented by the government, and, quite intriguingly, *yatiris* have crystallized as key actors in representing this indigeneity in official state ceremony and in legitimizing the president's role as "the indigenous president." While *yatiris* appear in state ceremony as emblematic indigenous actors, parts of their knowledge are also supposed to inform state politics on anything from public health to education. Indigenous therapeutic knowledge is supposed to be included in public health programs; a new education law asserts that education on all levels should be "decolonizing"; and three state-endorsed indigenous universities have been founded, one of them (Universidad Indígena Boliviana Aymara Tupaj Katari) in Warisata, not too far from the foot of the ridge upon which Pachjiri rises.[1] A state official at the Ministry of Education, who is also one of the founders of the Universidad Indígena in Warisata, explained its rationale to me:

> Since the 1930s and the creation of the first indigenous school, indigenous education and the access to education had advanced …, for indigenous children and youth. But in higher education there was no advancement …, higher education was still monocultural. … We want to construct a new epistemology at the indigenous universities. …To us, the indigenous universities, which are our own creation, are the vanguard to transform higher education. … As it is now, higher education has a colonized structure. … The university has only one format, one standard which implicitly favors one culture, the Castilian culture.

At the center of indigenous activism and state politics of decolonization alike, then, is knowledge. And "knowledge" is inseparably interlaced with "experience" and "practice" in Aymara epistemology, in which knowing the world is the result of experiencing the world while walking-in-the-world (Burman, 2012). Knowing the world differently is the result of knowing from epistemological premises other than the ones sanctioned by modernity. Knowing different worlds, such as the world in which the rock beings on Pachjiri are persons with agentive efficacy and intentionality, is the result of knowing from ontological premises other than the ones authorized by modernity. While many *yatiris*, indigenous activists and *indianista-katarista* intellectuals embrace such "worlds and knowledges otherwise" (Escobar, 2007), in their educational policies the

Bolivian state has until recently dealt less approvingly with what Blaser (2013) calls "radical difference." And while the Bolivian government currently implements allegedly decolonizing educational politics by founding indigenous universities and reforming the national educational system, indigenous activists and *indianista-katarista* intellectuals claim that state politics of decolonization are nothing but a well-rehearsed scam, which promotes a quasi-esoteric form of Andean essentialist culturalism, a smokescreen of multiculturalist ritual practices and indigenous ceremonial paraphernalia. For instance, in relation to Evo Morales' ceremonial investiture as "the indigenous president" and "president of the indigenous peoples" in Tiwanaku January 21, 2006, *indianista* activist and intellectual Freddy "Pachakuti" Acarapi claims that "it is simply an extravagant symbolic act—apart from being a ritual swindle—to ornament what was to come (colonial governance) and, at the same time, to present himself to the international community as something authentic" (Aqarapi, 2016, 194–195, my translation).

Freddy and his fellow activists do not put much hope into state politics aimed at the decolonization of higher education. Rather, they carve out other spaces for knowledge production, such as autonomous indigenous universities, informal seminars and communities for intellectual and ideological deliberation. Moreover, they widen the community of knowledge production, so that other-than-human persons are included in the social interaction that engenders knowledge. Thus, they do not only dedicate themselves to *epistemological* disobedience—that is, the generation of knowledges otherwise—but also *ontological* disobedience—that is, the generation and affirmation of worlds otherwise—and thereby they challenge not only the colonial episteme of domination but also "the coloniality of reality"—that is, the dynamics by which certain knowledges, realities and producers of knowledge are delegitimized while other knowledges and producers of knowledge are legitimized and a certain reality is naturalized and reproduced (Burman, 2016b). A fundamental part of this disobedience is the generation of other knowledges and other realities within which other subjectivities are allowed to unfold. Thereby, they defy three interlaced aspects of coloniality that have permeated Bolivian educational policies (and the colonial, capitalist world-system at large) since the first rural itinerant schools were founded in the early 1900s: the subjugation of subjectivities ("Be who we want you to be!"); epistemic domination ("Know what we want you to know and in the way we want you to know; create the kind of

knowledge we want you to and in the way we want you to!"); and ontological domination ("Live in the one and only world we recognize as real!"). It is the dynamics of this existential, epistemic and ontological disobedience—in lecture rooms, in the *barrios* of El Alto, and in places such as Pachjiri—that will be delved into in this text. As such, this chapter is part of an ongoing debate concerning the epistemological dimensions of colonial domination and anticolonial struggles, but adds to it a discussion on the ontological dimensions of coloniality and anticolonial resistance and their relation to the formation of dissident subjectivities. In order to understand where resistance and disobedience come from, however, we first turn to the Bolivian state and its variable strategies for dealing with radical difference.

Radical Difference and State Politics of Education

As we descended from Pachjiri, that early morning in August 2011, the *yatiri* pointed to the northeast, to a point in the landscape beyond Achacachi, saying: "That's where it all started; that's Warisata, where our grandfathers first defied the power of the *hacendados* and created a school of their own."

Warisata, located in the heart of rural Aymara society, is in many respects a special place. During the uprising in 2003, which resulted in more than 70 people (mostly peasants and workers of Aymara origin) being killed by the police and the armed forces and the subsequent fall of President Gonzalo Sanchéz de Lozada, "civil war" was declared by the peasant union and the residents of Warisata (Mamani, 2003). During the 1952 national revolution and the subsequent agrarian reform, Warisata was known to be an insubordinate community fraught with conflict (Blanes, 2000, 25–26). The event that forevermore positioned Warisata in Bolivian history, though, was the creation of the "Escuela Ayllu." As the result of a long struggle by rural Aymara communities, it was founded by Avelino Siñani and Elizardo Pérez in 1931 (see, e.g., Pérez, 1963). While the surrounding communities provided land, building materials and labor, the state provided teachers and funding to what would become a quasi-mythical educational model that not only *addressed* indigenous people, but departed in its pedagogical practice from the harsh reality of the rural communities (i.e., racism, poverty, serfdom) and their knowledges and social practices. It aimed at the "liberation of *el indio*" (see Botelho, Salazar, & Arze, 1992).

Nevertheless, la Escuela Ayllu operated less than a decade before it was closed down by the government; students and teachers were pursued and formal education vanished from the rural communities until the mid-1950s, when it returned in a new guise—not as a project aimed at the liberation of *el indio* but rather as an assimilationist project and as such instrumental to the creation of the new *patria mestiza*.

The Escuela Ayllu was not the first educational initiative in Aymara communities though. As early as 1905, a governmental decree issued that itinerary schools would be organized throughout the countryside to teach the indigenous population the basics of "civilized life" (Choque & Quisbert, 2006, 83–89). In the early 1920s, the itinerary schools were replaced by permanent rural schools within the system of *educación indigenal*, by which the indigenous population would learn to read and write but primarily learn to be skilled agricultural laborers, that is, good serfs. Mirroring the notion of "the two Bolivias"—one of modern, knowledgeable European descendants and one of backwards, ignorant *indios*—there were at this time two completely different regimes of education, one urban, one rural—that is, one for citizens who were apt for intellectual work, and another for *indios* (Choque & Quisbert, 2006). Not only was this system based on racist and essentialist notions of *el indio*, it also naturalized and legitimized the relation between *el indio* and hard physical labor on the one hand, and between "white" people and intellectual activities, on the other.

This short survey of historical educational projects reveals three different educational strategies used by the Bolivian state to deal with radical difference during the twentieth century: (1) The *educación indigenal* of the early twentieth century dealt with "difference" by separating it from "sameness"; maintaining it as difference but as a subaltern alterity and thereby controlling it and making instrumental use of it to secure a steady supply of a submissive labor force. (2) Closing down the Escuela Ayllu in Warisata and pursuing its teachers and students in the 1940s illustrates another way of dealing with radical difference—suppressing it and denying its value. When *indios* emerged as knowledgeable subjects, capable of learning, teaching and administering educational projects by themselves, for themselves and on to a certain extent on their own terms—that is, when they were moving beyond state control—they were repressed. (3) The educational reform of the 1950s was instrumental to the construction of the new *patria mestiza* which tried "to solve the 'Indian problem' by assimilating the Indians" (Ströbele Gregor, 1994,

108). The deprecatory term "*indio*" was replaced by an apparently more neutral one, "*campesino*" (peasant), and a stigma was attached to *el indio* as being the antithesis of the modern Bolivian citizen. Though a certain romanticized *indigenista* version of indigeneity accompanied such assimilationist politics, the overall message proclaimed that national progress depended on making Bolivians out of *indios*. Alphabetization and castilianization were two fundamental tasks of the Bolivian school system in this endeavor to turn difference into sameness and alterity into identity. The challenge for the national elites was, however, to implement such a thoroughgoing transformation of subjectivities, alterities and identities without also transforming the economic and material asymmetric relations of power that underpinned the highly stratified and segregated Bolivian society of the time.

A fourth state strategy for dealing with difference, neoliberal multiculturalism, was implemented in the 1990s and implied the recognition of difference in terms of a politically defanged notion of folklore and "tradition." Neoliberal multiculturalism consisted in the manipulation of cultural diversity—music, language and handicraft—to bring forth a smokescreen to conceal the simultaneous neoliberal assault on indigenous collective rights (Burman, 2016a; Postero, 2007). Education was instrumental to this.

Since 2006, a fifth strategy of the Bolivian state to deal with radical difference is in the making: to posit indigeneity as the foundational trope of the new nation-building process of the plurinational state and to incorporate difference (indigenous languages, knowledges, social practices, cosmologies) into sameness (the state apparatus, modernity, Bolivian nationhood, institutionalized schooling system) and, most importantly, allow for sameness to be transformed by difference. Nevertheless, the extent to which difference is allowed to affect sameness in Bolivian politics has its limits, as the following anecdote will tell (see also Burman, 2012).

An early morning in September 2009, I got on a minibus in El Alto with two friends—non-indigenous, urban, middle-class, radical intellectuals working within the Morales administration. They had invited me to a seminar on "decolonization and education" which they were organizing at the teachers' training college in Warisata, just next door to the recently established indigenous university. As we arrived after a couple of hours of spirited political and philosophical discussion in the minibus, we were met by a group of young and enthusiastic Aymara teacher students

and my state official friends were soon engaged in explaining anything from Paulo Freire's pedagogy of liberation and Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony to Enrique Dussel's "transmodernity" and Franz Hinkelammert's "cry of the subject." The seminar went well; my friends were well-rehearsed in critical theory and the Aymara students listened attentively.

While listening to the seminar, I gazed through the window toward the west and it struck me that there, on the horizon, was the mountain range upon which Pachjiri stands. How many times had I not climbed that mountain with the *yatiris*? How many times had I not met the sunrise up there after entire nights of ritual practice? According to the *yatiris*, it is a knowledgeable place where one, in the words of one of the *yatiris* I have worked most intimately with, can "think good thoughts" and obtain "good knowledge." And there it was, visible from the window of the lecture room where the Bolivian state summoned Aymara teacher students to teach them about the decolonization of knowledge and education. Many important books and many significant thinkers were mentioned there in the lecture room, but nowhere in the discussion was the name of Pachjiri, or any other *wak'a*, uttered. There was no mentioning of the *yatiris*; few, if any, words in Aymara were spoken. The decolonization of education seemed to be, as it were, more about the application of thoughts thought elsewhere, than about exploring and acknowledging Aymara ways of producing knowledges and worlds otherwise.

On our way home from Warisata, we were tired and less talkative than on our way there, and we soon decided to read. After a couple of minutes, though, I pointed to the mountain ridge where Pachjiri stands and I asked my friends if they knew that place. They shook their heads and returned to their books.

Little more than a year later, the new educational law (Ley de Educación "Avelino Siñani-Elisardo Pérez," passed in December 2010 and named after the founding fathers of La Escuela Ayllu) stated that Bolivian higher education should "articulate the knowledge of the indigenous peoples and nations (*los pueblos y naciones indígena originario campesinos*) with the universal [knowledge]" (Ministerio de Educación 2010, art. 29:2) and "recover and develop the knowledge of the indigenous nations and peoples" (Ministerio de Educación 2010, art. 29:5). Simultaneously, *yatiris* were promoted in state ceremony as "wise ones" and enactors of "tradition."

Incorporate or separate? Acknowledge or subjugate? The question of how the state should deal with radical difference and knowledges otherwise is as present today as it was in the early twentieth century. The answers provided and the political contexts in which the question is posed today are, however, different. And resistance is articulated and practiced in novel ways. To this we turn now.

Against the Subjugation of Subjectivities

While yatiris are promoted within state ceremony as the embodiment of indigeneity, the yatiri who lead us up the mountain slopes of Pachjiri that cold August night 2011 is far from a personification of anything resembling "immaculate tradition." He—we can call him Alberto—was born in one of the barrios on the northern slopes of La Paz in the mid-1970s. His grandparents had moved to La Paz from rural communities at the shores of Lake Titicaca not far from Pachjiri some decades before, in search of jobs and a better life. Being Aymara speaking peasants, discrimination and exploitation characterized their new urban existence, and "indigeneity" was hardly on the list of things they wanted to pass on to their children. Rather, Alberto told me, they wanted their children and grandchildren to become well-educated, modern citizens of the new patria mestiza. Accordingly, Alberto has a university degree and a good job within the cultural sector and he grew up without knowing the mother tongue of his grandparents. Twenty years ago, when Alberto first approached a yatiri and started to learn from him and take part in the ritual practices and journeys to the wak'as, his lack of knowledge of the Aymara language troubled him, not least in his learning process (see Burman, 2016a): "Dreams are really important to me" he told me. "The grandfathers come to me in my dreams and give me their signs, their teachings. A pity, though, that I don't understand them since they always speak to me in Aymara." Since then, Alberto has learned to speak the Aymara language, though far from fluently.

Alberto belongs to the generation of grandchildren of the 1952 revolution. His parents belonged to the first generation of Aymara children and adolescents to pass through the assimilationist digestive system of the new Bolivian state and its educational apparatus in which new national subjectivities were molded. During Alberto's last years of compulsory school education, explicit assimilationist policies were replaced by multiculturalist policies, as neoliberal multiculturalism rose

to prominence among foreign donors and Bolivian elites alike. As I have argued elsewhere (Burman, 2014), though, "tolerant" recognition of cultural difference from above holds very little of emancipatory potential.

As Foucault (1979) pointed out, however, where there is power, there is resistance. Where there is imposition, there is disobedience. Had the post-revolution assimilationist politics achieved its objective, Alberto would not have been here as the person he is today, practicing the art of the *yatiri*. Had neoliberal multiculturalist educational policies achieved their objective, Alberto's ritual trade would at the most have been an exotic postcard representation of a politically defanged indigeneity. But Alberto has defied the identities that were prescribed from above—be they assimilationist or instrumentally multiculturalist. Thereby, he is part of a larger movement that rises up against the subjugation of subjectivities and hegemonic dealings with indigeneity and difference from above.

One expression of such defiance, among many others, is the recurrent phenomenon among *indianista-katarista* activists and younger *yatiris* and *yatiri* apprentices (so-called *soldados*) of changing their given names into something more "indigenous." While indigenous last names such as Mamani, Quispe and Ticona still abound (a source of pride to some, a source of shame to others), the given names used by Aymara people are almost without exception of European origin. Aymara people are usually called names like Alberto and Juan, Elena and María. Only very recently have some *indianista*-oriented Aymara parents started to give their children names such as Yawar, Pacha and Wara. During my more than 15 years of working and doing research with and among *yatiris*, *soldados* and activists, however, I have seen "Freddy" become "Pachakuti," "René" turn into "Yawar Qala," and "Bruno" grow into "Paqapu." While many of them use their Aymara names mostly in ritual contexts or in their Facebook profiles, others—such as *indianista* activist and intellectual and old friend of mine Freddy Acarapi (see Aqarapi, 2016)—write books and give public lectures at the university under their new names. Whereas this proliferation of indigenous given names is ridiculed by some under the epithet "*pachamamismo*"[2]—that is, claiming that this phenomenon would be an expression of an apolitical form of Andean essentialist culturalism—it has quite deep roots in Aymara anticolonial mobilizations. Eighteenth-century rebel leader Tupaj Katari was baptized as Julián Apaza; only when heading the indigenous peasant population against Spanish colonial rule did he take on his Aymara name, meaning something akin to "the Resplendent Serpent" (Thomson,

2002). Likewise, among some *indianista-katarista* radicals of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, European names were replaced by indigenous names. Thus, legendary *indianista* militant Constantino Lima often prefers to call himself Takir Mamani, and Germán Choquehuanca is more known as Inka Waskar Chukiwanka. The last-mentioned recently argued in the foreword of a book by Freddy Acarapi that "it is more valuable when the author has an Indian name (…), because the Christian name announces [an] inclination towards invasionism" (Chukiwanka, 2016, 21). While to some *indianistas* of previous decades, their Aymara name was a *nom de guerre* which was used to conceal their true identity in times of dictatorship and persecution, to others it was rather a statement, a way of speaking back to power, saying: "I'm here, and I'm *indio*."

"*Indio*" was, and in many respects still is, a racist, colonial category, imposed from above. In the 1960s, however, a burgeoning *indianista* movement declared "As *indios* they oppressed us, as *indios* we will liberate ourselves!" They put pride in being *indios* and thereby they transformed a racist concept into a tool for dissident activism. Since the Aymara uprising in the year 2000, the concept "*indígena*" (indigenous) has undergone a similar transformation (Burman, 2014). Before the 1952 revolution, *indígena* was used by the state administration to refer to native people in the highlands (i.e., primarily Aymara and Quechua people), as well as in the lowlands (e.g., Guaraní, Ayoreo and Tacana people). The assimilationist policies of the new *patria mestiza*, however, transformed highland native people into peasants, and a stigmatized alterity was attached to lowland native people who continued to be identified as *indígenas*. During the decades that would follow the national revolution, to be *indígena* was to be a primitive savage, supposedly beyond the reach of modernity, civilization and the republic and few if any Aymara people would then identify as *indígena*. Nevertheless, with the burgeoning international discourse on the rights of indigenous peoples, the meaning of being *indígena* in Bolivia started to change in the 1990s. During the insurrectionary period of the early twenty-first century (2000–2005), more and more people of Aymara origin, not least in urban areas, started to include a new sense of indigeneity in political discourse and in their sense of "self." They became, as it were, *indígenas* "again." Thereby, they came into being in a certain relation to the state and to power, since, as Thomas Abercrombie (1991) asserts, indigenous peoples are constituted in their struggle with and within the state. The emergence of this new indigeneity is not a question of returning to some

ancestral essence of "self," but rather about certain social and political practices. To come into being as *indio* or *indígena*, today is about using the cracks and fissures of coloniality, carving out the social, political, epistemological and ontological spaces that are necessary for the generation of subjectivities otherwise and, in the words of Othon Alexandrakis (2016), "the formation of resistant subjectivities." Therefore, this is a phenomenon that goes beyond "identity" and thereby beyond "identity politics."

Difference, then, should not be understood as essence, but as relations produced in everyday practices. Difference is the outcome of a continuous process of creating difference, be that in order to legitimize, naturalize and reinforce already existing inequalities, or in order to challenge structures of social injustice, exploitation and asymmetric power relations.

With the coming to power of Evo Morales and MAS, the state articulated a nearly all-inclusive version of a hegemonic, politically instrumental and "popular" version of indigeneity, which was tied to notions of Bolivian nationhood, national sovereignty and a strong state. Suddenly "dissent" and "power" seemed to speak the same language, that is, the language of indigeneity. Soon, however, an indigenous opposition emerged (Burman, 2014) and the government was criticized for promoting a politically defanged, essentialist and culturalist representation of indigeneity and using it as a mere smokescreen to conceal the colonial continuities in state politics. Dissident, subversive subjectivities therefore emerge also in this new context, and new political, epistemological and ontological spaces are carved out and become the loci in which these subjectivities come into being and from where they speak and produce knowledge. And to this we turn now.

Against the Episteme of Domination

Carlos Yujra is a renowned *yatiri* and—since 2007 and in line with governmental efforts to decolonize public health policies and incorporate the knowledge of indigenous "wise ones" into the state apparatus—a state official in the Health Ministry with whom I have maintained a dialogue and close cooperation for more than 15 years. As a young man, in the early 1970s, he was consecrated and initiated as a *yatiri* on Pachjiri. In those days, according to Carlos, a ritual specialist lived permanently in a small cave on the mountain. That man was not an ordinary *yatiri* but a

ch'amakani, the ritual specialist who is known for working with *aphällas*, helper spirits, and for knowing how to speak to all sorts of other-than-human persons and make them speak through him or her under the cover of darkness.

Nowadays, no one lives permanently up there and when I asked Carlos why the *ch'amakani* used to live there, in the harsh and windswept rocky landscape 4500 meters above sea level, he told me: "Pachjiri is a beautiful place and it makes you think beautiful thoughts. You can think with that place. You can know everything there." Carlos says something of epistemological significance here. Thinking is not something going on inside the mind of discrete human subjects; intellectual activity is neither confined by the human skin, nor restricted to human society in any reductionist sense. Knowledge is produced in relational fields; it emerges from practices and intersubjective relations with and within the world (see Ingold, 2000). The epistemic community is thereby widened and the epistemic subjectivities involved in knowledge production are other than the ones stipulated by hegemonic theories of knowledge which asserts detachment of the knower from the known and the process of knowing and which essentially stem from Cartesian metaphysics and its ontological dualism of two separate worlds: the intentional world of human subjects (the knower) and the world of material things (the known). Carlos lives and produces knowledge in but one world, a world where places think and can be thought with and mountains have agency and intentionality.

Carlos complains, however, that his knowledge is at the most considered an exotic ingredient in the everyday work at the Health Ministry. Rather than being treated as a knowledgeable and knowledge-producing person, Carlos says, he is *tolerated* by the *licenciados* and the *doctores* because "they want to be able to show they have an *indígena*"; that is, his presence gives the Health Ministry an air of legitimizing indigeneity. "No one really listens to what I say, except for the people in the countryside. They listen because they know. People in the offices don't know about *pacha*[3]." Within the Bolivian state apparatus, according to Carlos, being an experienced and consecrated Aymara *yatiri* falls short of epistemic legitimacy in comparison with being a person with a university degree. This is an expression and a consequence of the coloniality of knowledge, that is, the epistemic dimension of colonial violence in which one certain form of knowledge is legitimized through an educational system (cf. Bourdieu, 1977), while other knowledges are

subalternized or denied as true knowledge. Likewise, the production of knowledge is monopolized by academia, and since knowledge production within academia mainly is a "Capitalist/Patriarchal Western-centric/Christian-centric Modern/Colonial" business (Grosfoguel, 2013, 89), the semantics of "knowledge" transforms from potentially encapsulating different ways of knowing the world—in which modern science and social theory is *one*—to raising walls around the knowledge produced according to the epistemological and ontological premises of modernity and thereby delegitimizing any claim to knowledge that is produced outside of the insular closed, system of academia. This is "the epistemic privilege of Western Man" (Grosfoguel, 2013, 73). This is the episteme of domination: knowledge that delegitimizes other knowledges; knowledge produced to control; knowledge as being instrumental to domination. And as the "other side of epistemic privilege is epistemic inferiority" (Grosfoguel, 2013, 74), the outcome of the episteme of domination is subjugated epistemes. Or in Silvia Rivera's words: "The legitimate word belongs to those up there; those down here give input. … We produce raw materials and they return manufactured commodities to us" (quoted in Grosfoguel, 2016, 134, my translation).

Nevertheless, there is yet another outcome of the episteme of domination: epistemic disobedience. Carlos is not only a state official *yatiri*; he is also a prolific writer (see, e.g., Yujra, 2005, 2009). And while his knowledge is at the most tolerated at the Health Ministry and primarily used to give indigenous legitimacy to state politics, his books are read and his knowledge is disseminated far beyond the confines of the Bolivian state apparatus, especially among a new generation of Aymara intellectuals and activists who take seriously that which is serious to Carlos. One of them is Freddy "Pachakuti" Acarapi.

When Freddy as a young man returned to his natal rural community after doing his military service, he decided to get an education. In the small rural town of Laja, not far from Freddy's home, there was a recently established Indigenous University (Universidad Indígena Tawantinsuyu "UTA"), founded in the 1990s by the abovementioned Inka Waskar Chukiwanka and other *indianista* intellectuals and activists. While UTA ever since its foundation has been very rudimentary in terms of infrastructure and institutional administration, it has been the more outstanding in terms of *indianista* philosophy and decolonial fervor. Freddy decided to register, not primarily out of ideological reasons but because he wanted an education, and the urban universities of La

Paz and El Alto were then not on his social radar. Freddy has since then graduated from Law School at the Universidad Pública de El Alto and has a degree in Political Science from the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz. Those initial years at UTA, however, were transformative in a way his subsequent university studies were not:

> It was as though someone had poured a bucket of cold water over me. It occurred to me that I had been living my life with my eyes veiled. There, at the UTA, I understood this and came to see the world the way it actually is, that the true knowledge is the knowledge of our *abuelos.* (grandparents)

To Freddy, UTA offered an epistemic opening in which "the knowledge of our *abuelos*" was given an institutional endorsement and legitimacy. UTAs unconventional pedagogical and administrative practices and its refusal to adapt to state regulations, however, soon aroused criticism from the Ministry of Education and in 2015 UTA was chastised. No new students are admitted, no new graduates are acknowledged, and graduates from previous batches are acknowledged as mere "*Técnicos Superiores*," not as "*Licenciados.*" Protests aroused and the Vice Minister of Higher Education, Giovanni Samanamud, was accused of racism and discrimination, which he immediately contradicted: "The sanction has more to do with the fact that the authorities of this university have not fulfilled [their duties], than with any (…) discrimination against the indigenous university" (*El Diario*, June 24, 2015, my translation). UTA currently leads a languishing academic life.

Parallel to an institutionalized endeavor like UTA—and very different from the state-endorsed indigenous universities (for a discussion concerning these, see Burman, 2016b)—other more informal collectives with *indianista* agendas have emerged, especially in the city of El Alto. Escuela de Pensamiento Pacha, founded by Freddy "Pachakuti" Acarapi and other young *indianistas*, is one of these. When I first started frequenting their meetings more than a decade ago, they met in a small adobe house on the outskirts of El Alto to discuss radical politics, activism and *indianista* philosophy, to play traditional music and engage in ritual practice. Nowadays, they meet in a small office in the commercial center of El Alto, and while the conversations still revolve around politics and philosophy, and while ritual practice and traditional music are still part of their activities, their impact in society has deepened.

They publish books (e.g., Aqarapi, 2016), they organize seminars and panel debates at public universities, and they organize the annual "Conferencia Internacional Indio-Tiwanaku" which has grown with each year and has come to bring together many hundreds of participants and scholars, from Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Argentina. Freddy explains the purpose of their activities:

> At the indigenous universities of the state, there's no philosophical fundament. There's no space for critical thinking from an Aymara perspective. What can we do? It's up to us to create these spaces! …. Our grandfathers were not researchers, but they were knowledgeable. It's *pacha* that teaches us everything …. According to Western logic, man makes theory. And the dominated tries to liberate themselves in the logic of the dominant. But these are only arguments between humans; there is nothing of *pacha* there. … To overcome all this, we cannot use the same logic.

Many activists therefore argue that they need to dig deep into the subjugated epistemes to undermine the episteme of domination and to make the conceptual and epistemic straitjacket of coloniality/modernity explode at its seams (cf. Blaser, 2013, 558); they need to dig deeper than the state does in its decolonizing educational politics from above and they need to create their own spaces also outside of academia.

Knowledge is not created in an ontological vacuum, though, and the coloniality of knowledge ultimately rests on the coloniality of reality. Therefore, epistemic disobedience—in order to be truly disobedient—needs to be put in practice in ontological spaces carved out by dissident subjectivities. Or in Freddy "Pachakuti" Acarapi's words: "We have to create theory from *pacha*!" And to these ontological spaces we turn now.

Against the Coloniality of Reality

What is *pacha*? In the two dominant Andean languages Aymara and Quechua, the word *pacha* is often translated as "cosmos," "space" or "time." But it can also refer to concepts of place, weather, nature, cycle and the climate. It is a multivocal concept whose meaning is contextual. Moreover, by adding suffixes or prefixes and by combining *pacha* with other words a list of its potential meanings would be if not infinite at least very long. For instance, in the Aymara language, *alaxpacha*, *akapacha* and *manqhapacha* refer to spatial dimensions in the cosmos: the

upper/celestial sphere, the sphere at hand (the here-and-now world) and the underworld, respectively. *Nayrapacha* refers to the past; *nayra* means eye, pointing to the Andean conception of the past as being laid out in front of us, something we can observe, while the future, *jutirpacha* (the *pacha* that is upcoming), is behind us since we cannot observe it (cf. Nuñez & Sweetser, 2006). *Ch'amakpacha* refers to the era of darkness that existed before the birth of the sun. *Jichhapacha* is the present *pacha*, the place-time from where we can observe the past. The annual cycle is also organized in different *pachas*, *awtipacha* (the dry season) and *jallupacha* (the rainy season) being the two main *pachas* of the year, composed by shorter *pachas* pointing to a specific activity such as sowing (*satapacha*) or a specific weather condition such as frost (*juyphipacha*) when *ch'uño* (freeze-dried potato) can be made. Another recurrent concept involving *pacha* is *pachakuti*, a deep-going transformation, a cosmic cycle, an insurgent return of ancestral time and space, a revolution in *pacha*. Not for nothing did Freddy Acarapi chose the name "Pachakuti" for himself. Prior to Evo Morales' investiture as president, the concept *pachakuti* was used primarily by *indianista-katarista* activists. Today, the concept has found its way into state discourse and during Evo Morales' first year in office there was a massive state-sponsored campaign avowing that Evo Morales' coming to power and the installation of a Constituent Assembly constituted a *pachakuti*. In March 2006, Evo Morales articulated it such: "I want to tell you, sisters and brothers, that *pachakuti*, that change, (…) is arriving sisters and brothers. For sure, when we install the Constituent Assembly on August 6 in the city of Sucre, well, it will arrive within one year from now, that great change that the Bolivian people are awaiting."

Parallel to the current political exploitation of the concept *pachakuti*, another concept derived from *pacha* is currently appearing in anything from Bolivian governmental discourse to environmentalist rhetoric and popular culture far beyond the Andes: Pachamama (see for instance Aho Colectivo's song "Wirikuta se defiende" in which "Pachamama warriors" are referred to). Clearly, *pacha* has a dual aspect of time and space and when used without adding additional words to it, it somehow captures the totality of existence and being, of the cosmos; *pacha* is the very time and space of existence. This semantic and situational richness notwithstanding, Pachamama is often referred to as "Mother Earth" (Madre Tierra in Spanish). But from a strict etymological perspective it could be argued that this translation is not entirely adequate since "*mama*" is not

usually the word used to say "mother" in the Aymara language; rather, "*mama*" is used to talk about or address any adult woman. It could be translated as "lady" or in Spanish "*señora*." To refer to the concept "mother," the word *tayka* is often used. Interestingly, the name Pacha Tayka is often used by *yatiris* to address the feminine forces of *pacha*, but I have never heard it being used in conventional political speeches or in environmentalist discourse. According to most of the *yatiris*, I have talked to and learned from, Pacha Tayka and Pachamama are not two entirely separate beings. However, the two concepts have slightly different connotations. Pachamama is related to the soil, vegetation and fertility in everyday life in a more direct manner than Pacha Tayka, who is a more distant and general feminine force including certain astral bodies, rivers, lakes and the feminine ancestors (*awichanaka*) dwelling in the landscape. In ritual rhetoric, both Pachamama and Pacha Tayka are part of conceptual pairs. On the one hand, we have Pachamama together with Pacha Tata, "*tata*" being the masculine equivalent to "*mama*" (in other words, meaning "sir," or in Spanish "*señor*"). Pacha Tata is often identified with the Sun (Tata Willka/Inti Tata), and often intimately associated with Jesus Christ or God (El Señor), in the same sense as Pachamama is often associated with "*la virgin*," the Mother of God. On the other hand, we have Pacha Tayka together with Pacha Awki, "*awki*" meaning "male elder" or "father." Pacha Awki is associated with the masculine ancestors (*achachilas*) embodying the high mountains and other powerful places (*wak'a*) in the Andean landscape. While governmental and environmentalist discourses on Pachamama as Mother Earth or Pachamama as the biosphere do not usually seem to engage this relatedness and involvedness, to the *yatiris* I have worked with, Pachamama exists in this context of other powerful and knowledgeable beings.

All these place-beings or earth beings as Marisol de la Cadena (2015) calls them—including the rocks on the mountain Pachjiri—are often referred to as *uywiri*, which means protector, shepherd or breeder. *Uywiris* set the climatic conditions that make agricultural production possible and they make animals and humans reproduce. While environmentalists and the Bolivian government alike promote a notion of indigenous peoples as "guardians of nature"—and Aymara leaders and organizations have certainly detected the political potential in displaying themselves as such—it follows from the concept *uywiri* that rather than "guardians of nature" the *yatiris* tend to see themselves as "guarded by nature."

However, these place-beings do not only provide protection and the climatic conditions for crops to grow; they also bestow knowledge. The *yatiris* are initiated at these places and they return there throughout life to think and produce knowledge by way of ritual practice. To create "theory from *pacha*," then, is to create knowledge of, with, and from within a relational world of other-than-human actors. What Freddy's epistemic disobedience suggests is something else than a Cartesian metaphysics in which the knower and the known exist in separate domains; it is rather an epistemology of engagement (Ingold, 2000, 216), which in turn is based on a relational ontology. This means that *pacha*, the cosmos, enters directly into the constitution of people's subjectivities, "not only as a source of nourishment but also as a source of knowledge" (Ingold, 2000, 57). This is, of course, only comprehensible in a cosmos that is itself sentient, knowing and responsive and in which knowledge-generating relations between knowledgeable beings—that is, the epistemic community—can "override the boundaries of humanity as a species" (Ingold, 2000, 107). To engage in knowledge production and the generation of subjectivities within such a widened epistemic community and to "create theory from *pacha*" is to engage not only in epistemic disobedience, but also in ontological disobedience and thereby in the generation of possibilities, that is, the generation of worlds beyond the one-world—world that is naturalized and legitimized, generated and reproduced in hegemonic academic processes of learning and knowledge production. To defy the coloniality of reality is a fundamentally political act, since it lends full ontological weight to a subjugated and denied reality—what I call a *damnés* reality, a reality that is not allowed to be—"so as to render it *viable as a real alternative*" (Holbraad, Pedersen, & Viveiros de Castro, 2014, emphasis in original). Ontological disobedience, then, is about the making of political and existential possibility; the making of the possibility for other worlds to be disclosed and for other subjectivities and knowledges to emerge in a relational world. It is about the generation of subversive subjectivities, dissident knowledges and rebel realities. Or in the words of Freddy "Pachakuti" Acarapi: "Our struggle is the same as our grandparents' struggle and there, the *wak'as*, the *achachilas*, always played an important role. We continue like this, with a radical political project that includes the *wak'as*."

Notes

1. An additional campus was later built in Cuyahuani, in the municipality of Huarina.
2. For a discussion on "*pachamamismo*", see Stefanoni (2011) and Burman (2016b).
3. Depending on context, "*pacha*" may mean "time," "space," "season," "earth," or "cosmos"; see discussion below.

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CHAPTER 3

In Search of the Good Life: Promises and Challenges of *Buen Vivir* for Knowledge, Education, and Gender

Nelly P. Stromquist

Introduction

Over the past three decades, a new paradigm for human progress has been emerging in Latin America, the fruit of many years of political organization and mobilization of indigenous groups. It represents a vindication of the value of indigenous knowledge, practices, and world vision and is encapsulated in the concept of *buen vivir* (or living well, BV hereafter). That concept is being implemented in Ecuador and Bolivia and under discussion in Colombia, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Argentina (Secretaría del Buen Vivir, n.d.).[1]

BV offers an extremely rich and innovative definition of human improvement,[2] recognizing both indigenous identities and their contribution to a well-lived life. In Latin America, after having presented itself mostly as a hybrid society with a prevailing identity based on *mestizaje*, there is a growing social movement toward a clear recognition that most countries in the region comprise multiple ethnic groups

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and, consequently, should be considered plurinational states. David Choquehuanca, an Aymaran politician and intellectual from Bolivia, remarks with pride: “We are beings again, returning to our path, to recover and reconstruct what we have, our sovereignty ….” (cited in Téllez, 2011, 46). Exponents of BV make reference to “pre-Columbian” and “pre-colonial” cultures. Although some of the principles they invoke had been applied during the Inca Empire, that connection is not specified; many of these writers also allude to pre-Columbian civilizations in vague and homogenous terms.

BV’s philosophy reflects ideas from intellectuals in the indigenous movements in Latin America. Such ideas share positions of sociologists such as Ánibal Quijano (Peru), Orlando Fals Borda (Colombia), and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Portugal, with affective ties to Brazil), all of whom have expressed the conviction that dependence has been experienced not only along economic and political dimensions but also along knowledge lines, so knowledge must be “decolonized” (Germaná, 2010; Goldentul, 2012; Quijano, 1988, 2014). BV has also been supported by contributions from feminist economics, ecofeminism, and feminist theology (Gudynas & Acosta, 2011).

Quijano was among the first to assert that there had existed rationality in the Americas before the colonizers arrived, and he went on to propose an alternative epistemology, attuned to the experiences of the indigenous peoples of the region. Quijano’s (1988) writings endorse the feelings expressed by indigenist writers about “the joy of collective work, the freedom to implement decisions made by all, the efficacy of reciprocity.” He holds that for too long the debate about human betterment has centered on economic, social, and political problems, leaving aside cultural issues (Quijano, 1988; see also Pajuelo, 2002). Quijano (1988) recognizes the conflicting coexistence of cultural groups attached to different historical origins and sets the core problem of “development” as one of social liberation, which will require a transformation affecting both power and culture. Similar arguments are made by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007), who endorses the notion of “Southern epistemologies,” a term he deploys for the revaluing of scientific and non-scientific knowledge of classes and social groups in less industrialized regions of the world (Aguinaga, Lang, Mokrani, & Santillana, 2012).

BV rejects what it calls an “anthropocentric” approach of modernity, in which capitalism advocates an individualistic approach and socialism a collective approach, but both focused on the person (Balch, 2013;

Huanacuni, 2010; Solón, 2014). BV seeks instead deep engagement with the cosmology of indigenous peoples; a greater respect for nature ("mother" nature or *Pachamama*), which implies a life sensitive to the environment; and an endorsement of communitarian and solidaristic values, where the individual becomes less central than the collective interest. BV makes emphasis on the indigenous population of the Americas; yet, it also recognizes the contribution of other marginalized identities, such as peoples of Afro-descent and those of the Amazon.

The decolonization of knowledge means rejecting Western superiority, respecting cultural diversity, and applying indigenous knowledge (Gudynas, 2011), as opposed to the Euro-centric knowledge that has dominated the world. In this respect, BV advocates express a profound disappointment with capitalism given its continued generation of inequality and inequity (Lander, 2010). To achieve this, BV proposes a more articulated economic and social system, with greater links to community, culture, and nature, beyond current market and profit motivations. Obviously, the solid link between economic and social dimensions cannot be left entirely to the market. Therefore, BV requires a strong role for the state in enacting relevant legislation and providing the resources and the participatory mechanisms for decision making; the state is to engage in adequate distribution and redistribution of both income and national wealth (León, 2014). On the other hand, the recognition of multiple nations—the "plurinational state"—would require participation from the bottom up through local and regional governments (Aguinaga et al., 2012; Prado, 2012).

This chapter focuses on the *buen vivir* concept as it has been defined and carried into action in Ecuador and Bolivia—countries where public policy has attempted to implement it for at least eight years. Given BV's enormous promise and the potential of formal and nonformal education to help make it a reality, education becomes a central theme in the chapter. Progressive educators recognize education as a critical vehicle for social change, so it thus becomes indispensable not only to produce and disseminate knowledge regarding the philosophy and theory of BV but also because, as Daniel Mato (2016) notes, it can form the professional and technical human resources to develop the ideas and principles to guide BV-oriented proposals for social, economic, legal, and institutional reforms. The chapter also explores the promise and potential of BV concepts to improve society from a gender perspective. By now, there is a wide consensus that progress cannot take place without gender justice

and this requires the redefinition of gender roles and the democratization of spaces occupied by women and men. So, specifically, this chapter asks two questions: What roles does BV assign to education in the creation of a new social order? What does BV say and do for women?

To discuss the principles and scope of BV and to provide evidence of attainment so far in applying this concept, I rely on primary sources such as national plans, BV plans, and related governmental documents. These are complemented by articles and books on BV. In the following sections, content analysis of these documents focuses on selected issues dealing with the philosophy of BV and its application and consequences for gender and education.

BV's Philosophy in Official Documents and Discourse

The indigenous world vision emerges in the translation of BV as *sumak kawsay* (Quechua) in the case of Ecuador and *suma qamaña* (Aymara) in the case of Bolivia, both explicitly incorporated in the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador and the 2009 Constitution of Bolivia. In the Ecuadorian Constitution, *sumak kawsay* appears in 99 of its 444 articles (Acosta, 2010). Solón (2014) finds differences between the two Constitutions, with the one in Ecuador emphasizing rights to eliminate poverty and to produce an equitable distribution of resources and wealth, and the one in Bolivia embodying more a set of ethical principles.

Numerous dimensions of life are touched by this philosophy. The various values prescribing the way to conduct a good life comprise ethical principles associated with those that guided the Inca Empire and restore traditional ways of organizing life, such as the *aynu*, a collective form of mutual help. Great importance is attached to the values of solidarity, equality among diverse peoples, reciprocity among groups and persons, equal redistribution as needed, community obligations, and community authority (see also Quijano, 2010). Some writers argue that BV does not mean living better (*vivir mejor*) as this implies competition with others and consequently comes at someone else's cost (Caudillo, 2012). Others translate BV to mean "life in its fullest" and hence to emphasize the fundamental importance of life.[3]

A striking feature of BV is the link between a good life and the earth/environment. This link relates to nature is a new way, however, for BV is recognized as a *subject with rights* in the Constitutions of Ecuador

and Bolivia—a significant development in political theory and practice (Minteguiaga & Ubasart-González, 2015). A second striking feature of BV is that its demands for a good life turn fundamental material conditions such as health, food, water, housing, education, work, social security, healthy environment, and rest and leisure into *rights* that should be part of people's citizenship (Acosta, 2010).

BV seeks to go beyond production and work as the key axes of our existence. Eid and Aliaga (2013) highlight that two BV principles are harmony and reciprocity, the latter defined as acting collectively to help the community, particularly in terms of work. The BV view readily assumes harmony between individual and community, a harmony that makes it unnecessary to refer to individual preferences. Surely, it is critical that individuals relate well to their community, but what to do in cases they don't?

Ecuador produced a Buen Vivir National Plan 2013–2017 (Consejo Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo, 2013), a sophisticated and comprehensive document of 600 pages that presents a detailed diagnosis of many social and economic problems and offers policies and guidelines, as well as targets. The Plan has 12 objectives and two crosscutting themes: (1) environmental sustainability and (2) equity along gender, generational, intercultural, and territorial lines. Of the twelve objectives, Objective 2 seeks to increase the capacity and potential of all citizens; Objective 3 seeks to improve the quality of life of the population in general. For its part, Bolivia has also produced a voluminous plan (216 pages) seeking to integrate BV ideas into its national development actions. A reading of its National Development Plan 2010–2015 (Ministerio de Planificación del Desarrollo, 2010) reveals that the government acknowledges the crucial importance of BV and reaffirms Bolivia as a multiethnic and multicultural country. The Bolivian Plan also refers to three crosscutting themes: innovation, equity, and the environment. This document does not present a discussion of gender but simply refers to women as one of the groups "with greater levels of exclusion" and lists women among several other groups: "indigenous, women, *campesinos*, people with disability, children, adolescents, elders" (Ministerio de Planificación del Desarrollo, 2010). The second iteration of the Bolivian Plan for 2016–2020 continues to highlight the importance of BV, although there is little in the way of translating this concept to specific action.

BV and Gender

Two sets of documents shine light on how BV sees the question of gender: the national constitutions and plans, and the views presented by several BV writers. These documents refer to women but not to gender as a social phenomenon with its own contours and characteristics. In the Constitution of Ecuador (Gobierno de Ecuador, 2008), women appear as a "vulnerable group," alongside persons with disability, the elderly, and those who suffer from complex catastrophic disease (Article 47). Similarly, in the Constitution of Bolivia, women are identified as part of a long list of discriminated groups, thus, the reference "no discrimination on account of sex, color, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, origin, culture, nationality, citizenship, language, religious belief, ideology, political or philosophical affiliation" (Ministerio de la Presidencia, 2009, 33). The specificity of gender as a fundamental marker for social organization and domination is thus lost. On the other hand, Minteguiaga and Ubasart-González (2015) observe that the two Constitutions pay attention to the problems linked to unremunerated women's work.

Regarding women specifically, the Ecuadorian Constitution calls for: the elimination of inequality and discrimination of working women in access to means of production, the redistribution of privileges and goods and the elimination of inequalities in the access to production, and the guarantee of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in access to property and decision making to administer the "conjugal society" (Léon, 2010a). The Ecuadorian Constitution not only aims to redistribute land to include women but also to compensate them in some way for the non-remunerated work related to self-sustainment and caring conducted in the household. Further, it seeks to introduce greater reciprocity and dual responsibility between men and women in domestic work and family obligations (León, 2010a). The Ecuadorian BV National Plan has many references to gender discrimination, which suggests that this document sees gender as essentially caused by discrimination—a rather superficial understanding of gender as it confuses manifestation with cause. The BV National Plan considers it imperative to take gender into account in all efforts to foster cultural change, yet most proposed actions are limited to gender violence and domestic labor. The Plan assigns less than 150 words (116–117) to the discussion of gender, a discussion that centers on women's access to education, health, and jobs.

For its part, the Bolivian Constitution refers to the need not only to equality of opportunity for men and women but also to the need to "abolish masculine domination and demolish the patriarchal state" (Aguinaga et al., 2012). The 2016–2020 Economic and Social Development Plan of Bolivia (Ministerio de Planficación del Desarrollo, 2016) mentions the importance of indigenous women. Yet, little details are provided regarding possible actions and funds to be assigned to this concern.

According to some of the best-known exponents of BV in Ecuador, a relation of interdependence occurs "naturally" between men and women, a relation that is invoked under the principle of complementarity. For example, Atawallpa Oviedo (2013, 67) explains:

> [Complementary parity] means that there are opposite and contradictory forces but they do not repel each other but rather combine and complement each other. Thus between man and woman, day and night, up and down, right and left, visible and invisible, physical and spiritual.

A similar comment is made by Huanacuni, a Bolivian intellectual of Aymara descent and a high-level government official. Speaking further on the complementarity of men and women, he refers to the "man-woman relationship as an ever-lasting relationship, for which the community creates and supports the spousal relationship" (Huanacuni, 2010, 45). Moreover, he observes that "all that exists exists in pairs" (50).

But this view is not held by others. A woman Quechua leader from Ecuador, Blanca Chancoso, highlights the importance of the recovery of indigenous agricultural knowledge linked to festivities and rituals, noting that in Andean culture women play a strong role in agriculture as well as in household production and reproduction. Chancoso, however, remarks that indigenous women have been treated as an appendix to men and that complementarity cannot be invoked as a bastion for some and servitude for others (cited in Caudillo, 2012). Complementarity in the Andean context, in which there is a marked sexual division of labor and in which women devote much more hours to domestic and caring work than men (Vílchez & Arnillas, 2013), does not seem a principle that would foster gender egalitarian relations. The 2016–2020 Economic and Social Development Plan of Bolivia (Ministerio de Planificación del Desarrollo, 2016) does mention the importance of indigenous women, yet few details are provided regarding possible actions and funds to be

assigned to this concern. Another Ecuadorian document, focusing on the national agenda for women 2014–2017 (Consejo Nacional de Igualdad de Género, 2014), identifies 12 areas of work, among them changes in the "educational content that foster relations of equality and *complementarity*" (emphasis added).

BV and Education

The Ecuadorian BV National Plan 2013–2017 declares that it considers "cultural dialogue" the main expression of its pedagogical approach and use of the educational space; to this effect, it proposes the creation of "cultural houses" to promote intercultural and democratic dialogue throughout the country. This plan, unlike many nationwide plans in other countries, clearly identifies the responsible ministries for each of its multiple objectives and activities. In this context, what is remarkable is the limited role assigned to the Ministry of Education. Also remarkable is the absence of budget allocations in the plan for the attainment of the proposed objectives.

One of BV's proponents in Ecuador observes that education must be lifelong and engage the participation of the entire community in the teaching process (Huanacuni, 2010, 48). He offers a critique of conventional education, arguing that the role of education should be to "generate something more than a labor force." Huanacuni proposes the use of bilingual education, although it is not clear whether such education is proposed only for the indigenous and Afro-descendants, or for all.

The Ecuadorian BV National Plan identifies teachers and other professionals in the field of education as key actors in the construction of the new society. Likewise, the educational reform going on in Bolivia since 2006 explicitly recognizes teachers as "its most strategic leading card" to decolonize education (Lopez Cardozo, 2015). Teachers are to become "critical, auto-critical, reflexive, proactive, innovative professionals and researchers, who are dedicated to democracy, social transformation and the integral inclusion of all in society" (Lopez Cardozo, 2015). This reform does refer to pedagogical methods as it seeks to use progressive approaches such as popular education, building on Freire's *Pedagogy for Liberation* (Shor & Freire, 1987). This approach would engage problem-posing, critical dialogue, the transformation of teacher–student relations, and the incorporation of indigenous knowledge (Lopez Cardozo, 2015).

In Bolivia, the current Economic and Social Development Plan has as a key target the "developing and revaluing knowledge about cultures," indicating that such knowledge will call the active engagement of each indigenous nation, but offers no more details on the matter (Ministerio de Planificación del Desarrollo, 2016).

The Contours of Implementation: Moving from Principles and Discourse to Concrete Action

Both countries have put in place a number of administrative structures and policies to make BV a reality. Below we review some of them:

State Reconfiguration

In Ecuador, there have been a number of changes in the government bureaucracy, especially since the state has promised "to guide the economy through democratic planning" (León, 2010b). Here, the National Secretariat for Planning and Development has established five national councils within itself to steer work on social equality, one of them being the Council for Women and Gender Equality (Secretaría Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo, n.d.). There are some elements, however, that a state reconfiguration cannot easily resolve. For instance, who speaks for and represents nature? The approach being followed in Ecuador is that nature and similar interests are best represented through ombudsmen, as in *Defensoría del Ambiente* and *Defensoría para la Interpelación de Ciudadanos*. But what assurance is there about the legitimacy of these appointed (not elected) officials? And will they take into account views that might not be consensual? (Barié, 2014).

Ecuador has also produced a National Agenda for Women and Gender Equality 2014–2017. It has 12 educational guidelines, dealing with gender and *complementary* (sic) relations and the control and punishment of sexual harassment, as well as the incorporation of issues dealing with right-based approaches, gender approaches, and sexual and reproductive rights in pre-service and in-service teacher training. This plan also makes critical observations about time differences in non-remunerated work between men and women, noting that women work (2012 data) 31.48 hour per week while men work 9.09 hours on related tasks. This observation is not followed by a concomitant set of

corrective actions, nor does the plan indicate how these guidelines will be translated into action and by whom. On the other hand, the Finance Ministry of Ecuador has set up a Gender Equity Unit, whose purpose it is to "propose measures to sensitize, make visible, and promote gender equity in public policies" (Lugo, 2010).

Ecuador has also established a National Directorate of Education for Democracy and Buen Vivir. According to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education:

> Education and *Buen Vivir* interact in two ways: On one hand, the right to education is an essential component of BV because it allows the development of human potential and thus it guarantees equal opportunity for all. On the other hand, *Buen Vivir* is an essential axis of education inasmuch as the educational process must consider the preparation of future citizens, with values and knowledge to foster the country's development. (Ministerio de Educación, n.d.)

Concomitantly, there have been improvements in the conditions of Ecuadorian teachers as teachers' salaries increased on average 6.3% from US$1005 in 2013 to US$1141 in 2016 (Consejo Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo, 2013), an amount slightly lower than the average for Latin American teachers. Also, the portion of the GDP going to education increased from 2.5% in 2006 to over 5% in 2013 (Baxter, 2016).

Lopez Cardozo (2015) finds that the past precarious living conditions of teachers remain precarious and not conducive to their assigned transformative role. In his view, teachers in Ecuador continue to earn low salaries, receive limited pedagogical support, must often have multiple jobs to support their families, and even lack information about the new education reform. Moreover, the *normales* (teaching training institutes) are perceived to be conservative institutions that engage mostly in traditional teaching styles (Lopez Cardozo, 2015).

In Bolivia, the government seems to have undergone more extensive transformation than in Ecuador. In 2016, Bolivia invested 8.3% of its GDP in education, making it the second highest in Latin America (Granma, 2016). There is now a Vice-Ministry for Decolonization, and within this vice-ministry, there is a Depatriarchalization Unit (patriarchy being a key manifestation of the power against which the feminist movement continues to struggle). However, those occupying this unit

have views that are not always compatible with notions of women's autonomy held in other parts of the world. Elisa Vega, the head of the Depatriarchalization Unit, states: "All in nature is *chacha-warmi* and has its own equilibrium" (Vega, 2012, 260). She goes on to explain that in Aymara *chacha* means hombre and *warmi* mujer, and asserts that this requires "parity, the complementarity among the genders." While few proponents of social justice would question the principle of parity between men and women, the notion of complementarity would be strongly challenged, as it represents a return to the old view that men and women have or should have fixed social roles. Bolivia has also established an ombudsman office for Mother Earth (*Defensoría de la Madre Tierra*). It would be interesting to examine how this office deals with the concept of gender.

As noted earlier, Bolivia's National Development Plan 2010–2015 gave scant treatment to gender. A successor plan, the Economic and Social Development Plan 2016–2020 (Ministerio de Planificación del Desarrollo, 2016, 4), states that "BV [implies] valuing and the role of women, particularly indigenous ancestral women," but the document does not further develop this idea. In the area of education, the new Plan seeks the expansion and improvement of school facilities, the reduction of dropout rates, and the provision of basic education for all to be reached by 2020. It mentions that it will work toward hiring more trained teachers and a curriculum revision that reflects the culture and knowledge of each indigenous nation within the country.[4] No details about the actions to be taken and the financial resources that the education sector would require for these particular efforts are identified.

Changes in the Education System

It might be pertinent at this point to reflect on what the education system would have to do to facilitate the implementation of BV principles, particularly those addressing gender. As D. Walsh (2011) reminds us, the process of social change requires not only women's participation in political office but also men's willingness to promote gender justice. Such willingness might be fostered through the incorporation of men in programs and courses dealing with family planning, sexuality, family management, sexuality. Lugo (2010) supports this strategy and observes that seeking to mainstream gender and environmental concerns implies enabling an understanding of public servants about gender equity, in

addition to their understanding of the standard operational and administrative procedures and skills.

Learning for the purpose of prompting social change requires what Mezirow (1978) has called transformative learning—a term he uses to refer to substantial changes in the way individuals perceive and understand their social world. Unsurprisingly, transformative learning is not easy. Taylor (2007, 179), after examining 41 peer-reviewed journals dealing with transformative learning, came to the conclusion that a critical element in transformative learning is the establishment of relations with others, as it is "trustful relationships that allow individuals to have questioning discussions, share information openly and achieve mutual and consensual understanding." He also found that essential to this process is the constant exercise of peer interaction and the equalization of power in the classroom. Two observations are pertinent to BV: (1) The creation of a multicultural, multiethnic society would require that the process of cultural learning be a two-way process to include not only the indigenous people who need to learn more about their respective cultures and value them, but also the dominant groups of society (the mestizos and the white) who must learn about and respect such cultures. (2) Transformative learning applied to gender implies discussion of structural inequalities and the avoidance of a narrow definition of lifelong learning that focuses on the marketplace and situates gender as a complex variable within the broader discourse of education for inclusion (Gouthro, 2007). Lugo (2010) remarks that, unfortunately, gender still appears in social agendas (health, education, social inclusion), but not in economic, technological, and cultural areas.

Both Ecuador and Bolivia are intensifying their bilingual education programs. However, it is not clear whether the new curriculum applies to all students or represents an expanded version of something that has been traditionally reserved for the indigenous population and primarily for those living in rural areas. Bolivia has created a Vice-Ministry for Alternative and Special Education (in which the units for adult education and lifelong learning are located). According to the vice-minister at that time, the intention was to carry out "a deep transformation of the conception and implementation of the curricula" (Aguirre, 2010, 16). The available documentation on BV does not provide much information as to what is actually happening either through formal education or through adult education.

Changes in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

Again, it should be remembered that any process of social change relying on the educational system (as it should) requires particular attention to the higher education levels. And here we encounter significant patterns that may not be conducive to the incorporation of indigenous knowledge. HEIs in Latin America have traditionally ignored—if not held in contempt—indigenous knowledge, even in aspects with indisputable benefits for all such as medicine, decision making, jurisprudence, economics (Mato, 2016). Mato terms HEIs in the region "monocultural organizations" that emphasize the sciences (*cientifismo*) and dismiss new forms of knowledge (Mato, 2009, 2016). According to Mato (2013), this position generates two problems: It impedes any understanding of other forms of knowledge and professional practices, and it shapes the legitimation of knowledge in ways that exclude possibilities of knowledge exchange, learning, and participation in several important social dynamics.

Mato (2009), an expert in higher education and indigenous groups, has made four observations: (1) Most universities in Latin America have been insensitive to cultural diversity in their programs and curricula, (2) the participation of indigenous and Afro-descendant students in HEIs is very limited, (3) the training of bilingual/intercultural educators occurs in only a handful of universities, and (4) there are very few instances of joint projects between universities and communities working on BV. More recently, Mato (2016) found that few HEIs in Latin America form intercultural educators. He also makes the insightful observation (2009) that programs that tie the university to its surrounding community are called "extension programs," a term that denotes a unidirectional movement of knowledge from the university toward the outside and not the mutual interplay of knowledge formation between university and community. This state of affairs suggests that institutions of higher education must be a prime target for the successful implementation of BV and that the task of intercultural education needs urgent redefinition to include interculturalism as a subject of study for all social groups, not just the ethnic minorities.

In Bolivia, through presidential decree, three Intercultural Indigenous Community Universities have been created (to serve each of the main indigenous languages—Aymara, Quechua, Guarani) (Mato, 2015).

In Ecuador, Mato (2016) identified only one university that provided BV-related training—the Amawtay Wasi University, which came into being at the request of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador—a major BV political actor. This university functioned from 2005 to 2013 but, reflecting the still unresolved tension between definitions of academic knowledge and indigenous knowledge, it was terminated when the national government suspended its funding because it failed to meet conventional academic standards (Mato, 2016).

Evaluation Pressures

Faced with a world that increasingly calls for accountability (though more a sign of symbolic performance than actual accomplishment), and with accountability generally measured in terms of quantitative indicators, it is not easy to measure advances in the implementation of BV. This is exemplified in a request made by the Bolivian government to the World Bank (specifically to its unit called South-South Facility) to help in the identification of relevant indicators. The World Bank responded by organizing video and in-person conferences with government officials from Bhutan, Ecuador, and Mexico (World Bank, n.d.), countries the World Bank felt could provide useful referents. The selection of these three countries, according to the World Bank, was guided by Bhutan's pioneering experience in measuring and monitoring happiness, Mexico's experience in the design and implementation of a multidimensional poverty index, and Ecuador's design and implementation of procedures for measuring and monitoring multidimensional well-being. New meetings are being planned. It should be observed, however, that Mexico's educational indicators are limited and concentrate on measuring student repetition. These activities suggest lack of clarity of the BV concept among Bolivian government officials. One thing that seems evident to some observers (including myself) is that the complex dynamics called for in BV will need a detailed narrative of multiple events and interactive forces that cannot be reduced to a common set of discrete quantitative indicators. Values and attitudes are not captured by conventional indicators (Walsh, 2010). Indeed, how do you assess solidarity? Respect for the Other? The extent of social cohesion? All of these processes are dynamic, linked to or affecting other manifestations and events, and evolving in nature.

Challenges

Some positive trends can be observed so far. The Human Development Index moved from 0.66 in 1980 to 0.72 in 2012 in Ecuador (Consejo Nacional de Planificación y Desarrollo, 2013) and from 0.49 to 0.66 in Bolivia in the same period (UNDP, 2013). Investment in education has considerably increased in both countries, although indigenous populations continue to register very low levels of secondary school completion and limited access to higher education. Nonetheless, these core indicators—the Gini coefficient and the proportion of the GDP assigned to education—signal an improved condition for disadvantaged groups. But serious gaps between principle and policy, and between discourse and action have been detected by several observers. Below we explore the most important conceptual, practical, and material challenges.

The Deep Roots of the Economic and Political Status Quo

In both countries, there has been a stagnation and even reversal of promised rights. Schavelzon (2015) presents evidence that indigenous groups have lost the right to prior consent in the exploitation of natural resources. He also notes that progress has been very limited in agrarian reform, the provision of microcredit, and the creation of community enterprises (Schavelzon, 2015)—all policies that could substantially improve the conditions of indigenous groups. Both Ecuador and Bolivia now authorize the use of genetically modified seeds, which a few years ago had been prohibited (Schavelzon, 2015); while potentially increasing production, this policy clearly goes against the core BV principle of respecting nature.

Radcliffe (2012) notes that "land redistribution barely features in the [Ecuadorian] Constitution and the National Development Plan" (Radcliffe, 2012, 247). She interprets this as a reluctance by the state to cede autonomy and territorial rights to ethnic groups, despite their being recognized as legitimate nations. But it is difficult to make drastic changes when 118 large economic groups generate about 48% of the GDP (Caría & Domínguez, 2016). In Bolivia, similar resistance has been expressed by established economic interests (primarily in the eastern part of the country) and by some indigenous groups themselves (Kohl, 2010). Speaking from Bolivia, Chambi Mayta (2015, 31) warns us that it is easy to fall into an "idealized and essentialist" vision of the

indigenous population, in which placid family/community relations unfold. He reports that indigenous communities often use child labor in trade and agricultural tasks; more ominously, he observes that the Government of Bolivia in 2015 reduced the minimum age for employment to 10–12 years, despite ILO's recommendation that Bolivia respect the standard definition of 14 years of age. According to Chambi Mayta, child labor is often used to peel chickens and to produce plaster. In both Ecuador and Bolivia, indigenous groups are engaged in practices dealing with the exploitation of mineral and forestry resources that harm the environment but are a form of economic survival. (Similar practices have been found among indigenous groups in the Peruvian Amazon.) There are also reports of clashes between the government and indigenous groups over land issues in Bolivia and oil exploitation in Ecuador. Both countries generate most of their revenues through the export of raw materials; the state itself thus is also implicated in substantial exploitation of natural resources.

Education as a Core Ideological Force

Judging from the terminology used by BV proponents, it is evident that indigenous people do not seek merely *multi*culturalism (defined as the understanding of multiple cultures) but rather *interculturalism*, which means dialogue and interaction among all cultures, which is necessary for cultures to enjoy equal value. There are now complaints by ethnic leaders in both Ecuador and Bolivia that the government does not have specific policies to benefit indigenous people and that bilingual education seeks to make education homogeneous, "leaving aside the pedagogical, cultural and linguistic specificity of our people" (Kowii, 2014, speaking for Ecuador). There is also a clear government reluctance to deepen changes in the curriculum that would help them. Also in the case of Ecuador, Morocho (2012) remarks that the Bilingual Education Unit in the Ministry of Education saw its "investment budget" cut in half. A more ominous development was the government's dissolution of the National Union of Educators (UNE; the largest teachers' union in Ecuador) in August 2016, in retaliation to teachers' protests against what they saw as violation of their rights.

Minteguiaga (2012) identifies as key educational challenges not only the revaluing of non-colonial languages and the introduction of new values related to BV but also how to bring together public and private

education so that the latter does not contribute to social inequality. The consideration of both public and private education, in my view, is enormously important. Ideological changes—the formation of new subjectivities and new ways to interpret the world—are extremely difficult to accomplish, both from the perspective of the individual and from the perspective of the society where such change would occur. One scholar deeply familiar with events in Allende's Chile (Farrell, 1986) considers that a turning point against the emerging socialist regime was the proposal to have a single, public education system. The educational content has to play a significant part in the production and communication of new values. This makes it extremely urgent to change the debate from school access (still problematic in Ecuador and Bolivia) to questions of knowledge content (curriculum) and teacher preparation to deliver such knowledge. Can teachers serve as change agents merely through invoking their role as such? Teachers in the Latin American region in general face low pay and limited recognition as professionals. Their explicit role as change agents will require changing the teacher training institutions as well as providing them with renewed knowledge and constant support. In formal education, the system will have to go beyond parity to include curriculum content and democratic practices in the school and the classroom. Under what conditions can this happen? What is happening thus far?

Examining the Ecuadorian educational context, Baxter (2016) finds a major tension between quality and participation, meaning between (1) setting standards (i.e., benchmarks for teaching quality) and teacher evaluation procedures and (2) having a dialogue with the teachers union. He finds considerable tension also between centralizing educational policy-making and enabling indigenous communities and nations to have a greater say in running their schools. Under President Correa, the government has increased the percentage of GDP going to education. It also abolished fees for textbooks and uniforms in public education. But Correa has been charged with excessive centralism and the new curriculum standards do not include such values as solidarity, cooperation, and mutual respect (Baxter, 2016).

The Resistance to Change in Gender Relations

One challenge will be how to introduce a gender perspective into the national plans. Radcliffe (2008), a researcher well acquainted with Ecuador, makes the observation that the government has engaged in

parallel routes and discourses: one for gender and another for race. The juxtaposition of gender and ethnicity will be imperative for the successful application of BV. Among adult women (and among secondary students as well), it will be imperative to expand the curriculum beyond discussing violence against women and how to reduce it. Moreover, BV will need to open a discussion regarding what gender means for *all women*, given cultural expectations regarding their roles as mothers and wives, expectations that limit career possibilities and autonomy and that seem particularly inflexible among indigenous groups. How can the modern features of women's autonomy be maintained or instilled in light of the respect for traditional values that might restrict women's freedom to be and to choose? To attain a wider and deeper use of education—both formal and nonformal—so as to generate new values congruent with the BV and at the same time make these values compatible with women's well-being is a complex task that will call for the participation of women's organizations. It would then be logical to provide women's organizations with the financial resources needed for them to consolidate and to engage in multiple fronts as required to advance visible change in laws and economic and social policies and practices. At this moment, reference to women's organizations is very weak in the national plans and overall agendas in Ecuador and Bolivia.

Blending the Present with the Past

While some BV principles assume the character of a society long gone, most BV advocates deny that the concept seeks a return to idealized pre-Columbian times. Two traditions explicitly mentioned in BV writings refer to the Andean values embodied in the *ayni* and the *ayllu*. The *ayni* (also known as *minga*) concerns reciprocity or mutual help, by which the community offers aid to a family in agricultural activities or house construction. The *ayllu* refers to extended family groups held together by kinship and territorial ties. But how do you engage in community work when many young people are moving from the rural areas to the cities? Modernity, despite its flaws and excesses, did bring freedom to the individual. How many indigenous women would subscribe to the BV notion of complementarity between the genders today?

Several writers remark that the presence of a political will becomes essential to the success of BV (Artaraz & Calestani, 2015; León, 2010b). Radcliffe (2012, 248) reminds us that needed in Ecuador is the

"political will and intellectual capacity required for overcoming postcolonial exclusions" (Kohl, 2010, also mentions the limited state capacity to undertake reform). Similar comments could be made about Bolivia. Caría and Domínguez (2016, 27) seem to dismiss the difficulties of implementation when they charge that the Ecuadorian government is using BV as an ideology to "legitimize measures in clear contradictions to its principles." This charge diminishes the historic trajectory of indigenous groups in reclaiming their rights and identities. We have to be aware that bureaucracies face major challenges in steering the state toward social change. Often, fundamental ideas and principles are lost in translation from idea/principle to actual action. This highlights the importance of well-prepared civil servants in the further specification of laws and guidelines. The call for World Bank assistance by Bolivian officials cited above does not suggest solid understanding of BV on their part.

All utopias encounter naysayers, generally those who demand immediate change. It is well known that the more radical the policy change sought, the longer amount of time and the more difficulties it takes to implement it (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1989). Yet important symbolic triumphs have accompanied the BV movement. The right of indigenous people to language, education, and identity is now present in the constitutions of 15 Latin American countries (Mato, 2015) and BV receives much attention in the global social forums held throughout the world.[5] These are not minor accomplishments. What is needed now is a greater critical spirit and the openness to acknowledge and resolve contradictions and tensions. The role of education—both formal and nonformal—for its great potential to form social conscience must receive the attention concomitant with its expected task. And so must the question of gender, if a true democracy is to be achieved.

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Notes

1. While Ecuador uses the term *Buen Vivir*, Bolivia prefers *Vivir Bien*. For simplification purposes, I will refer to both as BV.
2. BV contains a critique of "development" and argues that "progress" has meant primarily the imposition of Western values. In this chapter, I use the

term development to mean betterment of social arrangements along multiple dimensions, from advances to lengthen human life to those that make our existence less laborious and painful.

3. Thirteen principles have been identified for BV in Ecuador. They address how to engage in a proper physical and spiritual way in everyday functions such as how to eat, drink, dance, sleep, work, meditate, think, love and be loved, listen, speak, dream, walk, and give/receive (Huanacuni, 2014).
4. Bolivia recognizes 36 indigenous nations. Ecuador recognizes 14 ethnic groups (including Afro-descendants) as nations.
5. It is noteworthy that Argentina—a Latin American country notorious for its self-identification as primarily European and also for massive extermination of its indigenous groups—has seen the mobilization of indigenous women (now organized in 36 nations) in country-wide marches in favor of BV in April 2015 and April 2016.

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CHAPTER 4

"Never Again a Mexico Without Us": Education and Indigenous Autonomy Struggles in Mexico

Bruno Baronnet and Richard Stahler-Sholk

Introduction

The Zapatista rebellion of 1 January 1994—the day NAFTA went into effect—inaugurated a process of building autonomy in many indigenous communities in Mexico's southeastern state of Chiapas, in resistance against the neoliberal state. What started as an armed rebellion quickly morphed into a social movement, rooted in local realities but resonating with widening circles of national and international supporters, in an example of the network politics characterizing the new ways of organizing in the era of globalization. Autonomy in a variety of forms has been a notable feature of many contemporary movements in Latin America (Gabriel & López y Rivas, 2005), particularly in indigenous communities, and the Zapatista variant has been built around de facto autonomy—not asking permission to be free—rather than the negotiation of quotas of power with existing state authorities. The Zapatista practice

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of autonomy has included replacing the central government's education system with alternative, community-controlled education (alongside autonomous health care, administration of justice, governance, promotion of sustainable and collective models of production, etc.). The participatory process of building autonomy has itself been a didactic one, creating spaces for community members to learn by doing while at the same time offering an example that has served as an inspiration for other movements. This chapter will explore both the *political pedagogy* of the Zapatista movement's alternative community schools and the *pedagogical politics* represented by the larger praxis of exercising de facto autonomy.

We will address three aspects of this process. First, we consider how the Zapatista movement in effect breaks down the classroom walls to recognize explicitly the integral connection between school and the lived experience of the community, conceiving education as part of the participatory process of social transformation. Second, we examine the content and organization of Zapatista autonomous education and its key role in the formation of new social subjects. Third, we argue that this alternative model of education reinforces cultural and political identity, as a strategic component of the project of claiming rights (including land and territory) and reconfiguring social spaces in ways that directly challenge the individualistic neoliberal model of education and society.

The School Is the Community

"Educate to liberate," in the vision of Paulo Freire (2000a, 2000b), implies erasing the artificial divisions between school and community, recognizing the crucial importance of social context in the learning process. It entails conceiving of education as a collective project to create a society rooted in one's culture and values of justice, that is, a tool for the transformation of social reality. In Mexico, the indigenous struggles that nourish the construction of various forms of political autonomy have proven to be powerful vectors of socio-educational transformation. How can these struggles contribute to redefining the production of knowledge and the education of indigenous peoples? The principles and actions of the families of indigenous peasants that form the base of the Zapatista movement underscore the idea that "the school is the community":

> We don't want a school that is just books, classrooms, teachers, and kids, we want to see and struggle for the school to be the entire community,

> because the community is where the people's knowledge and their truth are. We want all members of the collective to become the school and to grow. The school is the community because it educates us since the time we are little, and as our parents say, it tells us how to do the right thing. That's why together the whole community should make education, so we will be respected by all and it will be useful to all. (Autonomous Rebel Municipality Ricardo Flores Magón, 2001)

This excerpt from an educational project in the Lacandon Jungle reflects the applied pedagogical practices inspired by the autonomy movement inaugurated on 1 January 1994 with the uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in the state of Chiapas, southeastern Mexico.

Across Latin America, pedagogical struggles are not just about the curriculum and educational policies of the state, but also the direct action practices of creating and implementing alternative educational models from below, often within reconfigured social spaces (Zibechi, 2012) and within social movements themselves, which are increasingly focusing on horizontalism in their own practices (Stahler-Sholk, 2014). Such experiences include not only the EZLN (Baronnet, 2008, 2012), but also Latin America's largest social movement, the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST) with its cadre school and the innovative pedagogies applied on lands recovered from wealthy landowners (Pinheiro Barbosa, 2015). Other examples across the region include "pedagogy from below" practiced by the *Universidad de la Tierra* (Unitierra) (University of the Land) in Oaxaca and Chiapas, Mexico, the *Escuela Política de Mujeres Pazíficas* in Cali, Colombia, the *Comités de Tierra Urbana* (CTU) in Venezuela, and the *Revolución de los Pingüinos* (Penguins' Revolution) of high school students in Chile, and the growing "solidarity economy" movement, all examples of what Sara Motta calls epistemological counter-hegemonies from below (Motta & Cole, 2014; Motta & Esteves, 2014).

A noteworthy feature of contemporary Latin American social movements is their emphasis on radical/participatory democracy and horizontalism in movement dynamics. Today's movements do not just strategize to take over existing political institutions in the old left tradition, but rather they start immediately engaging in a different, transformative set of practices within society. This kind of "prefigurative politics"—being the change you want to see in the world, as Gandhi put it—is not new,

but is spreading in the alterglobalization movements of recent decades (Dinerstein, 2015; Maeckelbergh, 2011), celebrating community and diversity in resistance against the atomizing and homogenizing effects of global capitalism. The Zapatistas did leave open the door to a dialogue with the state following the 1994 uprising, negotiating the San Andrés accords on indigenous rights and culture that were signed with the Mexican government in February 1996.[1]

However, it quickly became clear that the government's interpretation was based on what Hale (2002) calls "neoliberal multiculturalism," acknowledging ethnic diversity without actually conceding real rights of communities to make decisions in their own territories. Taking this as a teachable moment, the Zapatistas organized a "March of the Color of the Earth" in 2001, touring the country to connect with other grassroots struggles in a caravan that culminated in an historic address by EZLN Commander Esther to the Mexican Congress. The government ignored these voices and implemented their own version of an autonomy law that was widely rejected by indigenous groups across the country. The Zapatistas meanwhile did not wait for authorization, rejecting the centralized and top-down model of political power and instead proceeding to implement de facto autonomy throughout their zones of influence, creating their own structures and practices of governance, education, health, ecology, administration of justice, and women's rights (Baronnet, Mora Bayo, & Stahler-Sholk, 2011).

Alternative education has become literally a matter of survival for the Zapatistas, as the government's so-called low-intensity warfare strategy is aimed at undermining the sense of identity and community that gave rise to the social subjects of the insurrection. The state's counterinsurgency strategy has involved a combination of military intimidation and showering resources on the previously neglected indigenous communities of Chiapas. Non-Zapatistas receive social programs such as health and education, handouts of cash and materials, and the promise of legal titling of any lands they seize from Zapatistas. The intent is to foment division and communal conflict which then creates a rationale for further militarization, and even to undermine indigenous-peasant identity, as those who accept the "aid" abandon their traditional *milpas* (subsistence corn cultivation) in favor of handouts and wage labor. To confront this strategy, the Zapatistas have declared themselves "in resistance," by which they mean that their support base communities refuse all government assistance and reject participation in official programs in order to preserve

cultural autonomy and local control. This includes local control over the production of knowledge, rejecting intrusions ranging from biopiracy to state-imposed schemes of "intercultural" education (Rockwell, 2010). Through their daily, evolving exercise of autonomy, the Zapatistas are constructing what Forbis (2016) calls "insurgent indigenous identity," producing and validating alternative "ways of knowing" (Hale & Stephen, 2013; Walsh, 2012), in effect decolonizing the hegemonic identity imposed by the officially "pluricultural" Mexican nation-state (Mora Bayo, 2008).

The Zapatistas' own autonomous schools, which we will discuss in more detail in the next section, aim at giving children the psychological tools to resist low-intensity warfare and reinforce their sense of belonging to the collective construction of autonomy (Núñez Patiño, 2013; Rico Montoya, 2014). In addition to the pedagogy within the schools themselves, the movement has created new roles—particularly for youth, and also gradually breaking down gender barriers—to serve the community as "promoters" of education (Baronnet, 2008, 2013), community-oriented health care that recovers ancestral knowledge of herbal medicine (Forbis, 2006), agroecology (Gómez Bonilla, 2015), human rights defenders (Speed, 2008), etc. All of this involves a kind of continuing education, with a constant cycling of community members through training workshops that build up political awareness as "militant capital" (Poupeau & Matonti, 2004) and break down the artificial walls between school and community. The autonomous structures of self-governance in the movement also serve a didactic purpose. Direct participatory assemblies choose leaders at the community (village) level; representatives to autonomous municipal councils; and since 2003, a pool elected for 3-year terms from each autonomous municipality to serve rotating shifts of anywhere from ten days to a month on the Good Governance Councils (*Juntas de Buen Gobierno*) in each of five regional self-governance centers known as Caracoles (González Casanova, 2005). The "promoters" and members of these governing structures are all unpaid, requiring each community to come to consensus on how the community will contribute with labor or foodstuffs to support those who need to attend workshops or otherwise spend time and resources in service to the community. This practice, and the rotation of responsibilities, gives everyone a chance to learn new skills and leadership without losing their organic ties to the community. Like the practices of the Brazilian MST, this participatory model of direct democracy makes the movement itself into a kind of

school (Piñeyro Nelson, 2015; Starr, Martínez-Torres, & Rosset, 2011) in which teaching, learning, and community progress are everyone's shared responsibility.

From the moment of the 1 January 1994 uprising, the Zapatistas differed from the old vanguardist model. Rather than impose a party line for others to follow, they invited others in solidarity to define their own autonomy by a process they called *caminar preguntando*, walking and questioning. They launched a series of bold outreach initiatives to create the space for open-ended discussion that was being strangled by the neoliberal state: a National Democratic Convention in the Lacandon jungle in August 1994, an Encounter against Neoliberalism and for Humanity in July 1996, an Encounter of Zapatista Women with the Women of the World in December 2007/January 2008, a series of subsequent "encounters" and consultations, and a civic Zapatista Front for National Liberation, among others. Another network convened in 1996 but by no means controlled by the Zapatistas was the *Congreso Nacional Indígena*, CNI. Under the slogan "Never Again a Mexico without Us," the National Indigenous Congress (CNI) for the first time provides a common platform for the country's more than 60 indigenous groups.

In connecting with a national and international "neo-Zapatista movement" (Leyva Solano, 1998), they were acting as what Johnston (2000) called "pedagogical guerrillas," building "revolutionary counterpublics" in the Habermasian sense (Fraser, 1990). If an encounter against neoliberalism convened by Maya communities in the jungles of Chiapas sounds improbable, it is worth noting that the 1994 Zapatista uprising served as an inspiration for one of the major early battles of the alterglobalization movement, the massive protest at the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Seattle in 1999. Countering the dominant neoliberal model of globalization from above, the Zapatista movement is part of a global network of "pedagogies of resistance" (Jaramillo & Carreon, 2014) in which movements learn and share their analysis and strategies, occupying public space in defiance of the agendas of the state and capital and practicing alternative values and social relations in those spaces.

Two of the Zapatistas' pedagogical outreach efforts merit special mention. In June 2005, the Zapatistas issued the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (EZLN, 2005), outlining their anticapitalist and radically democratic principles. They invited anyone from the national and international civil society who shared this outlook to sign on as "Adherents" to the Sixth Declaration and to apply these principles in

their own organizing spaces. They held a series of open forums in their territories and then sent a delegation on a national tour to discuss these principles in public meetings, an initiative they called the "Other Campaign" as a pointed contrast to the Mexican presidential election campaign of 2006 in which the political elite offered the usual choreographed presentation of a pre-packaged platform.

As in January 1994 when the massive mobilization of civil society made it too politically costly for the government to crush the rebellion by direct use of military force, the grassroots energy and participation along the route of the Other Campaign thwarted the government's initial effort to simply repress this creative exercise of what Giroux (2003) has called "public pedagogy." The inclusive nature of this Chautauqua-like mobile adult education caravan created a unique experiential opportunity for people across Mexico to learn from the experiment in autonomy that had been launched by indigenous communities in the remote southeast corner of the country (Harvey, 2005a; Mora Bayo, 2007). The pedagogy was not even limited by national borders, as Adherents to the Sixth Declaration in other parts of the world took up the invitation to create their own autonomous spaces (Zugman, 2008; Dellacioppa, 2009). The government ultimately deflected the momentum of the tour in 2006 with heavyhanded repression of Adherents and other dissident groups (notably in San Salvador Atenco near Mexico City, and in Oaxaca), but the lessons and experience were not lost on participants in the Other Campaign. In October 2016, perhaps in a new twist on the notion of an Other Campaign, the Zapatistas together with the CNI announced that indigenous communities across the country would convene a "permanent assembly" of consultations to choose an indigenous woman to run in Mexico's 2018 presidential election; clarifying that this was "not for power, which we do not seek," but rather to "call on all of the originary peoples and civil society to organize."[2]

Another creative exercise of pedagogical politics was the "Zapatista Little School of Freedom." Beginning in its first phase in summer of 2013, the Zapatistas opened up their communities and homes to Adherents from around the country and the world. Students in the *Escuelita* spent a week with a Zapatista family, working in the fields or grinding corn alongside the family members as they went about their daily chores, then studying the movement in the evening by reading four text booklets[3] consisting of a compilation of narratives by Zapatistas about their experience of autonomy, including one volume focusing on

women in the movement (Escuelita Zapatista, 2013). Students had the opportunity to discuss the material with their host family and with an assigned Zapatista "guardian," usually a young person from another community and often an education promoter who was also tasked with interpreting between Spanish and the local indigenous language. Sessions of the *Escuelita*, which were later repeated in various formats, gave participants a window into the everyday reality of the movement (Zibechi, 2013a, 2013b). Perhaps more importantly, the preparations of the host communities and guardians themselves, including the writing of the texts, constituted a pedagogical space for the first generation growing up entirely within the movement to learn and teach (mutually reinforcing activities) about autonomy.

The Zapatista Schools: An Education to Build Autonomy

The consolidation of alternative school organization is sustained by the collective efforts of members of each of the Zapatista communities in Chiapas. These are mainly subsistence communities that strive for self-sufficiency, and they do not always manage easily to recruit local youth to be educators in each village "in resistance" (i.e., refusing government aid). Another challenge is that women and the elderly in the community do not always regularly attend meetings dedicated to education as consistently as men who are parents. However, both women and the elderly in the communities place high value on a curriculum for building autonomy, which they simply call "teaching the truth," such as stories, locally rooted and relevant knowledge and cultural values, as well as ethical codes and standards of conduct. This approach validates for schoolchildren the knowledge derived from everyday life and the collective imaginaries of the Zapatista support bases.

Through assemblies, the organized communities learn new capacities to participate actively in decision making on local school policy. Education came to be appropriated by the communities through collective action, as they saw the necessity of implementing alternatives to the official education system of the "bad government."[4] Dating back to before the uprising, the 1993 First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle included education among a list of 11 Zapatista demands.[5] The demand for education was understood to mean having their own community-based schooling processes originating in the cooperative aspirations of Mayan peasants (Baronnet, 2015). Abraham, a member of the Good

Government Councils of the Rebel Municipality (MAREZ) San Juan de la Libertad (La Realidad), relates that:

> At that time, before '94, already we had the idea of taking education of the people, for the people and by the people. They are ideas that have been emerging since before, but could not materialize in any way because there were official schools of the "bad government," and that idea was gradually nourished and for several years was kept in reserve. Then in 1994 our public demands came out, one is education, but only in words, there was only our demand for education but there was no recipe for how to start, how we will build that education of the people. (Escuelita Zapatista, 2013, 16)

To generate their own system of "real" education, the first task of the new Zapatista autonomous municipal council members between 1995 and 2001 was to dismiss and replace the "official teachers" with youth support base members to serve as "education promoters." The promoters began to alphabetize children between 5 and 12 years and were trained as multilingual educators in municipal centers in the autonomous regions. Little autonomous schools proliferated in all regions of Zapatista influence, generated through the autonomous municipalities, with endogenous processes for training young teachers by non-professional educators and experienced Mayan *campesinos* (peasants) in the different *Caracoles*. The pedagogical teams in Zapatista communities experiment and learn from each other innovative ways to articulate cultural knowledge that are politically significant and subjectively relevant for families of indigenous activists and peasants. Parents and grandparents value positively that children learn to be more confident, and that they learn the history of the colonization of the Jungle and collective rights of peoples. Learning to defend themselves is an objective that families consider essential (Rico Montoya, 2013), as self-esteem helps to decipher the practices and cosmovision of life in the *kaxlán* (white) world, through processes of intercultural collaboration and mutual learning (Arcos, 2013).

Education promoters focus on the 11 demands of the Zapatista movement as themes that are generators of knowledge in the Freireian sense. From the perspectives of Zapatista families, it seems relevant and necessary to link classroom lessons to historical living conditions in the time of peonage on the haciendas, from the colonization of the Lacandon Jungle dating back to the 1950s through decades of struggles for land rights, to the current repression against the movement. As a result of the

pragmatism of the promoters and the Zapatista authorities, the teaching practices observed are very eclectic across the modest classrooms of rebel communities (Baronnet, 2012). Indeed, political autonomy favors the collective and permanent redefinition of priorities and educational needs, with the evaluation criteria of the quality of education under local control.

In the words of Joshua, a Tseltal *campesino* named by his community to the “charge” of promoting education in a new town on recovered land in the MAREZ Francisco Gómez, “it is we ourselves who are going to prepare ourselves, no one will come to teach us anymore but we will educate ourselves.” The Zapatista educators emphasize environmental issues (Gómez Bonilla, 2015) as pragmatic and unique elements for contextualized, situated learning that is meaningful for children and families. As Joshua explains:

> … when I teach, we look at the theme of nature, what is around us, how we live, how we can use the forest, what is wood. All this is discussed with the children. They also learn how to gather wood because sometimes they just cut it all down, and that just fucks it up, no. You need to plant more trees, because if we destroy nature, what will children have when they grow up. We see this at school too. Sometimes I have them make a little map of the community, where the church is, what does your house look like, they do it by drawing…[6]

To train future leaders in autonomous development, community subjects try to guide the processes of integral education, inculcating respect for the elders and their values, cultural traditions, and collective memories that shape the principles governing contemporary political projects. Community elders, even if they were not directly involved in the Zapatista militancy, play a key role in education as the bearers of knowledge and values that the schools reinforce in young people and adults. Recognizing the wisdom of the elders means adhering to codes of values and patterns of behavior that shape individual and collective work. The school thus represents a space for socializing values that transcend the family, and the transformation of this space disrupts the social imaginary and produces new collective memories.

In this sense, what the Zapatistas call “real” education locates the generation of teaching and learning practices in time and space, in a natural, cultural, and territorial context in which Zapatista childhood grows

in strength (Rico Montoya, 2014). Instead of depoliticizing and decontextualizing the pedagogical processes, rooting education in the context of the region makes the school a reflective space for dynamic interaction between values and knowledge based on the one hand on local cultures and on the other global dominant cultures. Horizontally and endogenously, each community educator can draw on their own creative strategies through the autonomous municipality's project of "real" education. This democratic framework favors the building of an autonomous community-based education; as opposed to a centralized, top-down imposition emanating from an armed group manipulating the social bases that sustain and nurture their ranks.

Educational processes in the Zapatista communities, in pursuing regional self-management of their community projects, are committed to the ideal of decolonizing the school culture previously based on methods, plans, and programs that discriminated against indigenous cultures. The political-educational practice of each rebel municipality has been able to develop, in a direct and imaginative way, a regional project that is counter-hegemonic to the state project (Baronnet, 2013; Pinheiro Barbosa, 2015). Through processes and resources emerging from each community's assemblies, each school has its own organizational and pedagogical uniqueness, though not all have a written educational program. Their pedagogical work is legitimized through the daily performance of community actors and their representatives who guide, monitor, and evaluate the activities of young educators, who are in turn accountable for their work through regular assemblies (Baronnet, 2008). Far from being the mechanical application of a rigid model uniformly imposed by the Zapatista organization on their support bases, this radical educational autonomy has generated social processes of appropriation and reinvention from below of the school, arising from their own strategies of communal government, in service of the aspirations of the communities.

The sui generis political-educational practices of the Autonomous Municipalities of Chiapas resignifies the school, focusing teaching on the goal of learning "for autonomy." That is, the purpose is to learn to be able to govern themselves, in accordance with the emancipatory project pursued from critical pedagogies created from the indigenous context. Zapatista innovations contribute to democratizing decision-making processes around education issues, through the primacy of assembly processes of direct democracy that govern the autonomous communities and that guide teaching practices. This tends to facilitate inter-classroom

learning of values and norms that coincide with the collective imaginary of the autonomy project, transmitting identity markers that characterize a peasant, Maya, and militant population.

Zapatismo is an educational social movement in the indigenous communities of Chiapas, breaking free of the State's exclusionary education model by promoting education aimed at strengthening the political autonomy of peoples. In addition to promoting literacy of children in native languages in several hundred primary schools, the Zapatista socio-educational movement itself represents a space for intercultural dialogue by training "for autonomy." In other words, the exercise of educational self-management implies a permanent re-training of individuals to exercise the rights and duties of "good government," reinforcing the emerging pluralistic framework for community democracy. The exercise of autonomy itself teaches an alternative model of everyday practices and social relations in a context of lack of available resources, persistent government and paramilitary repression, and greater penetration of neoliberal market forces that dismantle the social peasant economy and that create greater social inequalities and new consumption needs for modern goods and services.

Alternative Movement Pedagogy as Resistance to Neoliberalism

As the Zapatistas outlined in their Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle (EZLN, 2005), their model of autonomous practice-as-pedagogy is explicitly conceived as an alternative to neoliberal capitalism. It is also an assertion of cultural autonomy, the right to identify as indigenous communities within multiple layers of identity, not confined by the hegemonic colonial construction of the nation-state. The timing of the uprising to coincide with the 1 January 1994 entry into force of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was a lesson, meant to underscore the point that neoliberal "free trade" was a death sentence for indigenous and peasant communities. The Zapatista demand of autonomy as expressed in the original San Andrés Accords on indigenous rights and culture signed with the government in February 1996, if implemented would have recognized self-governance, community control of land and territory, and a kind of critical and horizontal multiculturalism (Walsh, 2012). Instead, the government used the five years

of wrangling over implementing legislation to distort the intent of the Accords; replacing the concept of indigenous subjects of rights with language that would make them "objects of public interest," and replacing autonomy with a kind of federalism in which a limited sphere of local decision making would devolve to regional authorities who would be subordinate to the national government. In rejecting this vision of what Hale (2002) has labeled "neoliberal multiculturalism," the Zapatistas proceeded to implement their own de facto autonomy in their communities. They also made pedagogical use of the exercise of translating the complex concepts contained in the text of the San Andrés Accords into each of the indigenous languages of Chiapas, a participatory process involving indigenous translation teams and workshops that converted the negotiations into a teachable moment (Aubry, 2003).

Struggles for indigenous autonomy and rights in Mexico have long revolved around education, in the broadest sense of socialization into an alternative, locally produced body of knowledge, values, and identity. The official state ideology of *indigenismo* adopted since the Mexican Revolution was assimilationist and hierarchical (Saldívar, 2011), albeit tweaked in the neoliberal era to formally recognize ethnic diversity without allowing meaningful autonomy (Hernández, Paz, & Sierra, 2004). Historically, this ideology was deeply engrained in the official schools and other institutions in Chiapas (Lewis, 2005), the third most indigenous state in Mexico, and it facilitated the long-standing tradition of co-opted indigenous *caciques* (local political bosses) who shored up the seemingly eternal rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party, the PRI (Rus, 1994). Breaking free of their own rule of the *caciques* in the traditional indigenous communities of the highlands of Chiapas literally meant expulsion from the community. It was the uprooted migrants from the highlands eastward into the sparsely populated (and scarcely governed) canyons of the Lacandon Jungle in the decades beginning in the 1950s who began forging new collective identities and practices (Leyva Solano, 2003). These populations would become a cauldron for dissident organizing, intensifying with the impact of neoliberal policies from the late 1970s onward, and it was this environment that spawned the initially clandestine movement that would become the EZLN. The proto-Zapatistas, alongside Liberation Theology Catholic catechists and various strands of Maoist organizers, became part of the mix that would give rise to what Gunderson (2011) has called "organic indigenous-*campesino* intellectuals."

It is worth noting here that rural normal schools, in which mostly poor/indigenous youth learned to become teachers of other poor and indigenous, have a strong tradition of radicalism in Mexican history that continues to the present day (Padilla, 2009). In marginalized regions of sparse state control, education about social realities became intertwined with organizing for radical change. This helps explain the state's use of severe repression in the forced disappearance of 43 students in 2014 from a rural normal school in Ayotzinapa, Guerrero; and the harsh crackdown on resistance to neoliberal education reforms in 2016, particularly falling on the independent wing of the teachers' union with its strongholds in the poor indigenous southern states of Oaxaca and Chiapas.

Thinking of Zapatista pedagogy in its broader sense beyond the classroom, the insistence on a radically democratic form of community-based self-governance was a direct challenge to the liberal-individualistic model of neoliberal multiculturalism (Cruz Rodríguez, 2014). The painstaking process of nourishing leadership capacity among community education and health promoters and participants in governance processes, from the village level up to the Caracoles, involved nothing less than the formation of a new collective social and political subject, rooted in a self-defined identity (Cerullo, 2009; Dinerstein, Giotto, & Pascual, 2013; Forbis, 2016; Torres Rojas, 2012). Autonomous schools play a key role in this creation of a new social subject (Rockwell, 2010, 2012); but more broadly, the everyday practices of autonomy entail an ongoing process of construction of a new Zapatista political imaginary (Cerda García, 2011; Khasnabish, 2008), created and learned through participation. In that sense, the Zapatista model of de facto autonomy is an example of "constituent" power, made within an autonomous space in society rather than negotiated with the officially constituted state authorities (Ciccariello-Maher, 2013; Holloway, 2002). This is fundamentally different from the liberal construct of the individual citizenship compact and the hegemonic construction of the nation-state.

The Zapatista autonomy project includes the "recovery" of privately appropriated land from large landowners and ranchers, reconfiguring the space in terms of both directly participatory structures of self-governance and collective forms of production. The recovered lands were reconstituted as *nuevos poblados zapatistas* (new Zapatista settlements), turned over in usufruct to landless Zapatista families, in effect restarting the agrarian reform promised by the Mexican Revolution and Article 27

of the 1917 Constitution, but halted with the government's neoliberal counterreform of 1992. In the Zapatista variant, a portion of each of the recovered lands was designated for collective production, with participatory assemblies of the community to distribute labor tasks and to decide collectively on the use of the surplus. Like other experiments in building solidarity economies (Jaramillo & Carreon, 2014), this had the effect of creating non-market subjectivities that laid the basis for an alternative collective memory (Gahman, 2016; García González, 2005; Stahler-Sholk, 2010, 2015). In modeling alternatives to the capitalist paradigm, the Zapatistas have defined their own version of sustainable development and social reproduction of community space (Gómez Bonilla, 2015).

As expressed by Zapatista Subcommander Moisés (2015) in a reflection on "Political Economy from the Perspective of the Communities":

> … Yes, we understand it as a way to scratch at capitalism. Yes, it is true that we will lower its profits a little. That's not a lie, we understand it. But when we do something it is because we have come to an agreement through communication amongst all of us…. Now I will discuss with you some things that we started to discover as we were doing collective work, and this work was varied, not only work that had to do with Mother Earth. We started to see things about our resistance, we started to discover things…. So that's when we said that we have to work the Mother Earth. And so we started to really strengthen the resistance. Those of us *compas* [comrades] who understood this quickly now have beans, maize, coffee, pigs, turkeys, and other animals. Those who are *partidistas* [political party supporters] receive corrugated tin roofing, cement, and other cheaply made construction material…. For us, in the Zapatista communities, we see the conditions of the *partidista* brothers, and honestly, *compañeros* and *compañeras*, it makes you really sad to see how they live. It makes you feel a bitter sorrow to see it because many of the youth that we used to know are no longer there. They left seeking the American Dream, to find that green money, dollars. And many never returned, and some who have returned have very little left of their former selves, and they've returned and are in a bad way, now addicted to drugs, they smoke marijuana. And those who don't smoke marijuana come back with a different culture. They say that they no longer want to drink *pozol* [traditional corn porridge], and worse, that they don't even recognize it.

This "way to scratch at capitalism" represents a direct rejection of the neoliberal reforms that have been uprooting peasant and indigenous

communities from land and territory, forcing them into the market and "freeing" their land and natural resources for extractive industries in a process that David Harvey (2005) calls accumulation by dispossession. A pedagogical component of the Zapatista practice of alternative economic and social relations, aside from the internal learning process within the newly constituted Zapatista communities, has been the effect that the land recoveries had externally in inspiring numerous non-Zapatista indigenous communities in Chiapas to follow suit with their own spontaneous agrarian reforms (Harvey, 2005b). The state lost little time in trying to co-opt these initiatives by a combination of offering reparations to the former landowners; showering gifts and "projects" on the non-Zapatista communities; and encouraging non-Zapatistas to occupy portions of land recovered by Zapatistas, promising to award them individual legal title. These counterinsurgency measures presented challenges to the Zapatista project by fueling community divisions and conflict, leaving the Zapatistas to rely primarily on their negotiating skills and their reserve of legitimacy in creating autonomous conflict-resolution mechanisms.

The Zapatista self-governance structures included an alternative model of administration of justice, drawing on indigenous community traditions of customary law (*usos y costumbres*). The recovery of lands through the de facto agrarian reform broke many vertical structures of social and political authority previously based on local boss politics or even semi-feudal relations in the case of the *fincas* (estates) in the Lacandon Jungle. As one elderly resident of that region recalled:

> … Right now we're a lot better off, already advanced a bit in our organization, not like those days, when I was raised on the El Rosario finca…. The justice that the boss used to hand out, he's the boss and he ruled over us, there was nobody else who arranged things, just him, he's the boss and he gave all the orders, there was no school, there was nothing…. He punished us himself, the boss, nothing else, we didn't know anyone else who could sort things out. (Fernández Christlieb, 2014, 103)

The Zapatistas had to establish the legitimacy of their own judicial practices by modeling and teaching an alternative, creating "Honor and Justice Commissions" in the autonomous municipalities, and training community-based human rights defenders (Speed, 2008). This alternative normative system won legitimacy by hearing cases impartially and without payment, using restitution in the form of community service

instead of punitive justice. In the words of a member of the Francisco Villa Autonomous Municipal Council, Caracol of La Garrucha:

> What's different is that they don't work on the basis of money, they just work according to conscience, they hand out justice according to how the problems are presented. The thing is that with autonomous work, we don't depend on the government anymore, it's just our own problems and our own authority that has to be from within the community. (Fernández Christlieb, 2014, 114)

These practices began to have a transformative effect beyond the support base communities, teaching a new set of values, as non-Zapatistas began preferring to turn to the Zapatista autonomous authorities for justice rather than to the official government institutions (Mora Bayo, 2015).

Zapatista efforts to modify gender relations in their communities were another effort at reshaping values and norms. These efforts are not based simply on importing Western liberal feminism, but they involve consciously reinventing "traditions" of the indigenous communities. The Revolutionary Law of Women that was declared in March 1993 for Zapatista territories formalized a series of rights, including choice in marriage and family planning. Perhaps more important than these formal rights has been the opportunity opened to new generations of women coming up in the Zapatista autonomous communities to assume responsibilities such as the role of education promoter, with collective community support. Already this has resulted in some changes in traditional gender roles, with women postponing marriage and mentalities of men and women slowly changing (Klein, 2015; Millán Moncayo, 2013). In 1998 when the Zapatistas mobilized some 2500 indigenous people to travel to every municipality of the country to conduct a National Consultation, they established the norm that half of the delegates would be women, a decision that presented some cultural tensions that were resolved by sending couples and relatives (Millán Moncayo, 2013). By the time the Zapatista "Little School" was launched in 2013, when anyone interested in learning about the movement could spend a week with a Zapatista family, each student was assigned a "guardian" of the same sex, i.e., there were already enough young women prepared to take on that task and willing to travel alone to other communities.

As a young woman in a Zapatista community explained, new generations of women are breaking the vicious circle of not taking on

public positions because past gender barriers denied them experience or education:

> In various tasks of autonomy, we are already participating together with the male *compañeros*, even if we as young women don't know how to govern but we are chosen as authorities in our communities because they see that we know how to read and write a little, we do the work and we learn along the way. (Lisbeth, support base community member, in Comisión Sexta del EZLN 2015, 123)

Conclusion

The Zapatista autonomy project is only one example of a phenomenon seen in many Latin American multiethnic regions, where indigenous peoples in recent decades are aspiring to develop, plan, and implement their own communal political education, based on pedagogical principles elaborated in the heat of struggles and social movements (Motta, 2016; Rockwell, 2012). New opportunities are emerging for research on these educational innovations, by participant-observers and activist scholars who accompany and analyze the practices that these communal projects are undertaking despite scarcity of resources. To the extent that they challenge national policies, these projects dispute the state monopoly control of educational systems, raising the question of whether this is the genesis of a new diversity of regional educational policies adopted in the course of struggles of indigenous movements in defense of local resources and dignity.

The Latin American Afrodescendant and Indigenous territories have embarked on a plethora of reinventions of schools, educational experimentation, and non-state hybrid examples of educational insubordination (Medina Melgarejo, 2015). Not all of these follow the Zapatista "resistance" policies of complete rejection of all government aid and programs. Some of these experiments are examples of critical intercultural education, developed from multiethnic political autonomy-building processes that are critical social transformation projects seeking to destabilize the neocolonial order. Despite a lack of resources, these protest experiences against the neocolonial and monocultural order are intended as decolonial alternatives to the state and national education policies (Medina Melgarejo, 2015; Walsh, 2009), but often find themselves drawn into fierce political struggles for recognition by the state apparatus and for the allocation of material and symbolic resources.

Several education initiatives and indigenous autonomy processes in Mexico have contributed to radical democratization projects in culturally diverse territories. These struggles inspired by Zapatismo redefine relations between social actors and the state, in a neoliberal context where the state is an intermediary of global capital, seeking to turn people and lands into commodities in the market. The 1994 Zapatista uprising in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas has embodied the alterglobalization motto that "another world is possible," inspiring other movements to reclaim the commons and to assert their right to the production of knowledge and valuing diverse community practices. Cultural identities of indigenous peoples and their traditional roots are essential claims to resist the neoliberal project from within the alternative space represented by autonomous schools. The social and indigenous movements can support active resistance, insofar as they do not reproduce colonial mentalities and structures.

Critiques by radical educators of various forms of neoliberal multiculturalism, such as the Mexican variant of neoindigenism, focus on the educational policies within the system of centralized nation-state, disguised as plural and inclusive but actually reinforcing colonial hierarchies. However, in multiethnic territories of Chiapas and Mexico, the processes of building autonomy in education—and the everyday practices of autonomy movements which themselves represent pedagogies of resistance—contribute to the emergence of new collective subjectivities. They open political and educational spaces for communities to define their own identities and social relations, laying the foundation for a true community-based democracy.

Notes

1. The San Andrés Accords recognized the right to pluricultural education in the indigenous languages, with a government commitment of resources to plan and carry out educational and cultural activities determined by the indigenous towns and communities. The government never implemented the accords as signed, but the Zapatistas proceeded to enact them unilaterally.
2. EZLN, "May the Earth Tremble at its Core," 18 October 2016; http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2016/10/18/may-the-earth-tremble-at-its-core/, consulted 22 October 2016.

3. English translations of the texts: https://intercontinentalcry.org/free-zapatista-textbook-now-available-english, consulted 1 October 2016.
4. The phrase in Tseltal, chopol ajualil, translates literally as something like "evil overlord."
5. http://schoolsforchiapas.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/1st-Declaration-of-the-Lacandona-Jungle.pdf, consulted 1 October 2016.
6. Interview with Joshua, January 2007, MAREZ Francisco Gómez, when he was an education promoter. Now his eldest son is serving as educator in the school of a small community located in the middle of land recovered in 1994–1995.

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CHAPTER 5

"Everything has a Beginning and an End and we are on our Way": Transformative Agency in the Colombian Preparation for Social Action Program

Bita Correa and Erin Murphy-Graham

Introduction

For the past four decades, the Colombian *Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias* (Foundation for the Application and Teaching of Science, FUNDAEC) has been designing and supporting the implementation of diverse educational programs in Latin America that attempt to promote the intellectual and spiritual growth of individuals that can collectively work toward the transformation of society (Arbab, Correa, & de Valcarcel, 1988; Correa & Torné, 1995; Murphy-Graham, 2012). In 2006, FUNDAEC began implementing *Preparation for Social Action* (PSA), a non-formal, 10-hour per week program that trains youth (ages

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15–25 years old) to become "promoters of community well-being." In this chapter, we explore the ways in which PSA supports the goal of individual and community transformation through an empirical study that was guided by the following questions: (1) In what ways, if any, does PSA support the development of youth agency? (2) What pedagogical features of PSA seem to foster agency development? Drawing upon qualitative data from a study conducted in 2014, we describe how PSA students develop transformative agency and take action toward individual and community change. Our findings suggest that two central components of the PSA pedagogy are essential in this regard: (1) the explicit focus of the program on taking action, specifically in group-led service activities within their communities and (2) the systematic integration of individual and collective reflection exercises that are part of the curriculum studied.

Historical Overview: FUNDAEC and its Journey from Non-formal to Formal to Non-formal Education

FUNDAEC was created in 1974 and, after decades of work in the field of education, began to implement the PSA program in 2006. In all of its programs, FUNDAEC is concerned with the active participation of communities in the process of social and economic development in their own regions (Arbab, 2000). The organization was conceived, from the beginning, as a development organization (not specific to education) and focused its initial efforts in investigating processes of community life including production on small farms, health-related processes and education.

Alongside its investigations on community processes, FUNDAEC began training an initial group of selected youth from the region with the idea that they could become "engineers in community well-being," a designation that the organization created to describe community leaders that could serve as agents of change in their communities. During their work with this initial cohort, FUNDAEC began to write a series of materials that served as guides for the classes they offered (the basis for the curriculum that was later developed and is currently known as SAT). At the core of these curricular materials was the concept of a "capability" which FUNDAEC defines as "the capacity to think and act in a well-defined sphere of activity and with a well-defined purpose. It requires the understanding of certain interrelated concepts, and the acquisition of a series of skills, abilities and attitudes" (FUNDAEC, 2006, 7).

Parallel to the development of this curriculum, FUNDAEC also explored the best way in which their curriculum could be disseminated. Since the program was aimed at the rural population of Colombia with its own particular challenges, the method of delivery of the program was an important question at the time. In the early 1980s, most rural communities in Colombia did not have access to formal secondary schooling. At the same time, factors such as low population density, lack of trained teachers and the participation of the children and youth of the household in the family's economic activities led to the displacement of many young individuals into bigger towns or cities in search of secondary education. This in turn then had effects on family dynamics and the household economy, an increased disparity between male to female access to education and a disconnect from what was studied in urban schools to the rural reality. It is also important to note that the Colombian context, as a whole, has been affected by decades of civil unrest (particularly in terms of confrontation between diverse guerrilla groups, the military and paramilitary groups, where the civilian population has often found itself caught in the middle of different political, economic and territorial interests) and any organization or program in Colombia has to navigate this reality. In some cases, this has meant being present in certain areas of the country and in other cases not being able to penetrate the vast territory.

In an attempt to address the issues discussed above, FUNDAEC developed a tutorial education methodology that would allow students to study in their home communities. This tutorial system is based on the idea that individuals from the same communities as students can become tutors through a process of well-organized training, which FUNDAEC offers, and can then begin to study those materials with the students in a group setting. FUNDAEC makes important distinctions about their use of the term "tutor":

> The term "tutor" is not synonymous with "facilitator" as the word has come to be used in educational approaches that borrow the terminology from group therapy. The tutor is a trained teacher who knows more than the student. Yet, the teacher is also a learner and does not wield arbitrary authority. Tutors guide the students through the textbooks, raise questions and help find answers, clarify obscure matters, encourage reflection on real-life experience, and supervise experiments and social action. They do not lecture or dictate, but nor are they mere facilitators of group discussion. (FUNDAEC, 2006, 5)

In addition to the tutor, the other essential elements of the system are the study group (which normally has between 10 and 20 students), the texts and the community (where students engage in a variety of service and other applied activities).

With regard to the theoretical underpinnings of FUNDAEC's work, an extensive book explains the framework "capable of guiding educational programs seeking the moral empowerment of students" (Farid-Arbab, 2016, 2). A full description of this framework is beyond the scope of this chapter, although it is important to mention briefly here that the founders of FUNDAEC decided, from the start, *not* to adhere to a particular theory but rather look at theory as a source of insight that would inform their efforts as they engaged in action and reflection. They felt this stance would allow them to learn in conjunction with others without now having to feel bound by one way of approaching their work. Core elements of this conceptual framework are the interrelated set of Bahá'í teachings on the oneness of humankind and the evolution of human society.[1]

The program FUNDAEC developed, over time, became known as *Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* (Tutorial Learning System, or SAT). In the mid-1990s, the Colombian government deemed SAT "effective and valid" for secondary education, spanning grades 7–12 (and students who complete all 6 years earn a high school diploma) and the following two decades were marked by a substantial expansion of the SAT program, both within Colombia and outside of its borders (Murphy-Graham, 2012). In total, over 300,000 students in Latin America have gone through at least one of the levels of the program.

The expansion of the SAT program, carefully detailed in a recent Brookings Institution case study on how successful learning interventions can go to scale (Kwauk & Perlman-Robinson, 2016), had many positive implications, including the recognition of the program as a formal alternative to high school education. In Colombia and Honduras, the state recognized the "tutors" as official teachers and began to pay their salaries. This has allowed the program to become established in the national context and ensures program sustainability.

However, the growth of the program also resulted in FUNDAEC having to confront the challenges of working with a formal education framework. For example, the Colombian government began to demand that the SAT curriculum include certain elements which were necessary for a high school degree including: Colombian history, physical

education, computer science, moral education, English, etc. FUNDAEC has always allowed the addition of new books outside of the core curriculum, particularly to introduce locally relevant technology or respond to other local needs. However, FUNDAEC grew concerned that the increasing number of required subjects (due to national curricular standards) would slowly dilute the core goals of the program. In some cases, additional national curriculum textbooks were added to the program or in others FUNDAEC's texts were simply replaced. Some implementing organizations have felt the need to go through materials as quickly as possible, minimizing the service projects associated with the texts or the reflections embedded in them, all of which are crucial elements of the curricular design. The program, intended to be flexible so that students could set their own schedules (within a weekly hour target), which would then allow them to be involved in family production activities (farm life), has been boxed into meeting standardized goals, losing some of its innovative aspects which was what had made it successful in the first place.

As a response to this situation, FUNDAEC decided to start a new program, named Preparation for Social Action, which could be considered a "sister program" of SAT. While SAT is intended for the formal, state-sponsored sphere, PSA is non-formal. It does not lead to a credential, but students do receive a "certificate in community well-being." The program currently uses the first 24 books in the SAT program, includes the same elements (tutor, text, group and community) given its greater flexibility, is not addressed to high school students or framed by grades but rather is offered to youth between 15 and 25 years of age who are interested in going through an educational program which allows them to become equipped to be of service to the development of their community. In this manner, FUNDAEC was able to focus the PSA program on the wider purpose of community development and not only focus on formal education (as it does through SAT). The program began its pilot form in the north coast of Colombia in the department of Cordoba in 2006 spread over three communities with a group each: Tambor, Lorica and Tuchín. It has now grown to have over 40 groups and tutors, around 600 students and more than 200 graduates of the program.

For FUNDAEC, the term "community development[2]" refers to the improvement of any of the elements or "pieces" of what it terms "processes of community life." Examples of these processes include those related to the production of small crops and the raising of animals, the

creation and maintenance of service microenterprises, actions directed toward individual and community health and environmental sanitation and the marketing, establishment and flow of funds in a particular community among others (Arbab et al., 1988, 7). As FUNDAEC explains, the overall objective of the PSA program is to improve community life:

> The curriculum for the PSA program is designed to support a clear social purpose that is at the heart of all of FUNDAEC's activities: to improve the well-being of community life. Service to the community is the axis around which its integrated curriculum is built…. In their entirety, the textbooks present a pattern of thinking, attitudes, and behavior which is to be followed in a sequence of research-action-learning activities in a path of service to the community. The path of service, itself, is closely examined and continually adjusted. (FUNDAEC, 2006, 6)

A number of previous academic studies have focused on the positive effects of the SAT program, including how it fosters women's empowerment (Murphy-Graham, 2008, 2010, 2012), increased social responsibility (Honeyman, 2010) and impressive academic outcomes (McEwan, Murphy-Graham, Torres Irribarra, Aguilar, & Rapalo, 2014). Research is only beginning to examine how and if PSA supports the development of capabilities that ultimately lead to individual and collective social change (see Murphy-Graham & Lample, 2014; VanderDussen, 2009).

Theoretical Framework: Education and Transformative Agency

"Agency" is a term often debated within a number of disciplines, education included. More recently, the term has also slipped into the discourse of donor and nongovernmental organizations to signal efforts to improve youth participation in civil society (McLeod, 2012). The "bare bones" definition offered by Ahearn (2001) (where agency is the socioculturally constrained capacity to act) captures the idea that all action is socioculturally mediated, but it also (intentionally) leaves a number of questions unanswered, such as can agency be the property of groups? Ahearn advises that a fruitful direction for future research is to distinguish among types of agency—"oppositional agency, complicit agency, or agency of power."

Agency of youth, both young women and men, has become a considerable focus of research. In what ways might young people's culturally constrained capacity to act differ from those of older adults? These questions are explored in a variety of different contexts by DeJaeghere, McCleary, and Josic (2016) who conceptualize youth agency in different social, cultural, economic and political environments. A key tension in research on youth agency is how agency cultivated in school and other educational environments can translate to other contexts such as the labor market, the political sphere and within the cultural constraints of families.

For example, in her work examining youth's experiences in a school in Zambia, Bajaj introduces the term "transformative agency," signifying how youth began to see themselves and act differently within the contexts of their lives and communities. The idea of transformative agency is akin to Freire's assertion that education must heighten students' critical consciousness as they come to analyze their place in an unequal world, a transformative sense of agency can lead to individual and social change (Bajaj, 2009, 553). However, Bajaj finds that youth's sense of agency is dampened when they leave the school environment and face additional constraints of Zambian society: "once cultivated, it might not be a fixed characteristic, but is instead situational" (Bajaj, 2009, 552). We draw upon and provide further thinking regarding the idea of "transformative agency" in our analysis of participant experience in the PSA program, as we were interested in investigating how youth action can begin to transform communities, even beyond the time that youth were studying in PSA.

In addition, to deepening our theoretical understanding of transformative agency, we draw upon Emirbayer and Mische (1998), who explain that it is necessary to "conceptualize human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment," to which they add that "structural contexts of action are themselves temporal as well as relational fields-multiple, overlapping ways of ordering time toward which social actors can assume different simultaneous agentic orientations..." (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, 963–964). In this regard, human agency is an individual act but it is also situated in a historical context and occurs over time. Therefore, the individual agent begins to act in his or her own particular environment and within

a determined time frame. In the case of PSA, the consideration of time is an important one, as change can only be seen or determined over time.

Research Context

Focusing on youth agency is particularly important in the context of Colombia, where youth are vulnerable due to the forced migration and displacement of populations over the last decades. According to Cuesta, the Colombian rural context is defined by three primary characteristics. On the one hand, the fact that despite the country being traditionally agriculturally based, the history of Colombia shows "very little preoccupation by the state for the rural population… which has in turn allowed the war which is present throughout all of the departments of the country" (Cuesta, 2008, 90). Second, possessing land has been "the motive for the large displacement of rural population and it is the reason why many have taken up arms: some to defend and increase their ownership and others to find a reform though insurrection (ibid)." Finally, the levels of poverty in rural areas are higher than urban areas, with 62% of rural population living in poverty and 21.5% living in conditions of absolute poverty (Cuesta, 2008, 90–91). These conditions underscore the need for educational programs that are appropriate for rural environments and have a strong agricultural and anti-poverty agenda, as does PSA. While seeming issues of the past, questions of land ownership and agrarian reform continue to be central in many of the issues Colombia continues to face today. For example, in the context of the current peace process one of the main points in the peace agreements is the emphasis and resources that need to be dedicated to the rural sectors of the country. Rural to urban migration has led to overpopulated cities with their own series of issues and needs which have to be addressed, but if rural areas continue to be ignored the migration and displacement of populations will continue to occur. Therefore, the emphasis on certain plans and policies for urban centers that are different from those for rural areas is a crucial concern in this particular turning point of Colombian policy.

An example of a department which has faced social turmoil and deals with internal migration is the department of Cordoba, where this study took place. Here the population depends greatly on agriculture and cattle farming. Eight percent of all land is used for agricultural purposes. Its population is mixed, with 76.39% being considered white or mestizo, 13.21% are Afro-Colombian and 10.39% are indigenous. According to

national statistics, in 2012 the department had a population of 1.6 million inhabitants. The majority of the population is young with 52% being between the ages of 0 and 25 years old (DANE, 2005). In recent years, FUNDAEC has focused diligently on reaching the age group between 12 and 25 years of age, given the demographics of these communities: "It is FUNDAEC's belief that working with junior youth and youth is the most effective approach, as it creates, in a span of few years, the vital human resources needed to advance other development processes, including early childhood education" (FUNDAEC, 2006).

Methodology

This qualitative study took place in two municipalities (*municipios*) in the north coast region of Colombia, in the department of Cordoba: Lorica and Tuchín. These sites were selected because the program began in those two localities in 2006, and this window of eight years was considered sufficient time to have observed program impacts. Ethnographic fieldwork, including in-depth interviews and participatory observation, was conducted by Correa between January and February, 2014. A total of 47 interviews were conducted with program graduates (11), current students (16), parents (8), tutors (8) and coordinators (4). In conducting interviews with multiple stakeholders in the program, we were able to triangulate our findings (Creswell, 1998). Each interview lasted between one and two hours and was conducted in homes or public places. There was a separate interview guide for each category of research participant, but all explored the student experience in PSA, whether or not they perceived changes, what motivated them to study in the program, and their community activities and involvement.

We acknowledge a few potential sources of bias in this study. First, due to safety concerns and the geographic inaccessibility, interviews were pre-arranged by program coordinators. This may mean that only the "best" cases were selected. Second, often other family members (particularly mothers) were present during interviews with youth. Finally, Correa works for FUNDAEC and study participants were for the most part aware of this. These three features of the research may have skewed our findings because only positive experiences with PSA were shared. At the same time, we make no claims about the "representativeness" of these results or the sample. We acknowledge that experiences in the program will be variable, and that these might be best-case scenarios or

"revelatory cases" (Yin, 2003, 43) that help us to understand how and if PSA sparks social change and agency.

All of the interviews were transcribed and organized in a database, and the transversal questions present in all of the questionnaires were closely looked at. It became apparent that certain key words were present in most interviews, and this allowed for the categorization of these elements. Among these elements, the themes of change and motivation stood out. At the same time, these elements belonged to three distinct categories: the individual, the family and the community and the information could further be organized accordingly.

PSA as an Educational Resource for Agency

While education has been identified as a way to better equip individuals to act in ways that can improve their communities, untangling the relationship between education and agency is complicated. What specific resources can help support the development of agency? How can education promote individual and collective action? Here we further clarify how education can promote transformative agency (Bajaj, 2009). As individuals begin to act in certain ways, others take note, and are inspired by their actions. They believe that they, too, can take action. As individual agency spreads from student to student and to other members of the community, participants become aware of how PSA has led to a process of individual and community change, which are defining features of transformative agency. Consistent with FUNDAEC's assertion regarding the twofold moral purpose of education (personal transformation and social transformation), we found that PSA participants described changes at the level of the individual and changes in their communities.

Individual Change: Cultivating New Ways of Being and Thinking

PSA participants (both students and tutors) described ways in which their experiences in PSA influenced their attitudes, behavior and their modes of thinking. For example, one tutor (who was previously a student in the program) explained that he changed in a number of ways that allow him to work more effectively with others. These changes centered around his ability to listen and learn from others and to interact in ways that are not "rude":

> My character was very strong. The program helped change that. Learning to have different ideas, learning to listen to others. Every person has their own point of view. Before, I used always to defend my point of view even though I knew I was wrong. That is why the program helped me, to realize that what I said sometimes was not right…. Even my mom would say to me…you have changed. You don't talk back to me anymore and you are not as rude as you used to be, and that would help me to realize that it was true, that I was changing.

Another student explained that participation in PSA changed his mode of thinking, which has also influenced his relationship with others. The student explained:

> The most important thing I have learned is to live in my community. Learning *how to live with those around me*. To be patient towards others. I wasn't like this before. I wasn't tolerant…I am not the same as when I was starting out, my way of thinking is different. The difference is that I have learned how to deal with my temper. Because I had a really strong temper, everything bothered me. My way of being (*forma de ser*) is better, my way of treating others. I am a more patient person. So all of this has helped me as a person.

This new way of being was also linked to new ways of thinking and speaking. The participant continued:

> There has been change, in my way of thinking and acting. My thoughts before were like those of a child. But now I think, and I have new ideas. The things that I say go further and are not so elemental. I used to speak about silly things, but now I talk about interesting subjects, things that make sense.

Participants described internal changes in their ways of thinking and in their attitudes. These internal changes were linked to their interactions with others. These changes were not only described by participants themselves but were confirmed by other members of the community: by their parents and tutors. Some tutors described that their students were more responsible and patient with themselves and toward others. They also developed practical skills such as time management. One tutor described the change in the following manner:

> The difference is that they have learned to become more responsible. They are also more tolerant with themselves. When they began in the program there was a lot of tension between them [the students] … When a problem arises they are able to talk to each other. They are more responsible with their parents, with their responsibilities. They used to get to class late, or not go because they had school work, but now they know how to manage their time better. And they can work with the community. They did not engage with the community before, but now they do, all of this through the acts of service.

This tutor continued to describe a specific example in which she saw student behavior change. In the first few weeks of the program, they would throw their trash in the middle of the classroom even though there was a trash can nearby. They would leave the class and not pick up after themselves. However, as time went by she began to notice that they started to use the trash can in the classroom. They also shared with her that they had begun to do the same thing at home, using a trash can for the first time. In her analysis, this stemmed from their increased responsibility and awareness of their surroundings. This increased sense of responsibility and respect for others was particularly apparent in two domains: their family and the classroom. "The truth is that some of the students did not show love or respect towards their parents. As they went through the program, one could see the changes…They stopped being so vulgar and rude with their classmates." Individual changes of this nature, albeit small, have significant implications for these individuals, their families and communities, because these changes allow students to think differently about their relationships with others.

Another example which on the surface seems simple, but has profound implications, is how participants described their willingness to learn from and incorporate ideas from others in the group. One tutor explained how when he went to training sessions, he had already completed the exercises in the books with his answers and thoughts. When it came time to review those answers with the group and trainer, he initially found himself unwilling to change his answers, even though he knew they were wrong. He thought, "I have it this way, and I'm not going to erase it." Slowly, he began to add what others were saying in the margins of his textbook, "to think that I was writing the ideas of others in *my* book gave me a lot to think about." Eventually, he was able to erase his answers and wrote in his fellow tutors' answers. He began to ask himself, "am I really changing? And I would look myself and realize that yes, I was changing."

This anecdote shows how individual change is a gradual process, and that it has implications in the way we interact with others. This is consistent with the idea that agency is temporal (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). For example, at the beginning the tutor was sure of his own answers, his own way of thinking, and had no desire to listen to the ideas of others. He felt that changing his answers would be betraying himself and his ideas, that it was somehow wrong to accept what others thought about his own convictions. Slowly he began to consider that others might be able to contribute to his knowledge and advancement. However, he struggled not to react negatively when others challenged his answers. Over time, he grew more comfortable with letting go of his own ideas. Ultimately, his ability to accept feedback from others had positive implications for his relationships with his fellow tutors, and this enriched his own learning and progress.

In this case and others, we found that an important element of "transformative agency" was first the cultivation of "new virtues and powers, new moralities, new capacities" (Farid-Arbab, 2016, 8). These descriptions of change at the level of the individual allow us to understand better how transformative agency requires first and foremost individual change, and next changes in collectives and the community.

Transformative Agency in PSA Communities

In addition to observing changes in their families, students also described changes in the community. Initially, the PSA group fosters a sense of belonging and connection. The student stops being an individual or a member of a particular family and becomes part of a larger group of friends with a shared purpose of working together for the well-being of their community. This is particularly important because prior to their participation in PSA, many of these youth were socially isolated.

Initially, the groups come together through the study of the books. For example, one student explained how much she enjoyed working as a group, because the emphasis of the program on collective learning results in a sense of collective consciousness. She remarked: "You could say we have constructed a shared way of seeing the world." The formation of this collective identity is a crucial first step in the process of engaging with the larger community.

As the PSA groups engaged with the community, this led to the creation of more spaces for the community to come together around shared

concerns, for example, in community meetings. At the beginning, few people attended, but slowly participation increased. Community members noticed that the PSA groups were actually making a difference, and this motivated more people to become involved. One student explained, "we had a lot of community meetings and a lot of people came. Some were about the environment, and the community participated, helping identify the problems and the solutions, and we all became aware of what we could do." The deep and sustained ways in which the PSA groups interact with the community may explain why, unlike the youth in Bajaj's study (2009), PSA youth did not describe a dampened sense of agency when they completed the program.

Finally, there was some indication that the community was being proactive in making small improvements, such as trash collection. Rather than asking "who will do it?" and "who will pay for it?" they came together to change the situation. Once the PSA group established a precedent of holding community meetings and engaging in projects, community members began to give their own ideas and responses to chronic problems such as the lack of proper trash disposal, fixing potholes, cleaning public spaces such as soccer fields, making benches for people to sit down, buying food for needy families and supporting the projects of elected leaders. A PSA student shared one clear example of this:

> It became evident when we got together with another PSA group in the community and organized a project for solid waste management. We invited all of the community, and presented our ideas for the project. We explained what the PSA program was about and the entire community understood the purpose of PSA and that it was there for everybody. The community felt empowered to participate and collaborate with this project. They all helped for the project to take place. Together we came up with strategies about how to reduce waste. We divided up into small teams in the community. We organized the streets. We cleaned them, and we were able to get enough trash cans. All of this we achieved with the help of the community.

While PSA has had an impact on the community, there was a recognition that the process has been slow and that there is much room for improvement. One mother's comments, (which inspired the title of this chapter), illustrate this: "Well, this program has really brought the community together. But we have more work to do. You know, everything

has a beginning and an end, and we are on our way, and we are on a good path." She further emphasized that "you have to keep insisting, you can't stop." She believed that education was the route for community change, but that this would not happen overnight.

It is also important to take into account that change can be dangerous. Change can be seen as a disruption of the way things are traditionally done, and some people are resistant to change, which could result in violence. One student explained this danger and resistance, "I would always ask my mother why would trouble arise if I didn't go looking for it? And she would explain that when one makes a change, that one acts in a way different from the rest of society, you are different, and people will oppose that." Despite these risks, the research participants were confident about the positive impact the program has had in their lives, their families and their communities.

The Development of Transformative Agency Through Acts of Service and Reflection

Students believed that participation in PSA gave them greater clarity and confidence to act in small ways to improve and change their communities. When looking at the ways in which the program achieved these results, we found that two key features of the program were consistently associated with agency. These included the explicit focus of the program on taking action, specifically in group-led service activities, and the purposeful integration of opportunities to reflect on their actions.

An Emphasis on Service

The PSA curriculum is designed with the central tenet that knowledge is inseparable from action. Service is the way in which action is oriented and systematically integrated into the student experience (see VanderDussen, 2009 for a more complete analysis of how service is conceptualized and integrated into PSA). This arrangement, which is an integral part of the curricular design, has an impact on the ways the students perceive their connection to others, how they begin to feel a sense of accomplishment, as they see concrete results of their actions and how these feelings impact their motivation to continue in the program, but more importantly, to continue interacting with their environment.

As one tutor mentioned, "the impact of the program really becomes apparent when students begin to engage in service. Because the community sees that these are disinterested acts of service, they are not for money or anything like that. And they see that youth can make a change."

One of the first environments where the students begin to develop the confidence to interact with their environment is their own PSA groups. They begin to reflect together about what they can do, and beginning to do small acts of service together helps them begin to notice that their actions can have an impact on their surroundings. The enthusiasm generated by the group begins to have an impact on the community and serves as an example of the different possible actions that can be undertaken. One tutor shared how even though the community was very much concerned with issues that they had identified they do not see the solution to these. When the students begin to take action, the "community sees that there were things that could have been done." That while there was previously a tendency to ask why the government or community leader was not taking action, now they see that "youth are taking action without any financial benefit and wonder if they could have done something themselves as well."

We identified a virtuous cycle sparked by these service activities in that the community benefited from the PSA students' service, and the students were enriched by their connection and interaction with other people in the community. One student shared how she saw her studies as a way of learning how to help others, particularly children. She expressed that "there should be more and more people who are worried about the betterment of the community. I hope one effect my training will have is that it will motivate others to become trained as well."

Small acts of service provide a sense of achievement and purpose, which further motivated students to stay engaged in their communities both while they were studying and after they had finished the program. These concrete service projects made students see the practical value of their studies. As one explained, "well, it motivates me because it is really helping us. For example, we are currently working on a project about how to prevent dengue. We are going door to door and talking to families, helping them to collect bottles, tires, and cans.[3] This is a program that will always take place in the context of the community."

It is through service that the participants began to develop a sense of satisfaction, a feeling that they have something to offer and this, in turn, motivates them to continue working to transform their environment. This motivation through service is expanded beyond the immediate

circle of their community to include a larger sphere of influence, or as one participant above explained, "humanity:" "when I talk about community, I am referring to my immediate context. But when I talk about humanity, I am also talking about all of the other places..." The ability to act for positive change is fostered in students and also in other members of the community. *In this way, agency is transformative because it extends beyond the individual and becomes a collective capacity to act.* Seeing agency in PSA youth inspired other community members to act in ways that would improve the community. Again, the deep embeddedness in the community may be the key reason why students' transformative agency extends beyond the time they are actively studying in PSA, because the school/community boundaries are nonexistent in PSA.

Service also enables students to view their community differently, with greater resources and potential. As one student explained:

> We became aware that the community has a lot of resources. Sometimes we expected that the resources would be used by outsiders, and we don't think they are important. Or we think that in our community there are no opportunities, and therefore I should leave [the community]. But we shouldn't leave. Because our community does have resources and we need to take full advantage of them.

The interaction between these elements, agency and resources (Kabeer, 1999), creates a reinforcing dynamic. The students' capacity to act increases as their sense of belonging to a group becomes solidified, and this in turn shows the community that they are able to take concrete actions that benefit them all. As a result, the students realize that their communities are not static entities but are rather dynamic and that they have their own resources. They do not need to leave their communities or wait for others to solve their problems. Acts of service strengthen their sense of agency and motivate them to act in ways that benefit the community.

An Emphasis on Systematic Reflection

The second element associated with increased student agency was the capacity to reflect. Our findings regarding the importance of reflection support the hypotheses of Archer (2012) and DeJaeghere et al. (2016) regarding the "core" role that reflexivity plays in agency development. Reflection is often stressed in participatory and empowering educational methodologies, but few educational spaces cultivate this habit through

its systematic integration into the curriculum, particularly in collective ways that focus on the community in addition to the individual.

Students explained that the capacity to reflect improved their confidence, as well as their desire and willingness to act. The habit of reflection was fostered through the PSA curriculum in textbook exercises, which are called "reflections." These exercises connect the concepts being studied in the lessons to other themes, introduce new ideas and/or ask the students to think of the application of a particular concept in a different context. These reflections are found in almost all lessons in the curriculum (e.g., of lessons from the curriculum that include reflections see Murphy-Graham, 2012). Examples of the reflections found in ten of the books can be found in the Appendix of this chapter. These exercises can be grouped into three categories:

- Reflections about the individual
- Reflections related to the interactions of individuals with the community and family and the nature of such interactions
- Reflections related to change and transformation.

These reflection exercises fostered the changed ways of thinking that students described as a result of their experience in PSA. As a first step, students reflect about themselves, about the role they play in their environment and their own abilities. Second, the reflection exercises allow the student to reflect about how he/she can interact with those around them and the characteristics of those interactions. Finally, the reflections allow the student to channel their ideas about the self and their interactions with others toward social change. Once this habit is cultivated in the classroom, students then used reflection in other contexts. PSA participants spoke specifically of how reflection influenced their thoughts and actions. For example, one PSA tutor explained that he had noticed his own change unfolding when he started questioning his actions. He explained how over time he had realized that:

> Asking questions of oneself also helps you change. How can I become a better person? How can I improve my relationship with my mother or father? Because at the beginning those questions are not relevant or important. I never used to think about those things, about how to improve my communication with them. But slowly I found myself thinking about these type of questions.

This capacity to reflect was recognized by the participants as a particular characteristic of the PSA program, and not something they had been taught to do before. In many cases, the students compared their experience with their formal schooling system and talked about the difference they saw when they compared both systems. One graduate of the program expressed how "in school one goes to learn mostly theoretical things. But here it is more about learning how to live with people that we see every day. It is about reflecting more."

In sum, the process of reflection allowed participants to further their awareness of their surroundings, and about possibilities for interaction and intervening in their communities. The insights gained through these reflections further motivated them to act, particularly in service activities that benefitted the community.

Discussion/Conclusion

Our findings regarding how PSA supports the development of transformative agency for youth in Colombia highlight some of the advantages of non-formal education. As explained earlier, FUNDAEC developed the PSA program as an effort to ensure that certain elements of the SAT program (which is a formal and accredited high school program) were maintained and even strengthened. This was prompted because as national governments worked to improve educational quality, new curricular standards required SAT to respond to various forms of assessment, international standards and degree requisites. Because of this, many curricular elements in SAT were not adequately covered by tutors, particularly the service and reflection exercises (with more content to cover, these activities were skipped). What we found in our research illustrates an important paradox: The elements of SAT that were compromised in the name of improving educational quality are those that have a direct impact on the students' motivation to learn, their sense of agency and commitment to meaningful contributions to social change. Our findings suggest that one of the key elements of the PSA program is that students find motivation in action, in service and in the application of their learning. This motivation ensures that not only do they stay in the program but they do so out of their own volition, with no formal degree as validation of their effort. They participate because they love learning, and they are inspired by their newfound abilities to act in meaningful ways toward community betterment.

Another important insight gained by the study of PSA relates to the importance of relevant curriculum. In the case of PSA, the curriculum emphasizes that knowledge plays a central and fundamental role in the learning process of its participants. Concepts and information are presented in the textbooks in a particular integrated manner which is, of course, one way in which students acquire knowledge. Additionally, the PSA textbooks help students generate their own local knowledge through their interactions in the community: This includes knowledge about their environment, who the different actors are in their local environments, and about the diverse problems that affect their community. At the same time, they generate their own questions and begin to acquire the tools to answer these. Through the different practices, investigations and service components in the program, they generate their own knowledge about how to respond to pertinent issues. Their acquisition of "local" knowledge serves as a key resource for them to act in ways that can improve their communities.

In the case of FUNDAEC and its experience with SAT and subsequently with PSA, these findings are not limited to ideas about education, its purpose and its potential effects, but rather based on both formal and non-formal educational programs with established curriculums, structures and textbooks. In this regard, these models can be considered potential alternatives to learning in the Latin American context.

Notes

1. The Bahá'í Faith is the youngest of the world's independent religions. More information about it and its worldwide community is available at www.bahai.org. FUNDAEC is considered a "Bahá'í-inspired organization and SAT/PSA "Bahá'í-inspired programs. However, as Farid-Arbab (2016) clarifies, "the educational endeavors thus designated do not include religious instruction…. 'Inspiration' in this case refers to the framework of thought and action within which educational experience unfolds…Those involved in such programs are not exclusively Bahá'ís; they include a range of like-minded individuals who agree on the fundamental elements of the evolving conceptual framework" (p. 5).
2. The way in which FUNDAEC conceptualizes community development is also described at length in Farid-Arbab (2016). Community development is linked to its broader understanding of "civilization-building," FUNDAEC conceptualizes as a reciprocal relationship between personal

growth and organic change in the structure of society. A *telos* (an end or purpose) related to the purpose of education informed the theoretical approach of FUNDAEC; namely that education serves a twofold moral purpose of personal transformation—becoming "imbued with new virtues and powers, new moralities, new capacities" and of the transformation of society (Arbab-Farid, 2016, 8). The "aim of the educational process set in motion was thus expressed as the empowerment of the individual to assume responsibility for developing those virtues and powers required of her as a member of a human race now entering its age of maturity, on the one hand, and of consciously contributing to organic change in the structures of society, on the other" (Farid-Arbab, 2016, 8).

3. These are spaces where water accumulates and the female *aedes aegypti* mosquito lays eggs, so students worked to ensure breeding grounds were minimized.

Appendix: Units in the Curriculum and Their Reflections

Language

Properties

Reflections about the concept of change of state
Reflections about the concept of human will
Reflections about the concepts of cooperation, solidarity and unity

Systems and Processes

Reflections about positive and negative change
Reflections about possible changes in the state of a community
Reflections on the family as a system
Reflections about the interactions within a micro region
Reflections about the functioning of a system
Reflections about cooperation and competition within the context of search for excellence
Reflections about the concepts of structure and the functions of a system
Reflections about the interactions between subsystems
Reflections about the concept of cooperation
Reflections about interiorizing ideas
Reflections about the flow of information in a community

Mathematics *Classification* Reflections about sets and subsets: the human species Reflections about the interactions among species: mutualism *Numerical Statements* Reflections about the concept of unity Reflections about the concept of value
Technology *Planting Crops* Reflections about communities *Diversified High Efficiency Plots* Reflections about group work
Science *Heating and Cooling of Matter* Reflections about the concept of peer pressure Reflections about the methods of science *Growth of a plant* Reflections about the life of the community Reflections about the appropriate attitudes for the investigation of reality Reflections about the concept of habits that are formed in our lives Reflections about the concept of the structure of a system Reflections about the concept of community Reflections about the concept of interactions
Service *Environmental Issues* Reflections about the social dimension of transportation *Ecosystems* Reflections about group unity Reflections about the interaction with a community Reflections about the harmony between ecosystems Reflections about taking decisions

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CHAPTER 6

Beyond Achievement: Colombia's *Escuela Nueva* and the Creation of Active Citizens

Thomas F. Luschei and Michelle Soto-Peña

Introduction

In the 1970s, rural areas of Colombia faced many challenges, including civil conflict, insufficient infrastructure, poverty, and low levels of educational access and quality, especially in the most remote areas. Most rural schools did not offer complete primary education and more than half of rural children between the ages of seven and nine never attended school (Psacharopoulos, Rojas, & Echavarria, 1992). Rural children who were in school experienced high degrees of grade repetition, with fewer than two-thirds of rural first-grade students advancing to the second grade in the following year, compared to nearly three-quarters of first graders in urban schools (McEwan, 1998). Due to civil conflict dating to the 1950s, children in rural areas were often exposed to violence and danger (Pitt, 2002). Children in sparsely populated rural areas who had the privilege of enrolling in school generally attended small, one- or two-room schools

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with children of many ages and grades in the same classroom. Yet teachers received little or no preparation to confront the complex teaching and learning challenges in these "multigrade" classrooms and schools.

The difficult conditions facing rural multigrade Colombian schools called for an innovative and comprehensive approach to meet the academic and social needs of rural children while providing support for rural teachers, who were often poorly trained and isolated from colleagues. Daily exposure of children to violence also demanded an educational approach that would instill peaceful values and behaviors in students. To address the critical needs of these small multigrade schools, which represented the majority of schools in Colombia's rural areas, UNESCO piloted a multigrade model called the "Unitary School" in 150 schools in the Colombian department of Norte de Santander. Working with the materials and methodologies of the Unitary School, a representative from the Colombian Ministry of Education (Vicky Colbert), a rural school teacher (Oscar Mogollón), and an officer from the United States Agency for International Development (Beryl Levinger) jointly developed what became known as "*Escuela Nueva*" (New School), a systemic and child-centered approach to multigrade instruction. Between 1975 and 1978, and with support from USAID, *Escuela Nueva* was implemented in 500 schools in three Colombian departments (Colbert & Arboleda, 2016).

Escuela Nueva's new approach to schooling shifted the focus of the learning process from the teacher to the student, encouraging cooperative and collaborative learning among small groups of students, flexible promotion of students across grades, and individualized support from the teacher. This learning process was supported by a system of curricular learning guides, resources—like school libraries and resource-rich "learning corners"—to facilitate student-centered inquiry, and a set of activities and mechanisms to promote student autonomy and leadership skills, as well as stronger relationships with parents. As Vicky Colbert and Jairo Arboleda (2016, 390) write, "The basic idea was to transform the conventional teacher-centered schooling practices into a learning-centered model that would integrate curriculum, teacher training, community involvement and administrative strategies in a systemic and cost effective way. The expectation was that the new approach to rural education would guarantee access and quality improvement for all school children."

Escuela Nueva was designed to provide a replicable and scalable educational model for teachers and community members living in rural

regions. The model was also meant to expand access to education in rural areas; improve student achievement; minimize rates of repetition; and improve the self-esteem, civic engagement, and creativity of children (McEwan, 1998; Psacharopoulos et al., 1992; Rüst, 2012). In most *Escuela Nueva* schools, one to two teachers worked with different grades across one or two classrooms. *Escuela Nueva* teachers used learning guides to facilitate a student-centered classroom environment where students were able to learn at their own pace and engage in self-assessment and flexible promotion (Psacharopoulos et al., 1992). *Escuela Nueva* also encouraged community involvement and engagement through a holistic, collaborative approach; just as important, authentic student governance ensured that student voice was incorporated into the administration and operation of schools to build citizenry and interpersonal skills among students (McEwan, 2008; Psacharopoulos et al., 1992). To illustrate the contrast of *Escuela Nueva* with traditional rural schools, Former Chilean Minister of Education Ernesto Schiefelbein (1991) observes:

> When entering a school that works with the *Escuela Nueva* model the visitor sees that it operates in a different way and special attention should be given to the children. Some children approach the visitor and ask with interest and tranquility what he or she comes to see while others continue working concentrated on their task or discussing in groups. The teacher finishes giving some instructions to the group with which she is working and can then talk to the visitor. Each one seems to know exactly what he or she is supposed to do and if the visitor asks they can tell what they are doing and, more importantly, how they are learning. They know they are learning with a method: they observe, reflect, write alone and then in groups, compare with elements that allow self-evaluation, review and correct and write again to, finally ask the teacher for comments or suggestions. They can come to the teacher whenever they need or have a difficulty. Because in this school the teacher fulfills, truly, the role that is always recommended in the normal and pedagogical schools but that is almost never put in practice: to be the guide that facilitates the learning process of the learner, who is the student. (Schiefelbein, 1991, 16, as cited and translated in Colbert & Arboleda, 2016, 387)

The *Escuela Nueva* model enjoyed quick success and expansion, growing from a small pilot in 1975 to implementation across nearly 25,000 schools by 1990. In 1983, the *Escuela Nueva* model became official public policy for all of Colombia's rural schools. The model was also adopted

in more than a dozen countries in and beyond Latin America and the Caribbean. Much of this growth and success were due to a series of positive evaluations of *Escuela Nueva's* impact on student achievement and other important outcomes. For example, Psacharopoulos, Rojas, and Velez (1993) found that third- and fifth-grade students who attended EN schools performed better in all subjects with the exception of fifth-grade math, relative to students in traditional rural schools.

In 1997, UNESCO's Latin American Laboratory for the Assessment of Quality in Education (LLECE) across 13 education systems in Latin America and the Caribbean found that Colombia was the only country in which rural students outperformed urban students in both math and reading. UNESCO's report attributed this rural school advantage directly to *Escuela Nueva* (Casassus, Cusato, Froemel, & Palafox, 2002). Luschei and Fagioli (2016) found that in a 2006 follow-up study by LLECE, Colombia's rural schools retained a mathematics test score advantage over marginally urban schools (but not schools in other urban areas), holding all else equal. Summarizing accumulated positive evidence regarding *Escuela Nueva* and *Escuela Nueva*-inspired programs in Latin America, McEwan (2008, 479) observed, "regional inequities [in Latin America] might be overcome through concerted investments in multigrade schools."

After decades of evaluations, there is a strong body of evidence that relative to children in traditional rural schools, *Escuela Nueva* students enjoy superior academic performance. Yet *Escuela Nueva* was designed to boost more than academic achievement; the program also seeks to develop non-cognitive skills like responsibility, leadership, and the ability to relate well with peers. Although there is some evidence that *Escuela Nueva* has positively influenced non-cognitive skills of children living in rural Colombia (Chesterfield, 1994; Luschei & Vega, 2015; Pitt, 2002; Psacharopoulos et al., 1992; Schiefelbein, 1992), the evidence is much thinner in this regard. Given the importance of these softer skills in both schooling and life, here we focus our attention on evidence regarding *Escuela Nueva's* potential to develop empathic and active citizens who can contribute positively to their schools and societies. Specifically, we draw on the results of a comprehensive review of literature related to *Escuela Nueva* in Colombia and beyond. Our principal objective is to explore the questions of whether and how *Escuela Nueva* promotes active and involved participation in personal relationships, civic activities and attitudes, and stronger relationships between schools and families.

We also explore evidence of the impact of *Escuela Nueva* on other important non-cognitive outcomes.

In the section that follows, we discuss evidence related to the conceptualization and importance of non-cognitive skills. We then describe our theoretical framework, which draws on the work of Paulo Freire to distinguish the teaching of non-cognitive skills from instruction and learning that rely on more traditional "banking" approaches to education. This is followed by a description of our literature review methodology and the results of our literature review. We conclude with a discussion of our results and how they contribute to current literature on *Escuela Nueva*.

Background: What Are Non-cognitive Skills and Why Are They Important?

Defining Non-cognitive Skills

Although non-cognitive skills have become increasingly important in discussions of the aims and impact of education, there is little consensus on how to define them. Scholars often use terms like "non-cognitive skills," "soft-skills," and "personality traits" interchangeably. Nyhus and Pons (2005) describe the "Big Five" personality traits as agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, extraversion, and autonomy. According to Brunello and Schlotter (2011, 5–6), agreeableness is "the degree to which an individual is co-operative, warm and agreeable versus cold, disagreeable and antagonistic." Conscientiousness is the "preference for following rules and schedules, for keeping engagements and the attitude of being hardworking, organized and dependable." Emotional stability "addresses the degree to which the individual is insecure, anxious, depressed and emotional rather than calm, self-confident and cool." Autonomy refers to an individual's "propensity to decide and the degree of initiative and control." Extraversion represents the "preference for human contacts, empathy, gregariousness, assertiveness and the wish to inspire people." Drawing upon the work of Nyhus and Pons (2005), Brunello and Schlotter (2011) posit that individuals should be provided opportunities to develop these traits in educational contexts.

Kautz, Heckman, Diris, Ter Weel, and Borghans (2014) operationalize non-cognitive skills as Openness to experience, Conscientiousness,

Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (OCEAN). Schulz (2008) places "soft skills" into three skill categories: (a) personal qualities, (b) interpersonal skills, and (c) additional skills and knowledge. Economists James Heckman and Yona Rubinstein (2001) have described non-cognitive skills as motivation, tenacity, trustworthiness, and perseverance.

In addition to skills centered on an individual's personal qualities and motivations, others have extended the concept of non-cognitive skills to relationships and perspectives regarding others. For example, Rothstein (2004b) characterizes non-cognitive skills as personal qualities that are important for success in life, work, and personal relationships. Rothstein cites a 1987 report from the National Academy of Education to describe key non-cognitive skills: "resilience and courage to overcome stress and adversity, empathy and commitment to justice for others beyond ourselves, devotion to the public good" (97). Rothstein (2004b) has also argued that important learner outcomes—beyond academic or cognitive skills—should include tolerance and comprehension of pluralism, in addition to self-direction and commitment to one's craft.

Despite many diverse definitions and conceptualizations of non-cognitive skills, three general themes emerge from the literature: (a) "grit," or the ability to persevere under adversity, (b) leadership qualities, and (c) a "commitment to public good" (Rothstein, 2004b). The third is related to interpersonal relationships, empathy, and the characteristics of active citizens, which will be the primary focus of our review below.

The Importance of Non-cognitive Skills

Although most educational studies address the determinants and importance of more cognitively oriented skills, especially academic achievement, there is reason to believe that non-cognitive skills are as or more important in ensuring children's success in school and life. As a result, researchers have attempted to underscore the importance of these skills as important outcomes alongside student test scores (Heckman & Kautz, 2012; Rothstein, 2004a). For example, Rothstein (2004a) argues that leadership skills, self-discipline, ambition, and a strong work ethic and moral code should be measured and qualified as valid learning outcomes that should be addressed and developed in schools.

Of course, cognitive and non-cognitive skills should not be treated as substitutes or competitors, as they can complement and reinforce each other. Ample evidence suggests that the development of non-cognitive

skills enhances students' persistence and achievement in school, thereby increasing the development of cognitive skills. For example, Carneiro, Crawford, and Goodman (2007) found that the development of non-cognitive skills can contribute to higher levels of success in school and life, in terms of staying in school, obtaining a degree, securing employment, gaining work experience, and earning higher wages. Jacob (2002) argues that the development of non-cognitive skills can influence the enrollment of individuals into higher education. Heckman and Rubinstein (2001) found that students who stay in school longer are more likely to develop non-cognitive skills. Comparing students who obtained a secondary-level general equivalency diploma (GED) to those who earned a traditional high school diploma, the authors found that students who remained in school to earn a diploma were able to develop their non-cognitive skills further, which led to more advantageous educational and employment opportunities.

The impact of non-cognitive skills carries over to the labor market, both as a result of and independently of their impact on academic success. Kautz et al. (2014) argue that investing in non-cognitive skills returns high rates of economic return in the labor market and broader economy. The importance of non-cognitive skills is also evidenced by a high level of demand for employees with strong non-cognitive skills across many different employment sectors (Murti, 2014; Schulz, 2008).

Finally, non-cognitive skills appear to be beneficial for the greater society. In the USA, Bowen and Bok (1999) found that students who had entered university through affirmative action programs were more likely to choose career paths that benefitted their communities, as opposed to entering other more individually oriented careers. The authors attributed this decision to the relatively high level of non-cognitive skills possessed by these students. Translating this concept to the Colombian context, Forero-Pineda, Escobar-Rodriguez, and Molina (2006) found that graduates of *Escuela Nueva* schools in one of Colombia's most violent regions were more likely to participate in voluntary organizations than alumni of non-*Escuela Nueva* schools.

Developing Non-cognitive Skills

Although researchers vary substantially in how they conceptualize and define non-cognitive skills, most argue that these skills are malleable and can be developed through appropriate and effective educational

approaches. However, there is limited literature exploring how one develops non-cognitive skills. Rothstein (2004a) argues that students can develop non-cognitive skills (like communication, punctuality, responsibility, attitude, teamwork, and conflict resolution) in school. Kautz et al. (2014) posit that the inclusion of parents and the development of healthy parent–child relationships through school programming can help to develop the non-cognitive skills of participating students. Schulz (2008) also argues that parents play a critical role in the development of their children's non-cognitive skills, which suggests that student-centered learning institutions and models can substantially enhance the formation of non-cognitive skills in students. Finally, according to Kautz et al. (2014), mentorship has also proven to be a key positive influence on the development of non-cognitive skills and the educational attainment of youth.

What's Missing?

Despite some variability in definitions and conceptualizations of non-cognitive skills, three major dimensions emerge: leadership and autonomy, grit or perseverance, and relations with others, including empathy and interpersonal skills. These skills are important for a range of academic reasons, from their positive impact on educational persistence and success to their ultimate importance in life and the labor market. Although there is less evidence regarding how non-cognitive skills are developed, schools can and should play an important role in supporting and building them through the development of peer relationships and partnerships between schools and families.

A key limitation of the literature on non-cognitive skills is that these skills are examined primarily through the lens of an input-output framework rooted in achievement and upward economic mobility. There is very little discussion in this literature on the relationship between non-cognitive skills and personal empowerment or social or political awareness. As we argue below, there is also little discussion in literature on *Escuela Nueva* that directly addresses the questions of how *Escuela Nueva* can foster an educational process that challenges traditional, teacher- and school-centered approaches to education to empower youth to become active participants in their local communities. To address these limitations, we turn to our theoretical framework, which aims to

incorporate these less traditional perspectives into the discussion of both *Escuela Nueva* and non-cognitive skills.

Theoretical Framework

In an analysis of challenges facing the implementation of *Escuela Nueva* in rural Colombia, Benveniste and McEwan (2000, 34) underscore the radical pedagogical change that the model represented. Whereas the "core of educational practice" across Latin America and the Caribbean is often very rigid and teacher-centered, *Escuela Nueva* uses a flexible, child-centered pedagogical approach that encourages student collaboration and voice, as well as partnerships with local communities. From a pedagogical perspective, this change shifts the focus from teacher to student. According to Vicky Colbert and Jairo Arboleda (2016, 392), "Although the principles of Escuela Nueva are based on the pedagogic trends of the 1900's and inspired in pedagogues as Decroly, Dewey, Montessori, Piaget and Vygotsky, among others, the designers of the model were able to apply these principles within operative strategies transforming schools with the lowest economic resources into active, participatory and collaborative learning environments. Some of these principles were adopted by some elite schools in most countries but not in the poorest low income schools. This is an important feature of the Colombian innovation."

Escuela Nueva's shift to child-centered instruction leads logically to the development of key non-cognitive skills among students, particularly leadership, autonomy, and interpersonal relationships, as children take on new roles as leaders and classmates. For example, Luschei (2016, 93) relates the case of a school in the Colombian department of Quindío, where the student government created a committee called the "Constructors of Peace" to resolve school conflicts. Although the committee was comprised primarily of children with behavioral challenges, these students took their roles to heart and were able to positively influence the school climate. As an administrator recalled, "it is surprising to see those children with the most problems, how they appropriated that role, that they are the constructors of peace…they are the most difficult and they are changing, they carry more and more children and everyone takes on that role."

At the same time it recast the traditional relationship between teacher and student, the radical pedagogical change brought by *Escuela Nueva*

also challenged the traditional position of historically marginalized, poverty-stricken citizens living in rural communities of Colombia, vis-à-vis their urban counterparts.[1] Viewed from this perspective, *Escuela Nueva* can be seen as heeding the call of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, that education provide more than cognitive skills to students. According to Freire (2000), teachers must also instill in their students civic skills and knowledge so that all citizens are able to participate in the political process. One key avenue for addressing this objective, according to Freire, was for the pedagogical process to allow learners to discover themselves and the social problems that afflicted them (Freire, 2000).

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (2000) interrogates the traditional use of education as a tool of domination, in which the teacher acts as an oppressor by "banking" knowledge into the student, who acts as a passive receptor in an educator-centered pedagogical approach. Whereas educational banking oppresses students, problem-posing, learner-centered education serves as an instrument of liberation that occurs through a mutual process of action and reflection, also known as "praxis." Through praxis, students engage in a student-centered learning process (action) by building on their prior knowledge and lived experiences (reflection). In this model, students are active agents in their learning process and production of knowledge. This process is reinforced through "dialogics," where teachers and students employ critical dialogue to understand the world around them. In turn, this process changes and liberates the student from oppression.

In drawing upon the work of Paulo Freire, we argue that *Escuela Nueva* represented more than a new pedagogical approach that elevated the academic success of poor children in rural areas. In our view, *Escuela Nueva* also empowered rural children and their communities in a Freirian process of liberation that ultimately contributed to a stronger and more peaceful Colombian society. In fact, Vicky Colbert has pointed to Freire as an inspiration for her work with *Escuela Nueva*; Colbert has described *Escuela Nueva* as "Freire in the classroom," due to the model's departure from rigid teacher-centered banking models and its emphasis on child-centered construction of knowledge (V. Colbert, personal communication, November 8, 2016).

In using the work of Paulo Freire as a conceptual bridge from evidence of the impact of *Escuela Nueva* on non-cognitive skills to social transformation in Colombia, we challenge and attempt to broaden the conceptions of non-cognitive skills offered in the literature cited above.

First, we argue for a broader conceptualization of non-cognitive skills to include Freire's (2000) idea of "critical awareness," or one's ability to recognize his or her position in the world as oppressed or oppressor. This critical awareness promotes solidarity among those who are oppressed. From the perspective of social relations in the classroom, solidarity—generated through praxis—may encourage greater empathy among students and promote more peaceful social interactions.

Second, whereas the authors discussed above link non-cognitive skills directly to labor market outcomes like employment and earnings, we argue for a more expansive idea of the societal value of non-cognitive skills. As we aggregate peaceful classroom interactions to the level of society, the development of non-cognitive skills like mutual respect and peaceful social interactions can ultimately promote greater solidarity and empathy within society and across groups engaged in conflict. In fact, as we write this chapter, the Colombian society is witnessing social and economic transformation and improvement, as well as the potential end to centuries of violence, and over 50 years of conflict with armed insurgents.

According to the Colombian National Center for Historical Memory, armed conflict among *guerrilla* groups, paramilitary armies, drug traffickers, and the Colombian government claimed an estimated 220,000 lives, most of them civilians, between 1958 and 2013 (GMH, 2013). More recently however, events suggest that Colombia's future will be more democratic and peaceful than its past. Rates of murders and kidnappings have fallen substantially since the 1990s and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), Colombia's largest insurgent group, has been involved in peace talks with the Colombian government, culminating in the completion of a series of peace agreements in October and November 2016. Although the first of these agreements was narrowly rejected by a popular vote in October 2016, prospects for a peaceful resolution seemed strong at the time of this writing. In our view, *Escuela Nueva* has contributed substantially to this process. Although we cannot link *Escuela Nueva* causally to social transformation in Colombia, our review of literature does reveal evidence of *Escuela Nueva's* impact on a number of key non-cognitive skills, including peaceful social interaction of children (Forero-Pineda et al., 2006). Given the long history and expansive reach of *Escuela Nueva* in Colombia, we think it is likely that the model has played some

positive part in the movement of Colombian society toward a more peaceful future.

Literature Review Methodology

Our literature review draws upon sources related to both non-cognitive skills and *Escuela Nueva*. In reviewing non-cognitive skills, we examined literature that included but was not limited to empirical studies, research reports, and theoretical papers. Our search terms included: "non-cognitive skills," "soft skills," and "non-cognitive development." In searching for literature on *Escuela Nueva*, we examined empirical studies and research reports as well as primary documents produced by the *Fundación Escuela Nueva Volvamos a la Gente* (FEN). Our search terms included: "*Escuela Nueva*," "*Fundación Escuela Nueva*," and individual names of FEN- affiliated programs, including *Nueva Escuela Unitaria* in Guatemala, *Aulas Alternativas* in El Salvador, *Escola Ativa* in Brazil, *Programa para el Desarrollo Educativo de Guinea Ecuatorial* (PRODEGE), and *MECE-Rural* in Chile. We employed the search engines Google, Google Scholar, and ERIC. Although we did not limit the literature to specific publication dates, most literature examining non-cognitive skills and non-cognitive development within *Escuela Nueva* ranges from 1990 to 2015. We identified a total of 22 sources referring to non-cognitive skills, 44 sources that directly referred to *Escuela Nueva*, and 12 sources that referred to both non-cognitive skills and *Escuela Nueva*.

Literature Review Results

As we describe above, our review focused primarily on evidence of the impact of *Escuela Nueva* on non-cognitive skills, especially those related to social interactions, active citizenship, and peaceful interactions of children. Before discussing this evidence, we briefly describe the *Escuela Nueva* model itself, including its design and operation, EN's emphasis on child-centered pedagogy and cooperative learning, student governance, and relationships with local communities. We then discuss evidence of the impact of EN on non-cognitive skills in Colombia and beyond. We conclude the review with a discussion of implementation challenges that are important for educators and policy makers to consider when attempting to adopt the *Escuela Nueva* model elsewhere.

What Is *Escuela Nueva*?

According to the co-founder of *Escuela Nueva*, Colombian educator Vicky Colbert (1999), EN is a multigrade educational model designed to address the learning needs of marginalized youth living in rural regions of Colombia. Prior to the establishment of EN, Colombian children living in rural regions had limited access to educational quality and uninterrupted schooling. When children did have access to schooling, their classrooms generally featured a teacher-centered learning environment in which teachers talked while children listened. Curriculum and instruction were not relevant to the daily realities of rural youth. Exacerbating these learning challenges, teachers received very little or no training to address the needs of rural youth or to succeed in the complex pedagogical environment of the multigrade classroom (Colbert, 1999).

Child-Centered Instruction

The establishment of *Escuela Nueva* in rural schools challenged traditional notions of education in many ways. Most importantly, the focus of the teaching-learning process shifted from the teacher to the student (Baessa, Chesterfield, & Ramos, 2002; Colbert, 1999, 2006, 2009). As the protagonists of their own education, children guided and led their own learning processes at their own pace, with curriculum that was more relevant to their contexts and lived experiences (Colbert, 1999, 2009; Rüst, 2012). With this new model, students engaged in active learning through discussion, debate, research, and exchange of ideas (Baessa et al., 2002; Rüst, 2012). Promotion across levels and grades became more flexible, allowing children to work at their own pace and advance at the appropriate time. This flexibility also allowed children who were forced to leave and return to school after extended absences to avoid losing an entire year of schooling (Vega-Chaparro, 2014). At the same time, students were encouraged to take ownership of their progress in school through self-reporting tools to monitor their academic progress and attendance (Madhavan, 2015; Psacharopoulos et al., 1993; Torres, 1991, 1992).

As EN shifted the focus from the teacher to the student, the teacher's role changed from that of the sole source and communicator of knowledge to a facilitator of student learning, intervening at critical "junctures" of student learning (Madhavan, 2015, 13). To help them adjust

to this new role, participating teachers received training that employed the methodology of EN itself, working cooperatively in small groups to complete modular learning guides, with the support of facilitator/trainers (Luschei, 2016). To further support and train teachers, *Escuela Nueva* teachers met regularly in "microcenters" for professional development and to collaborate and develop strategies for classroom teaching (Psacharopoulos et al., 1993). Professional development allowed teachers to reflect upon their new roles and techniques as teacher facilitators, and to construct new ways to teach in their own classrooms.

Pedagogy and Curriculum

According to FEN, EN rests on a number of key pedagogical guidelines, including:

- The role of the teacher is reimagined as a facilitator who fosters a safe learning environment where students are in control of the learning process;
- students engage in the construction of their own knowledge through inquiry and creativity;
- students engage in critical thinking through inquiry and reflection;
- students engage in a learning process that is relevant to their cultural and contextual realities;
- students engage in a learning process that promotes democratic behaviors; and
- students engage in a learning process that is developmentally appropriate for their needs (Vega-Chaparro, 2014, 78–79).

These pedagogical principles are supported with a comprehensive set of curricula or student learning guides. Each learning guide is dedicated to a core content area, such as math, social studies, and literacy. The EN learning guides are created to align with the cultural context of children's communities (Colbert, 1999). They can also be modified or adapted to contexts of specific communities, and classroom activities are intended to relate directly to the lives of children in their communities (Torres, 1991). Citizenship skills and competencies are infused throughout the learning guides and taught directly through the social studies curriculum (Rüst, 2012).

Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

EN learning strategies foster collaborative and cooperative learning, as students are encouraged to work collaboratively in small groups to discuss and share their ideas. If implemented with fidelity, the collaborative nature of the EN model can build a safe and supportive classroom environment where students develop confidence and concern for one another. In addition to modular learning guides, EN employs classroom strategies to promote a student-centered and collaborative learning environment. For example, EN "learning corners" are used to engage students in inquiry-oriented learning centered on students' direct experiences. Open access classroom libraries allow students to research particular topics and construct their own knowledge through the written word. "Friendship mail," which features prominently in most EN classrooms, allows students to send friendly and supportive messages to each other throughout the school day. Students and teachers also work as a community to create "values charts," which exemplify societal values that all agree to adhere to throughout the year. Additionally, a classroom suggestion box enables members of the classroom community to express their concerns or suggestions to improve the quality of their learning experience (Psacharopoulos et al., 1993).

Student Governance

In addition to fostering collaborative relationships among children, EN classroom strategies attempt to promote the development of democratic behavior (MEN, 2010 as cited in Vega-Chaparro, 2014, 83). One key avenue for doing so is the use of authentic student governance and voice. Students in EN schools are encouraged to participate in student government, which involves serving on different committees, including the general student assembly, board of directors, and classroom or work committees, such as the conflict resolution committee or *convivencia* committee, which is designed to promote positive relationships among students (Luschei, 2016; Rüst, 2012; Vega-Chaparro, 2014). Student leaders are responsible for proposing and organizing projects for the broader school community, as well as "finding solutions to problems, challenges, and difficulties encountered in school life" (Rüst, 2012, 19); students also enjoy the autonomy to make and carry out the activities and decisions that they propose (Rüst, 2012).

In theory, students who participate in school government learn about the challenges and rewards of civic participation. For example, students who are elected to positions through the electoral process feel responsible for completing the promises they made to the student body (Torres, 1992, 21). As Torres (1992) writes, the student election and governance process involves students in the co-management of the school and introduces students to civic and democratic life, helping them to "develop cooperative attitudes, partnership and solidarity, ability to lead and make decisions, public speaking, group work." Moreover, the election of student leaders replicates "the procedures of a democratic voting policy, and is renewed periodically so that several children have the opportunity to go through an experience of direction" (Torres, 1992, 5). Although there are likely to be limits on the reach and power of student governance, Luschei (2016, 96) has observed an *Escuela Nueva* school in which students occasionally lead the school while administrators and teachers participate in professional development. As the school's principal observed, "if you walk by a classroom, the other students are paying attention, the primary coordinator is managing the young student teachers, they are exercising that autonomy, the leadership that they learn with this model."

Community Building

Several features of the EN school and classroom are designed to promote communication both within classrooms and between the classroom and the community. As discussed above, values charts, friendship mail, and the classroom suggestion box encourage dialogue among peers, community members, and teacher facilitators. Classroom libraries, which provide resources for student research projects, are also open to community members and parents. "Traveling notebooks," which students take home to share and contribute to with their families, are designed to strengthen relationships between the classroom and the surrounding community. In these notebooks, students, teachers, and community members have the opportunity to pose a topic of discussion and share their related ideas and opinions, thereby helping to build mutual respect across households. All of these activities are designed to involve parents in their children's learning.

Students in *Escuela Nueva* schools are also encouraged to undertake projects with their parents that build engagement with their

communities (Psacharopoulos et al., 1993), including the joint development and incorporation of family records, a map of the school surroundings identifying students' homes, and an agricultural calendar. As a result, *Escuela Nueva* students are often aware of and involved in their local communities. For example, Pitt (2002) found that EN students in rural Colombia believed that they should convey their problems to local officials and be more involved in the community. Pitt also found that students were able to identify several community-based projects that the student government had undertaken, including a "coffee school," sports, and working with the town mayor.

Evidence of Impact of *Escuela Nueva* on Non-cognitive Skills

Our discussion above paints an appealing and somewhat idealistic picture of what *Escuela Nueva* has been able to accomplish, if implemented with fidelity and adequate resources. Of course, perfect implementation occurs very rarely, as we discuss in more detail below. Here, we critically examine evidence of the impact of *Escuela Nueva* on non-cognitive skills, drawing on studies of EN in rural areas of Colombia and other countries, as well as offshoots of EN in urban areas of Colombia.

Escuela Nueva *in Rural Areas in Colombia and Beyond*

Several studies of *Escuela Nueva* in Colombia, as well as *EN*-inspired programs in other countries, have found positive impacts of the model on children's non-cognitive skills, especially their relationships and interactions with other children. For example, Rojas and Castillo (1988, as cited in Psacharopoulos et al., 1993) found that EN schools had higher levels of civic and community participation, as measured by activities like adult education, agricultural extension, athletic competitions, health campaigns, and community celebrations (Psacharopoulos et al., 1993, 274). Comparing scores on assessments of non-cognitive skills between *Escuela Nueva* students and students in traditional rural schools, Psacharopoulos et al. (1993) found that *Escuela Nueva* students in third grade scored higher on measures of creativity, civics, and self-esteem. However, after controlling for relevant background factors, the *Escuela Nueva* advantage remained only in civic behavior and knowledge.

In comparing *Escuela Nueva* schools with traditional rural schools in Colombia, Pitt (2002) draws upon the work of Freire, Dewey, and Schiefelbein to define school as a place where students feel empowered to be active participants in their classrooms and communities, thereby contributing positively to school climate. Although Pitt found no significant difference in school climate between *Escuela Nueva* and non-*Escuela Nueva* schools, she found that students who left *Escuela Nueva* schools for traditional schools reported that classroom climate worsened. Specifically, these students reported that the "extent of free expression, cooperation and participation was not as great in their [new] classrooms" (Pitt, 2002, 58). She also found that students attending *Escuela Nueva* schools were more likely to express their opinions and demonstrated higher levels of democratic behavior with their peers.

Exploring the impact of *Escuela Nueva* in one of Colombia's most violent regions, Forero-Pineda et al. (2006, 275) found that the level of implementation of *Escuela Nueva* was positively related to peaceful social interaction of children or "*convivencia*." According to the authors, *convivencia* is a "concept of common use in Colombia to identify the conditions associated with non-violent human relations." The authors operationalized *convivencia* through an 18-item student survey designed to assess active respect for others, universal solidarity, fair play, and equity. In addition to finding a positive and significant relationship between implementation of *Escuela Nueva* and levels of *convivencia* among students, they also found positive relationships between *Escuela Nueva* implementation and parental involvement and participation.

Chesterfield (1994) compared behaviors of first- and second-grade students in 20 Guatemalan rural schools, half in traditional rural schools, and half in *Nueva Escuela Unitaria (NEU)*, or "New Unitary Schools," which followed the *Escuela Nueva* methodology. Using direct observation of children and their actions—including democratic behaviors like taking turns, assisting classmates, expressing opinions and attitudes, participation in student government, and leading fellow students—Chesterfield found that a large majority of turn-taking (80%) occurred among *NEU* students. Additionally, although students' turn-taking in traditional schools was associated with waiting for teachers to review their work, turn-taking in NEU schools occurred more spontaneously. Chesterfield did not find differences across school types in terms of assisting others in academic work or in political and social involvement, results that he attributed to the young age of the students studied.

In a follow up to the Chesterfield (1994) study, Baessa et al. (2002) found that implementation of the EN model in rural areas of Guatemala fostered student collaboration and independence. Specifically, children participating in *EN*-inspired NEU schools engaged in more turn-taking, provided positive feedback to their classmates, and directed others in activities. Children participating in the NEU schools were also more likely to engage in more democratic and cooperative behaviors. Comparing NEU and non-NEU children in terms of allowing peers to participate in classroom activities, between 80 and 89% of observed occurrences of turn-taking were among NEU students. NEU students were also more likely to assist their peers with their classwork. The authors found similar patterns in regions with large populations of indigenous students, where 70% of turn-taking occurred in NEU schools.

Offshoots of **Escuela Nueva** *in Urban Areas of Colombia*

We identified two EN-inspired programs serving urban children in Colombia. First, the *Escuela Nueva* Learning Circles program ("*Círculos de Aprendizaje*") was developed in 2001 to address the educational needs of marginalized and displaced youth who have experienced prolonged periods of interrupted schooling, extreme poverty, work, and low parental support and involvement. The target population also includes victims of sexual exploitation and other forms of violence (Vega-Chaparro, 2014). The Learning Circles—which operate in both urban and rural areas of Colombia—follow the same design, operational structure, and curriculum as *Escuela Nueva* (Vega-Chaparro, 2014). Students from diverse backgrounds are provided learning guides and are encouraged to work together collaboratively. Given students' diverse and often interrupted schooling background, instruction occurs in flexible multigrade classrooms in which students can join at any time of the school year and leave if required by family or work obligations. As with *Escuela Nueva*, the Learning Circles employ a learner-centered pedagogy in which student collaboration, voice, and governance are encouraged. As with *Escuela Nueva*, Learning Circles classrooms send a "traveling notebook" home with children so that they can share and contribute to the notebook with their families. The traveling notebook also provides children an opportunity to share difficult past experiences with their classmates and instructor (Vega-Chaparro, 2014).

In a study of the Learning Circles program in the Colombian cities of Florencia, Leticia, Sincelejo, and Tumaco, Vega-Chaparro (2014) found evidence of the positive impact of the program on key student outcomes. According to data from student and instructor interviews, students in Learning Circles improved in terms of their self-perceptions, self-esteem, future aspirations, and social skills. They became more polite and less aggressive with their peers, and they developed ownership over the classroom learning community. Vega and Bajaj (2016, 368) attributed much of this success to the Learning Circles teachers, who "demonstrated agency in creating caring and meaningful interactions with students despite the hardships they faced." According to the authors, Learning Circles teachers "were the catalyst of important changes in their students' lives by fostering caring behaviors, communication skills, and positive ideas about their future." Given the success of the Learning Circles with Colombia's displaced children, Luschei and Vega (2015, 53) discuss the strong potential of the program in addressing the unique educational needs of marginalized student populations in the USA, especially foster children, who share at least three experiences with displaced children: trauma, dislocation, and mobility. In their assessment, the "Learning Circles' flexible and child-centered pedagogical model can be particularly effective in helping foster youth to cover instruction and curriculum they miss during schooling gaps caused by transitions to new homes."

The second urban schooling program in Colombia modeled after *Escuela Nueva* is *Escuela Activa Urbana* (EAU) or Urban Active School. EAU was founded in 1987 to bring *Escuela Nueva's* pedagogical approach and curriculum to Colombia's urban schools. The key difference between EAU and the rural *Escuela Nueva* model is that most EAU classrooms have only one grade and tend to have more students, compared to *Escuela Nueva's* small multigrade classrooms.

As with the rural *Escuela Nueva* model, various studies have found a positive impact of EAU schools on student's academic success, relative to traditional schools. A 2002 study by Colombia's National University found that urban schools adopting EAU had superior academic results to traditional schools after two years of implementation (FEN, n.d.). Studies of EAU schools have also found a positive impact of the program on student's non-cognitive skills, especially their relations with other students. For example, a 1999 study in the capital of Bogotá found that children in EAU schools participated in school activities more frequently than children in traditional urban schools. Their parents also perceived

that their children worked more collaboratively in school (IDEP-FVG, 1999).

A study of EAU focusing on the Colombian city of Manizales found both cognitive and non-cognitive advantages of EAU (Puryear, Barrera-Osorio, & Cortelezzi, 2014). The authors found greater homogeneity in test score performance of EAU students relative to non-EAU students; higher test scores in reading, math, and science of EAU schools relative to traditional public schools; and higher test scores among EAU students relative to other students in public schools of Manizales and Colombian students in general on the 2012 Program for International Student Achievement (Puryear et al., 2014, 5–6). In addition to these positive academic results, Puryear et al. (2014) found that EAU schools achieve positive results in the development of non-cognitive skills, evaluated through citizenship competencies, relative to students in other municipal and state schools. As the authors observe, these results may not be completely surprising, as the teaching and learning of non-cognitive skills have been "a fundamental and distinctive aspect of the EAU model since its inception" (Puryear et al., 2014, 6).[2]

In a study of EAU schools in five Colombian departments, Luschei (in press) found that school leaders and teachers consistently attributed the child-centered and collaborative EAU model to key non-cognitive and relational skills like independence, leadership, work ethic, self-discipline, empathy, and peaceful social interactions, or *convivencia*. Several participants in Luschei's study pointed out the importance of authentic student governance in building both leadership skills and civic behavior among children. According to Luschei (in press), "daily interactions among children taught with the *Escuela Nueva* methodology help them to develop empathy and agency that promote school wide *convivencia*. These outcomes interact with authentic student government to build a sense of efficacy among children that they can and should intervene positively in their communities."

Discussing the impact of *Escuela Nueva* and EAU on *convivencia*, Luschei (2016) argues, "Cooperation and sharing are at the heart of *Escuela Nueva* and *convivencia*." Luschei relates the experience of a first-grade teacher in the Colombian department of Boyacá, who explained that the EAU approach both teaches and requires cooperation among students by transforming individual work to group work. According to this teacher, "if a child does not understand a concept, his friends explain it to him and help him and he learns more than if just one person tries to

explain it to him" (Luschei, 2016, 95). The same teacher also observed, "the children at our school develop independence, they are leaders, they collaborate; but above all else, they think about others, not just themselves."

Implementation Challenges

Despite the impressive success of *Escuela Nueva* and its offshoots, research has also identified challenges to the model's successful implementation in Colombia and beyond. Given the radical departure of the model from traditional teaching approaches in rural areas of Latin America, uneven implementation of *Escuela Nueva* is not surprising. Applying McLaughlin's "capacity and will" framework to the implementation of *Escuela Nueva* in rural Colombia, Benveniste and McEwan (2000) found unevenness in how EN is implemented across rural schools. The authors argue that both capacity and will influence whether and how teachers have implemented the new model. In the first case, teachers may simply not have the skills and knowledge to teach in such a radically different way. As a result, professional development represents an important avenue to ensure fidelity in implementation. In the second case, teachers may not have sufficient will to undertake a massive shift in their pedagogical techniques, especially if they hold reservations about multigrade teaching, which suffers a negative stigma across much of the developing world (Benveniste & McEwan, 2000; Little, 1996).

In addition to challenges of capacity and will, others have identified lack of funding and resources—including teacher training—as well as limited oversight, as reasons for incomplete or unsuccessful implementation of *Escuela Nueva* and its offshoots (Gómez, 2010; McEwan, 2008; O'Connell, 2014; Psacharopoulos et al., 1993). Further, Psacharopoulos et al. (1993) observed that despite EN's widespread institutionalization, its success was nonetheless dependent upon the support of local actors and partnerships with private organizations like the National Federation of Coffee Growers.

Implementation challenges could help to explain some of the lack of differences in studies comparing non-cognitive skills across *Escuela Nueva* and non-*Escuela Nueva* schools. For example, Pitt (2002) found no significant difference between *Escuela Nueva* and non-*Escuela Nueva* students in terms of how highly they valued civic participation (although most students in both types of schools strongly valued civic

participation). Additionally, students in *Escuela Nueva* schools did not address matters of municipal and national government as frequently as students who attended traditional schools (Pitt, 2002). Pitt also found no significant difference in moral reasoning or civic participation between students in *Escuela Nueva* and traditional schools.

At the same time, lack of significant differences in important student outcomes across *Escuela Nueva* and non-*Escuela Nueva* schools—especially in Colombia—may stem from the long-term and widespread implementation of *Escuela Nueva* across rural areas. Forero-Pineda et al. (2006) used the degree of implementation, rather than a dichotomous yes/no variable, to assess the impact of *Escuela Nueva* on peaceful social interaction of children because, as the authors argue, in rural areas of Colombia, many teachers in schools that are not recognized as EN schools nonetheless use the EN methodology, due to their own experiences and preferences. Consequently, there are very few schools in rural Colombia that are either completely *Escuela Nueva* or not *Escuela Nueva*. Pitt (2002) found no elementary schools in her study that did not use some aspect of the EN model, even if they were not formally recognized as EN schools. Moreover, most students in her sample had at least three years of schooling in the EN model, regardless of what type of school they attended at the time of her study. She hypothesizes that a lack of civic engagement between school types may result from the fact that all students had been exposed to the EN model at one point during their schooling.

Discussion and Conclusion

The principal objective of this review of literature was to explore whether and how *Escuela Nueva* promotes active and involved participation in personal relationships, civic activities and attitudes, and community building. Our review included studies undertaken in rural and urban areas and within and outside of Colombia. We find that in addition to substantial evidence of *Escuela Nueva's* impact on children's test scores, *Escuela Nueva* and *Escuela Nueva*-inspired models have been associated with stronger non-cognitive skills, including leadership, peaceful interaction of children, and civic participation and knowledge. Studies linking *Escuela Nueva* to children's peaceful and democratic behavior are particularly important given Colombia's ongoing efforts to end decades of armed conflict. Although we cannot causally link *Escuela Nueva* to social

transformation in Colombia, our review does reveal evidence of *Escuela Nueva's* impact on peaceful social interaction of children and civic behavior and knowledge (e.g., Forero-Pineda et al., 2006; Psacharopoulos et al., 1993).

Evidence of *Escuela Nueva's* positive impact on non-cognitive skills is not completely surprising, given the original aims of *Escuela Nueva* to foster stronger relations among children, and between schools and communities. Perhaps it is more surprising that some studies have found that similar outcomes are also relatively high in non-*Escuela Nueva* schools. As Forero-Pineda et al. (2006) and Pitt (2002) have argued, the influence of *Escuela Nueva* in Colombia has extended from *EN* to non-EN schools through the experiences and preferences of teachers and students. Consequently, the spread of the model may be much greater than has been recognized through measures like the number of EN schools or graduates. From this perspective, it may be possible to infer a relationship between the widespread application and extension of EN since the 1970s and social and political transformation in Colombia. *Escuela Nueva* began in the rural areas of Colombia in the 1970s and spread to thousands of schools in urban and rural areas, meaning that millions of adult Colombians have experienced its student-centered approach, while many others have been at least peripherally affected by its presence.

Despite the positive and growing evidence of *Escuela Nueva*'s impact on non-cognitive outcomes, the mechanisms through which this impact occurs are still not completely clear. In previous work, we have suggested that the model's emphasis on active, child-centered, and cooperative learning helps children develop empathy and agency. Combined with authentic involvement in student governance and strong relationships with the community, these skills help children "develop a sense of efficacy that they can and should intervene positively in their communities" (Luschei, in press).

There is still much more to learn regarding the ways in which *Escuela Nueva* may help to promote citizenship and democratic behaviors among students. In particular, there is insufficient discussion in the *Escuela Nueva* literature that directly addresses the questions of whether and how the model fosters a transformative educational process that challenges traditional, teacher- and school-centered approaches to education to empower youth to become active participants in their local communities. Here, we turn to Paulo Freire to begin building a conceptual bridge from key non-cognitive skills discussed in conjunction with *Escuela Nueva* to social transformation and liberation in Colombia.

Although few studies have directly linked Freire with *Escuela Nueva,* the model's co-founder Vicky Colbert (1999) discusses Freire's notion of the "banking" pedagogical approach, in which teachers deposit "knowledge" into passive students. Colbert argues that Latin American education must move away from this approach toward one in which students collaborate to build knowledge by engaging with each other, toward the end of creating a sustainable and equitable democracy where youth can live peacefully with one another. Whereas Freire (2000) decried the widespread banking method, *Escuela Nueva* directly confronts this teacher-centric model and encourages students to engage in and become active, problem-solving protagonists of their own learning process. This radical change parallels and illustrates Freire's idea that "problem-posing" education can serve as an instrument of liberation. Further, according to Freire (2000), liberation occurs as a mutual process of action and reflection. Two important aspects of *Escuela Nueva*—community building and student governance—may be considered as key levers in this process.

We must also be aware of Freire's cautions regarding "false charity," whereby the oppressor provides charity to mask the oppression of a community. In this sense, *Escuela Nueva*, when scaled up through a centralized educational system and promoted widely, may become a tool to provide false charity and the promise of upward mobility for students. In fact, *Escuela Nueva* has been promoted widely as an educational model for developing countries by major multinational and binational organizations like UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank. One must question why organizations like these have so strongly promoted an educational model that holds such great potential for liberation and social transformation. Educators and researchers alike must continue to probe these connections and potential contradictions to ensure that *Escuela Nueva* retains its power to liberate and transform children and communities.

Notes

1. Perhaps the greatest evidence of this change can be seen, ironically, through the lens of cognitive skills: as described above, in 1997, Colombia was the only country in UNESCO's learning assessment across Latin America and the Caribbean in which rural schools outperformed urban schools in tests of both mathematics and reading (Luschei & Fagioli, 2016).
2. Author translation from the original.

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CHAPTER 7

Counter-Hegemonic Higher Education in a Remote Coastal Region of Brazil: The Federal University of Southern Bahia as a Case Study

Naomar Almeida Filho and Denise Coutinho

Introduction

Worldwide, macroeconomic and macrosocial processes—forming what has been called globalization—have produced intense transnational mobilization of wealth and power, resulting in strong pressures on persons, groups, and institutions (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2006). Over the past years, contemporary neoliberal policies have defined international agendas that challenge directly the sociocultural and historical mission of knowledge institutions in general, and of universities in particular (Altbach, 2016). As far as education is concerned, there has been political subservience of education institutions and systems to the logic of financial capital and to the hegemony of Western capitalism, which, above all, implies compliance to teaching and research requirements established by self-nominated central countries (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In this current scenario of conflicts and accommodations,

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virtually in every sphere of organization in contemporary societies marked by Western culture, the university as an institution has faced serious challenges.

In Brazil, traditional models of universities have not responded to the demands of the new social, economic, and technological scenario and, particularly, in addition to that, the national public university system has not met the growing social needs for higher education (Almeida Filho, 2015; Santos & Almeida Filho, 2008). In this context, the current economic and political crisis has reduced funding and support for the institutional building process and for the operation of public universities. In parallel, student organizations, staff corporations, and faculty graduated in elite conventional universities have openly resisted proposed changes in planning, organization, curriculum structure, and learning contents, as well as the adoption of innovative pedagogical models by higher education institutions.

In this text, we introduce the Federal University of Southern Bahia (UFSB), the newest Brazilian public university, as a case study of counter-hegemonic higher education institution. With this aim, first, we present the historical and political backgrounds to Brazil's higher education context, outlining its features as a deeply intricate, regressive, and unfair system, emphasizing the social and political inequities that affect and thus define the country's educational structure. Secondly, we describe in broad strokes the territory and population of Southern Bahia, a remote coastal region of Northeast Brazil, where UFSB was recently established. Third, we present the main features of the university's Master Plan, focusing upon the meaning and relevance of each key issue for the institution's social mission: territoriality, social integration, metapresence, inter-transdisciplinarity, active learning. Fourth, we analyze challenges and obstacles for the implementation of the institution and achievement of its major goals as a popular university, effectively oriented toward sustainability, social integration, and intercultural commitment. Finally, we discuss further perspectives for the successful implementation of a counter-hegemonic model of university in Brazil, one of the most unequal societies in the Western world, dominated by globalized late capitalism.

Background

In Brazil, education has been part of a major social debt, enhanced by liberal and totalitarian regimes that consolidated an oligarchic social system inherited from colonial times. After the last military dictatorship

(1964–1985), the country has experienced demographic, economic, and social changes along with a rapid, rich, and complex political construction toward democracy which turned the Brazilian State into an instrument for hegemony. Between 1992 and 2012, per capita average income increased around 20%, while the gross national product (GNP) more than doubled. Despite having reduced unemployment and increased income for almost a decade, the country did not overcome challenges and problems associated with an economic model based on the formation of an internal consumer market and on the exportation of raw commodities (Bresser-Pereira, 2009). Regarding inequality, there has been a significant and sustained reduction of the Gini coefficient, especially after 2001, from 0.637 to 0.527, due to a network of public programs for food security and social protection (Ham, 2014).

The combined effect of economic growth, rapid urbanization, more employment, and income redistribution has been a reduction in the proportion of the population below the poverty line, from 62 to 37%, along two decades (1992–2012). By 2012, more than 95% of homes had water supply and electricity, and 65% had access to sewage systems. Nowadays, the proportion of people over 60 years is over 13% of the population, the urbanization rate has reached 80%, the fertility rate dropped to 1.7, and life expectancy at birth is 75 years overall (71 years for men and 78 years for women). Infant mortality reduced markedly from above 30 deaths per thousand born alive in 1992 to 14.4 per thousand in 2014. With regard to education, in the past 15 years, school attendance has increased overall, the illiteracy rate dropped to less than 10%, and enrollment in higher education more than doubled. These improvements have been attributed also to social policies including universal health system, access to education, social security coverage, real increase in wages, and a national conditional cash transfer program called Bolsa Família (Ham, 2014; Wetzel, 2013).

In this context, there exists a political contradiction regarding education (Almeida Filho, 2015). The reduction of economic inequalities due to social protection policies occurs in parallel to increasing social inequities, mainly due to a wider top-bottom gap of the quality, type, and reach of public services. Therefore, more equity in the economic sense, with undeniable improvement in patterns of income distribution, paradoxically generates inequity in the social dimension—on the one hand, enlarging the gaps in education and, on the other, maintaining the unequal concentration of social and political capital. Economic equity

producing social inequity seems to be indeed a disconcerting paradox. Trying to understand this paradox, we would like to propose a hypothesis: In Brazil, in a subtle, discreet, and camouflaged fashion, the State has become a promoter of social inequities in the sense that some of its ongoing public policies mainly public education end up producing perverse effects.

In Fig. 7.1, we propose modeling education as economic and social reproduction of political domination based on intertwined cycles of inequality. In this model, taken from another paper (Almeida Filho, 2015), an unfair regressive tax system, supported by a legal and political structure bound for social reproduction, leads to social perversion primarily in education (but also in other sectors such as health, housing, and public security), therefore producing inequities in the educational system and inequalities in the social situation. Public universities, offering better-quality teaching, free of tuition and fees, are largely responsible for the professional and academic training of the ruling elite. In paradox, young students from poor families, who struggled for upward social mobility, are forced to enroll in paid private institutions to acquire lower-quality instruction in socially disregarded professional careers. The triple conjunction of perverse cycles, inter-articulated as dialectical

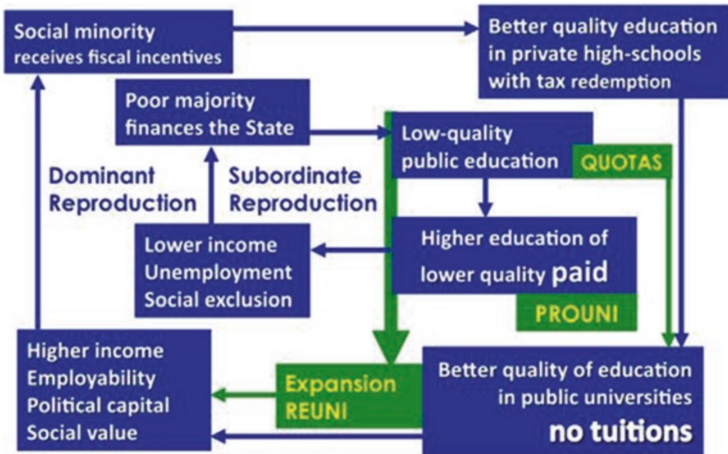

Fig. 7.1 Social reproduction of inequalities in education in contemporary Brazil

processes, feeds back into the political system that conditions the State as an overwhelming and contradictory inequality-producing institutional complex.

From this scheme (Almeida Filho, 2015), elaborated to organize the set of social vectors in the education domain in Brazil, we propose to consider three main perversions:

1. To a disproportionately greater extent, the poor segments of Brazilian society finance the State, through a distorted and regressive tax structure.
2. Those who are poorer receive few benefits from the State, among them, the constitutional duty of providing basic education for all citizens. The Brazilian State instead subsidizes, by revenue tax reimbursement, wealthier families that can potentially mobilize resources to account for this stage of education for their children.
3. The poor have to pay for higher education in the private-sector institutions while the rich, instead, go to the best universities, which in general are public and charge no tuition or fees.

In our judgment, the third perversion is the most serious from the point of view of equity in the public education domain (Almeida Filho, 2015). In addition to gaining priority access to free public higher education, if by chance rich families have to pay for a private college for one of their children, they will also benefit from income tax refunds from the time their students are in university up to the legal limit of 24 years of age. As the Brazilian career training structure is short and starts very early (for instance, entry into medical or law courses at the age of 17 and graduation around 21 or 22 years is not uncommon), unlike other countries in the world, in Brazil upper- and middle-class youngsters normally conclude their education before the age of 24, thus taking full profit from the socially unfair discounts in taxation. In opposition, lower class students, who tend to reach higher education later in life, take longer to graduate because, in general, in addition to studying, they have to work for survival. Therefore, their tuitions and fees are not reimbursable because they are above the age limits established for the tax rebate.

During President Lula's term, along with affirmative action programs such as quotas for poor, black, and indigenous students (Lloyd, 2015), two focused governmental policies for higher education—called *Programa Universidade para Todos* (PROUNI) and *Plano de*

Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais (REUNI)—have helped promote integration between the two cycles of reproduction. PROUNI is a massive scholarship program launched in 2005 to finance university tuition at private higher education institutions for students from low-income families (Brasil/MEC, 2006). Launched in 2007, REUNI is an acronym that summarizes investments for the expansion of federal universities with resources, infrastructure, personnel, curricular restructuring, and social inclusion, with incentives for efficiency and population coverage along with affirmative action programs (Brazil/MEC, 2007). It should be noted that this ambitious 10 billion dollar PROUNI/REUNI plan was out just before Brazil got hit by the world financial crisis of 2009.

The target of the REUNI initiative was expansion of the federal network of 56 universities eventually to overcome the hegemony of the private sector of higher education in the country. The 4 million students in higher education, with around half a million in public institutions, was projected to rise to 6 million in four years, with more than 1 million students in public universities. During 2008–2009, investments and budget increases planned for the network of Brazilian public universities were maintained and, in some cases, anticipated. Mass-scale construction of labs and classroom buildings, equipment acquisitions, faculty and personnel recruitment, all contributed to enhance economic activities and reinforced the government strategy to deal with the financial backlash. As a result, the expanded access to higher education for larger population groups was confirmed, elevating the participation of 18- to 25-year age groups from 9 to 15% in less than a decade.

Although effective for reducing some of the negative consequences of the perversion cycles, restricted to a few beneficiaries, these initiatives do not challenge exclusionary structural features of the Brazilian system of education. On the one hand, despite all changes, the private sector still dominates the current higher education scenario; as a result, demands for social inclusion and for training of specialized man power for promoting sustained economic development, remain unattended. Brazil has recently experienced a great shortage of engineers, ICT experts, social workers, health professionals, and especially school teachers (at all levels), particularly in remote areas of the impoverished North and Northeast regions. This indeed represents a real pressure on the country's system of higher education to form personnel faster and more effectively in the near future, thus inducing a wider territorial coverage.

Yet, higher education in Brazil maintains the model of direct entry into professional training courses consolidated by the university reform triggered by the French Revolution, a time of great turbulence in the history of Western Europe, that happened more than two centuries ago (Santos & Almeida Filho, 2008). French culture has influenced heavily our higher education model, and Brazilian universities have their academic structure even more distorted by the university reform of 1968, promoted by the military dictatorship (Cunha, 2007). Today, our universities are still operating on a rigid organizational structure, most of them fragmented in faculties, schools, and departments. As a result, the Brazilian higher education system has become more elitist and alienated from the people's needs, in spite of the implementation of affirmative action programs in several public universities during the past decade (Almeida Filho, 2012; Lloyd, 2015).

Nonetheless, the current crisis seems to have raised among a few Brazilian universities a deeper awareness of the importance of curriculum restructuring, internationalization, and "hinterlandization" to fully and effectively accomplish their intellectual, cultural, and social missions. This is the context of creation of the UFSB in a remote coastal region of Northeast Brazil, case study object of this paper.

The Case of UFSB

The UFSB was founded in 2013 as one of the four new institutions of higher education proposed by President Dilma Rousseff's government to the National Congress. Officially, it was conceived to meet the highest educational requirements of contemporary universities, as well as to respect cultural, social, artistic, and economic specificities of the Southern region of Bahia State, considering national and planetary values.

Context: Southern Bahia

UFSB's campi are located in the cities of Itabuna, Teixeira de Freitas, and Porto Seguro, economic poles of the Southern region of Bahia. The territory covered by UFSB consists of 48 municipalities, on a surface of 40,384 km^2, situated on the Southern coast of Bahia State. Its population totals 1,520,037 inhabitants (2010 Census data). Most municipalities are small; only the city of Itabuna exceeds 200,000 inhabitants and

five others (Ilhéus, Teixeira de Freitas, Porto Seguro, Eunápolis, and Itamaraju) have more than 50,000 inhabitants. Geographical distances are substantial—the municipality of Mucuri, on the Southern border of the region, is 1000 km away from the capital city of the Bahia State, distances between each campus are over 200 km, and there are almost 900 km of secondary roads—a potential major obstacle to the operational efficiency of the institution.

The South of Bahia has a unique historical importance in the constitution of Brazil as nation, culture, and people, both from an economic and political point of view (Tavares, 2006). The region is the location that received the Portuguese fleet, led by Pedro Alvares Cabral, that started the colonization of Brazil in 1500. With the installation of the capital of the colony in the city of Salvador in 1549, Bahia State remained the center of the colonial economy for three centuries. With the change of the capital to Rio de Janeiro, and given the crisis of sugarcane production, Bahia experienced deep economic stagnation, from late nineteenth century to recent years. At that stage, the monoculture of cocoa had become the main bulwark of the State's economy during most of the twentieth century. The South of Bahia concentrated the largest cocoa production until the 1980s; at the time, one of the main agricultural commodities on the export list of Brazil. The introduction of "witch's broom," a highly pathogenic fungus, practically decimated the cocoa agriculture in the region (Teixeira, Thomazella, & Pereira, 2015).

In the middle section of the Southern region, on the coast, tourist activity (regional, national, and international) has expanded in recent decades, especially after the construction of the BR-101 highway, main vector of regional development, leading to one of the largest hotel parks in the country. Tourism is, however, an economic activity with a high degree of seasonality, with serious sociocultural and environmental problems. In the Southern section of the region, recently a large area of eucalyptus cultivation was planted, raw material for pulp production, processed in plants located in the region, mainly for export.

The South of Bahia suffers from deep economic and social inequalities and has very poor educational indicators. About 290,000 students are enrolled in 1878 primary schools and 66,000 students in high school, in 165 mainly State public schools. Only 22% of graduates in the elementary school ascend to the high school level, with large variation between municipalities. Every year, about 14,000 students graduate from the public high school network in the region and 3000 students

from the private network. Therefore, considering a latency of three years for graduate students in high school and a dropout rate of 50% per year, we can estimate a potential demand for those seeking access to university education of around 24,700 candidates/year in all municipalities of the region. However, before the opening of UFSB, only 10,725 slots for higher education were offered in the region, of which 1475 were in public institutions.

Given this picture, the initiative to establish a medium-sized university of the federal system of higher education in the region, with institutional design adjusted to the regional context, was fully justified. To comply with the identified needs and demands and to overcome obstacles, the creation of the university had to be followed by development and implementation of organizational innovations. The immediate challenge was to articulate, on the one hand, open control and centralized governance and institutional assessment and, secondly, decentralized academic management supported by instances, strategies, and virtual management devices, focusing on the quality and effectiveness of the educational process.

Mission and Proposal

UFSB's Chart of Foundation (Brazil, 2013) announced its institutional mission as oriented by sustainability, democracy, solidarity, and sharing, as well as commitment to knowledge, skills, desires, dilemmas, and utopias that, in short, are the basis for an equal, just and fair world. In this perspective, its political-institutional agenda is formed by the following principles: academic efficiency, with optimal use of public resources; commitment to sustainability; expanded access to education as a means for regional social development; pedagogical flexibility and creativity, with methodological diversity oriented by inter-transdisciplinarity; systemic interface with the public education system; inter-institutional articulation of public higher education in the region; and promotion of national and international mobility for its community. Perspectives and solutions that support this complex and ambitious scope compose a Master Plan for institutional development, in dialogue with curriculum structures and pedagogical practices adopted by prestigious contemporary universities worldwide (Brazil, 2014).

Admission into the institution is only through undergraduate courses of two kinds: Interdisciplinary Bachelor (*Bacharelado*

Interdisciplinar—BI) and Teacher's Licentiate Interdisciplinary Degree (*Licenciatura Interdisciplinar*—LI). The Interdisciplinary Bachelor comprises full degree courses, with a minimum duration of three years, offered in four areas of training: Sciences, Arts, Humanities, Health. The Teacher's Licentiate Interdisciplinary Degree in the first cycle is intended to overcome important gaps in the educational landscape of the region and the State. This LI course is a training program for teachers for elementary-secondary education, organized in large areas or blocks of knowledge, articulated by a shared knowledge base, with a modular, progressive, and flexible structure.

UFSB offers education mediated by technology in a network of community colleges called *Rede Anísio Teixeira de Colégios Universitários* (CUNI), deployed in cities with over 20,000 inhabitants and more than 300 graduates of high school programs, as well as in rural settlements, Indian villages, *quilombos* (remnants of runaway slaves), and poor-income neighborhoods of larger towns. These community colleges operate preferably on evenings and weekends in available facilities of the State system of secondary education. Each point of the network features a suite of teleducation systems, connected to a high-speed digital network installed and maintained by the university.

There are two ways of access into UFSB undergraduate courses: (a) general application directly into one of the four Bachelor courses; and (b) in Basic Entry Area (*Área Básica de Ingresso*—ABI) with further options for BI or LI undergraduate programs. As defined by federal law, there are social-racial quotas for students who have graduated from public high schools, with half of the reserved slots for students from poor-income families. The social quota is 55% in the campi and 85% in community colleges for students who attended high school in municipalities participating in the Anísio Teixeira Network. Furthermore, supplementary slots are available for indigenous candidates from local villages and to lay school teachers, through special agreements with public institutions of the State education sector.

Learning Model

The pedagogical platform of UFSB is based on the following aspects:

1. curriculum architecture organized in cycles with progressive modularity (providing independent certificates for each cycle);

2. academic quarter (*quadrimestre*) calendar system, allowing for flexibility of professional training and academic projects of faculty, staff, and students, with optimization of equipment, facilities, personnel and financial resources;
3. pedagogical pluralism and intensive use of digital technologies for teaching and learning.

General Education training is offered both on campus and in the Anísio Teixeira Network of community colleges, at the level of municipalities and localities, on the entire coverage area of the university. It includes a *neo-quadrivium* approach: modern languages (minimally, Portuguese and English), instrumental knowledge processing (with digital literacy and connectivity skills), logical-interpretative thinking (with efficient use of analytical and rhetorical strategies), and global citizenship (eco-historical consciousness). In addition to General Education undertaken in the Anísio Teixeira Network or on campus, the student will perform vocational training activities, emphasizing notions of entrepreneurship, with practices, internships, and placements concentrated in specific course programs offered by partner institutions.

BI and LI graduates wishing to proceed to second cycle courses, aimed at academic or professional careers, must undergo selection processes based on performance in the first cycle, among other specific criteria. Second cycle courses will be taught in Centers for Graduate Professional and Academic Training, located on campus and offered with innovative curricular models, transferring part of their workload for specific training steps at the first cycle. In all cases, emphasis is placed on active methods by teaching–learning teams, with the use of digital technologies, strong emphasis on mentoring, self-instruction and focus in practice. Some second cycle courses may include, in partial or full mode, training in teaching skills through recognition of credits in teaching activities and practices, allowing double-degrees Bachelor/Licentiate.

UFSB third cycle graduate programs primarily consist of Professional Masters, offered in partnership with social institutions and business organizations. These programs are designed as in-service training programs, in the form of residencies redefined more broadly, supplemented with Research Methods modules and supervision-tutoring of theses that address concrete problems of the organization, institution, or network involved. Community colleges located in larger municipalities may serve as placements for some graduate programs, taking advantage of the

digital network infrastructure deployed and made operational, particularly the Multidisciplinary Residency in Public Policy and the Teacher's Residency.

To ensure quality education at all levels of training, UFSB has developed contents and, although in process, has adopted advanced technologies for teaching and learning. With this objective, virtual learning environments (VLEs) have been created, with virtual learning devices (VLD) as key teaching tools. VLEs comprise digital interfaces (games, Web sites, blogs, social networking, multimedia devices) and interactive media technologies through digital networks connected in real time, overcoming the traditional school environment through non-physical spaces and metapresence situations.

Students and teachers sign mutual commitment agreements for Significant Learning in each step/module of the training processes, formatted as "learning contracts" with rights, duties, and responsibilities. In relevant courses, three methodological choices may be offered to the student: in-presence (classes, seminars, workshops, etc.); metapresence and self-programmed learning. Pedagogical practices are structured by the following formats:

- Concrete Problem-Based Learning (cPBL), adjusted to the context and objectives of the course;
- Active Team Learning (ATL), by groups of 2–3 students in each year of the course, working at all levels of the practice field;
- Shared Learning Strategies (SLS), where students from each class of a course are Peer Tutors of students in less-advanced cohorts;
- Practice-Oriented Evidence (POE), Workshops for supervision, coordination, and validation of knowledge-based technologies.

Participatory Implementation

Since UFSB's implementation committee was formed in January 2012, our first task force traveled to almost all municipalities and localities in the region, presenting and debating the proposed model. More than 80 meetings and public hearings were held and in two years we visited nearly 100 schools, talking to teachers, students, indigenous *caciques*, community leaders, and NGOs, but also businessmen, politicians, intellectuals. When the University Senate was inaugurated in each of the campi, community representatives were included on an equal footing to professors.

For the institutional operation of the diverse, complex offering of courses in learning cycles, the UFSB structure has three levels of organization, respecting the broad regional coverage of the institution, with the following distribution of academic units:

Jorge Amado Campus (Itabuna)
Centre for Techno-sciences and Innovation (CFTCI)
Centre for Agro-sciences and Technology (CFACT)
Jorge Amado Institute of Humanities, Arts and Sciences (IHAC)
Sosígenes Costa Campus (Porto Seguro)
Centre for Human and Social Sciences (CFCHS)
Centre of Arts (CFAr)
Centre for Environmental Sciences (CFCAm)
Sosígenes Costa Institute of Humanities, Arts and Sciences (IHAC)
Paulo Freire Campus (Teixeira de Freitas)
Centre for Health Sciences (CFCS)
Paulo Freire Institute of Humanities, Arts and Sciences (IHAC)

The university started its activities in September 2014, offering 1080 slots for first-cycle options in Institutes of Humanities, Arts and Sciences (IHACs) and at the Anísio Teixeira Network of Community Colleges (CUNI Network). As of 2016, the university has a faculty of 188 teachers and 161 staff. It already hosts 2340 students in undergraduate courses, with 1276 enrolled in four interdisciplinary Bachelor degrees (Science, Arts, Humanities, and Health) and 976 in ABI. Of these, 88 students of the first cohort have already progressed to five Interdisciplinary Undergraduate (Mathematics and Computer Science, Natural Sciences and its technologies, languages and codes, Humanities and Social Sciences, Arts and its technologies). Only 122 students (5.2% of the total) are with suspended registration, which is a small proportion of potential dropouts.

With its full completion planned for 2020, the UFSB will be a mid-range federal institution of higher education. General Education Certificates will be offered in all 48 counties of the region, 12 Interdisciplinary Bachelor in four areas of knowledge (Arts, Sciences, Humanities, and Health), five Interdisciplinary Licentiate degrees (Natural Sciences; Human and Social Sciences; Mathematics, Computing and Technology; Languages and Codes; Arts and Technologies), 30 vocational graduate courses, 10 residencies, 19 masters, and nine Ph.D. programs. At the end of the envisaged implementation period, in both

cycles of graduation, it will offer 9100 slots in the first cycle (7000 in the CUNI Network), 1000 slots in second cycle, with over 700 slots in post-graduate totaling almost 11,000 entries. An overall total enrollment of almost 20,000 regular students is expected, considering all levels of education.

Besides the direct economic impact, this new university is not only intended to expand the offer of public slots at higher education levels of training in the remote hinterland of Bahia. In parallel and in line with improvement of relevant basic education indicators, it is thought to promote extension programs designed to increase quality of elementary and secondary education, above all bound for equitable social and human development of the region. Nevertheless, beyond immediate economic, scientific, and technological development, specific demands related to training proposals are referred not only to employability and entrepreneurship, but also for intercultural and social integration.

UFSB as a Project for Political Change

The institutional model of the UFSB was designed to meet the circumstances of Brazil's economic and political position in the contemporary world as well as the social, cultural, political, and economic specificities of Southern Bahia State. This university is driven by the possibility of recreating public education as a vehicle for social integration and as a factor for promoting the human condition, aspects often undervalued in the educational model prevailing in Brazil. However, beyond regional and national borders, it is founded on a political-pedagogical conception of the university as a social and cultural institution for education and emancipation of the person and to promote profound, sustainable, critical changes in society. This statement implies that the curricular matrices of the various courses offered by UFSB should include cultural diversity, political dissent, and social equality in order to promote the construction of new forms of counter-hegemonic knowledge.

In this endeavor, understanding education as a primary civilizing and emancipatory task, the creation of UFSB has been openly conducted as an action-research project to promote social transformation of regional and national contexts, oriented by a set of key concepts: "territoriality," "social integration," "inter-trans-disciplinarity," "metapresence," and "active learning." We briefly discuss each of them in this section, adding our subjective evaluations of the emergence of these concepts as critical

achievements or, in some cases, contradictory points of compliance or resistance, internal and external, regarding the proposed or intended political project of a counter-hegemonic education.

Territoriality

Considering the process of globalization, with time-space increasingly compressed, and the world's cultural diversity, the renewal of the university as an institution needs a critical theory of society and culture for sustainable political-pedagogical projects. Although limited to the epistemological territory of techno-science, respectful of advances in science and technology, the thinking of Bahian geographer, philosopher and social theorist Milton Santos (2000, 2002 [1978], 2008) is a powerful tool for exploring the phenomenon of multiculturalism in building a counter-hegemonic globalization. From Santos' basic concepts of "territoriality" and "glocality," we have derived more expanded concepts like, for example, "ethnodiversity" and "epistemodiversity" in order to consider the unsettling issues of the clash between dominant and subordinate cultures.

In his seminal work *Towards a New Geography* (2002 [1978]), Milton Santos highlights two sets of general symbolic effects that structure contemporary society. On the one hand, the conceptual context of so-called knowledge society implies a dialectical relationship between different structural elements and contemporary macrosocial processes or, in his terms, the ideology of the modern world (Santos, 2000). First, the emergence of a new sort of space-time, mediated by the development and availability of information and communication technology; second, in this case segregated by social class, expansion of telematics sets up a unique individual and institutional hype of connectivity in human history; third, to account for the increasing complexity of contemporary society, a new paradigm based on non-linear, complex system dynamics, instead of the Cartesian paradigm which simplifies the concrete reality. On the other hand, the acceleration of the historical process and the space-time compression produces "empirical universalism" and, paradoxically, fosters social diversity and ethnodiversity in unprecedented scale in human history.

According to Santos, however, the physical and symbolic presence of the subjects in the territory is required. Contradictorily, taking advantage of the enormous privilege of mobility and hyperconnectivity provided by technology which defines the modern world, the ruling classes do not

participate in the local world of territories and, therefore, "[…] they just see little of the city and of the world" (Santos, 2008, 80). Therefore, socio-ethnodiversity present and acting in local territories enables the production of new discourses, practices, and wisdoms, with solidarity constantly created by the contiguity of direct interpersonal relations. Here is the root of Santos' political optimism: The perversion of globality is confronted and often suppressed by the singularities of locality (Santos, 2000).

In this process, almost as a historical mission, the university occupies a prominent place to review the past, to realize the present, and to imagine the future in contemporary multicultural society. However, for Milton Santos (apud Leite, 2007), authoritarian, ethnocentric, and bureaucratic models inherited by the Brazilian university stem from a colonized posture by the national intelligentsia, together with the elites who dominate the country. This attitude produces subjects whose singularities end up submitted to the roles imposed by the increasingly rapid transformation of contemporary society, particularly the rampant massification of technological and cultural goods spread out by globalization processes.

Inter-transdisciplinarity

When designing interdisciplinary first-cycle courses, first at the Federal University of Bahia since 2008, we have dealt with the possibility of educating human subjects following the classical German concept of *bildung*, as well as with the North American notion of General Education, adjusted to the context of contemporary Brazil (Almeida Filho & Coutinho, 2011). Now, at UFSB, our proposal is to radicalize the regime of cycles, in order to move beyond interdisciplinary education. The adoption of a General Education baseline, offering flexible, modular, and convergent learning programs for all students of the university, is intended to break inherited paradigms and to reaffirm a trans-epistemic vision of university education. Such a leap would involve transforming, and not only forming, in order to overcome known forms of education that are controlled by hegemonic conceptual frameworks. To face this challenge, we have relied first upon the notions of inter-transdisciplinarity, then to its evolution toward the concepts of ethnodiversity, epistemodiversity, and ecology of knowledges. All these concepts have been treated as tools to explain multiculturalism, a crucial feature of contemporary societies.

There is a huge confusion about the notions of multi-, meta-, inter- and transdisciplinary, more pronounced in the area of education, which would rather be interdisciplinary by definition (Almeida Filho & Coutinho, 2013). For a consistent and rigorous conceptual construction, it is necessary to distinguish between such terms. Multidisciplinarity is the mere coexistence between disciplines, without exchange or communication. Metadisciplinarity is more than that, since in this case disciplines are articulated within a communication framework provided by a meta-discipline, capable of functioning as a common language. Interdisciplinarity, in turn, implies three directions or modes: (a) interface between disciplines, enriching specific knowledge objects (e.g., Social Anthropology; Legal Sociology); (b) fusion of disciplines, resulting in also fused objects of knowledge (e.g., Biochemistry and Astrophysics); and (c) use of multiple approaches, coming from different disciplines to produce knowledge or action upon a concrete (and complex) problem. In the latter case, prospects or pertinence of passage or transit across different disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields, for the complex process of formation of subjects, have been designated as "transdisciplinarity."

At this point, it is necessary to bring to light the epistemic-methodological debate on post-colonial paradigms as a baseline to dialogue with subordinate and oppressed cultures, respecting their knowledge and practices that until recently were silenced or excluded from the Brazilian school environment. Sousa-Santos (2009) has designated as "sociology of absences" the reference to what is suppressed, marginalized, or not been allowed to happen, or has been silenced; in other words, counter-hegemonic forms of struggles and knowledges, local differences erased by hegemonic globalization. For him, "the universal and the global constructed by the sociology of absences, far from denying or eliminating the particular and the local, rather encourages them to envision what is beyond them" (Sousa-Santos, 2001, 191).

For the conceptual design of UFSB, the idea of an "ecology of knowledges" can be used to promote and enhance the epistemodiversity of the territory and society (Sousa-Santos & Almeida Filho, 2008). For Boaventura Sousa-Santos (2009, 118), the ecology of knowledge is non-hierarchical, because "the superiority of a given way of knowing is no longer assessed by its level of institutionalization and professionalization, but rather by its pragmatic contribution to a given practice." To put this approach into practice, we have integrated masters of popular

knowledge (artisans, shamans, traditional healers, religious leaders, persons of wisdom recognized by their communities) as lay teachers in several learning programs, where appropriate. This approach is in opposition to the conventional divide of knowledge as scientific or traditional, rather indicating post-disciplinary, post-colonial approaches away from the framework of multi-inter-transdisciplinarity, leading further to a trans-epistemic transgressive perspective (Clavo, 2016).

Social Integration

UFSB's institutional goal is to expand and popularize the provision of higher education with its open, decentralized structure. With this expansion, requalification is needed because, throughout the region, only 1400 public higher education slots are offered, mostly in careers that have no impact on regional development. The main strategy for promoting access to higher education for students who graduated from public schools is the network of *Colégios Universitários* (equivalent to community colleges, as we saw above). By making possible overcoming territorial exclusion, this strategy is indeed an innovative form of social integration, because it opens the university to poor youth, indigenous villagers, *quilombolas*, and rural settlers. Remember that, in the region, poor students' opportunities for study are limited to public elementary, middle, and high schools, because there are no other schools in such remote areas. Of course, when the implementation process is complete, this model will inevitably transcend the issue of social and ethnical inclusion via quotas. Since the entire institution is structured for effective social integration, we do not actually need affirmative action isolated programs because everything we do is affirmative action for social integration.

According to the UFSB Master Plan (Brazil, 2014), the concept of *Colégio Universitário* was conceived by Anísio Teixeira in the 1950s, proposed at a public hearing in the National Congress on a 1952 Education Act, which was never approved. Other countries have adopted this modular higher education system for a long time. In the USA, it is called *community college* or *junior college*; currently there are more than 2000 of such establishments. In Canada, a similar system called *Collège d'enseignement général professionnel (Cégep)* includes a decentralized e-learning variant for distant provinces, *Cégep-distance*. Other European experiences in Sweden, Norway and Germany, were incorporated into the Bologna

Process already in 2004, with the so-called short cycle. In Latin America, despite political difficulties, conceptual and institutional proposals of this kind have also been implemented. Since 2003, the Bolivarian University of Venezuela has built a network of university "aldeas" (ALDEAS: acronym in Spanish for Local Alternative Environment for Socialist Educational Development) throughout the country (Parra Sandoval, 2010). In 2005, Cuba began a universal program of higher education—Plan Nueva Universidad—whose main strategy includes the implementation of municipal university colleges, called (SUM: Sede Universitaria Municipal), with universal access to first-cycle courses (Blanco, 2007).

Does the CUNI model really allow access to those who have been historically excluded from the university? We believe so, but only the action of implementing and testing the model will produce an answer to this and to other questions. This may happen on two grounds: On the one hand, being successful, the community college network may become in the future a kind of discriminatory democratic institution. The local middle class, and even those coming from other neighboring regions, will quickly discover the advantages of entering a federal university through the regional network of colleges. On the other hand, the question of a potential "ghettoization" of the CUNI system really concerns us. We are planning several measures to reduce this risk, which is not trivial and can jeopardize the entire project. These measures range from the implementation of a tutoring-mentoring-monitoring system, including integrating community outreach actions into the network of high schools, reaching all students without discrimination on town of origin, to the production of isonomic educational contents regardless of learning environment, both on campus and in the Anísio Teixeira Network. In addition, we anticipate intense national and international mobility programs, particularly the Paulo Freire Project, a new program of scholarships and other incentives for training elementary and high school teachers in interdisciplinary programs, such as the *Licenciaturas Interdisciplinares* (Teacher's Interdisciplinary Degree).

However, social integration is not only community action programs, affirmative action, wider access and more inclusion of students from poor families or excluded social groups. As approved in UFSB bylaws, a Strategic Social Council is tasked to articulate the academic projects to the social demands of the regional community, compiled by a biannual Social Forum, congregating delegates from the community. This Council is composed by farmers, executives, environmentalists, politicians,

businessmen, and trade unionists, but also by workers, settlers, Indians, *quilombolas*, fishermen, street artists, and high school students, all elected by their respective ethnic, professional, or social groups. In addition to these and to advisory functions for the higher governance team, members of the Social Council also participate in the electoral processes for the nomination of the university authorities, including Deans and the President.

Metapresence

The institutional design of UFSB provides networking, both at intra-institutional level (the relationship of CUNIs with campuses) and as inter-institutional (at municipal, State, and federal level). Technologically, we are attempting to solve the region's huge gap in access to educational resources by deploying a high-speed digital network that interconnects small towns and villages of the Anísio Teixeira Network. This conception is based on the possibilities of using advanced technologies of information and communication as strategies for the construction of a counter-hegemonic logic for transforming teaching and learning, which seems counter-intuitive (Bates & Sangra, 2011). As a secondary gain, this will allow access of isolated populations to the outside world. Institutional and academic management of UFSB has been strongly based on information and communication technologies (ICT) with non-linear planning, decentralization and flexibility as key government strategies. To make this possible, open-broad institutional control and centralized evaluation are coordinated with decentralized governance, supported by strategies of e-management, with a main focus on quality of the educational process.

Aiming at a more rigorous conceptual formulation, we have designated the virtual presence (which is also real, although mediated by digital technologies) of the learning subject as "metapresence," the situation arising therefrom as "metapresencial" and the concept that underlies this formulation as "metapresenciality." In this line, we have proposed to rethink the idea of learning space, overcoming the conventional model of the classroom (or the laboratory), as a physical learning environment where everyone is at the same time in one place. We seek thus to avoid the trap of distance-education based on a hierarchy, also in terms of quality, in which some subjects at a distance have access to a mentor, to a guide, to materials and consultation systems not necessarily online or real

time, while others have all of this and more, with the privilege of sitting in a classroom with the not always warm-and-stimulating physical presence of a teacher.

At UFSB, we are set to overcome limitations of physical material presence through various structuring strategies of teaching spaces, VLEs and teaching–learning relationships, recognizing what is most valuable in the university education system: the experience of being in an educating atmosphere (Bowen, Chingos, Lack, & Nygren, 2014). Moreover, we can make feasible this teaching, learning, and sharing experience to be widely available on a network, including, but not confined to, the university campus. This move converges with the idea of integration of the university to society, to tear down the imaginary, symbolic, and real walls of the university campus, making it part of a territory and not a mere location of facilities and persons.

Learning Model

As clearly stated, our ongoing project is to create a university of popular roots, focused on the needs and wants of our society, with strong regional ties and, at the same time, open to the world. To comply with this objective, at the politico-pedagogical domain, we had to recover and try to recreate the historical conceptual basis of the Brazilian university. The main source of inspiration for our university's learning model was Anísio Teixeira (1971/2005, 1982) and Paulo Freire (1970, 1996), Brazilian educators and critical philosophers whose ideas and initiatives were repressed by the military dictatorship.

The curriculum structure proposed for the UFSB has been influenced by two models: the Bologna Process (organization of higher education in study cycles) established in European universities and the American model of higher education (community colleges). Critics have suggested that the proposal of UFSB is intended to be a synthesis between the two models, carrying on all the problems they revealed. Indeed, the Bologna Process is openly intended to adjust to the modular and progressive system that defines the American college model. The competitive advantage of the cycle-system in the international scenario of education was a threat to the university in continental Europe, fragmented in almost two dozen different national models. In addition, the difficulties of economic and political integration resulting from this fragmentation could be overcome. But, in our opinion, the creation of the European University Area

was not taken as an opportunity to promote interdisciplinarity and ethnodiversity toward a multicultural university education. We consider that this was perhaps due to the fact that, in most European countries, secondary education is of high quality and culturally dense. But beyond that, or perhaps because of it, the scope of the post-Bologna European university, in a context of a deep, broad economic crisis, has been reduced to rapid and early professionalization, with fixed, linear, fragmented curriculum frameworks (Delgado-Gal, Alonso, & Pericay, 2013).

At UFSB, we offer a three-year bachelor's degree prior to specific professional and academic training courses. This recalls the Bologna model, although with a curriculum more open to the students' choices. Our strong emphasis on General Education—integrating community colleges to interdisciplinary degree courses—resembles the undergraduate model of the USA and Canada. So, our curriculum model can be described as a proposal to combine the best of both worlds, avoiding some problems or drawbacks of each of them. In addition to promoting quality, flexibility, autonomy, mobility, and social commitment in the pedagogical practices of the Brazilian university, this model makes us better integrated into the contemporary landscape of higher education. By adopting an interdisciplinary regime of learning cycles, our open curriculum architecture is unique, frankly referred to ethnodiversity and epistemodiversity (Clavo, 2016).

Nevertheless, we have a critical position in relation to the classic tripod of teaching, research, and extension, first for being classic and then for being a tripod. The university as an institution was created in the Middle Ages to form clerical cadres and later on professional and corporate staff, State leaders, and organic intellectuals of the emerging bourgeoisie. With the Humboldt Reform, very late in history, the mission to produce original knowledge was added, initially for scientific and technological base and then in the humanities and the arts (Scott, 2006). Only in the last century has the university awakened to its social mission, first by outreach actions in the community, regional, and national development initiatives and political action, using different ways of social mobilization (Sousa-Santos & Almeida Filho, 2008). Following Teixeira (1971) and Freire (1996), the distinction between teaching, research, and extension sounds poor, superficial, and unjustified. Perhaps it is wiser to speak of hybrid acts as action-research, research-creation, research-training, research-transformation, learning-transformation, learning-creation, diffusion-learning, learning-innovation, and many other possible combinations, and still others that we cannot even imagine.

Challenges, Obstacles, and Perspectives

Here is the biggest challenge faced by our proposal of a critical university of a new kind: How is it possible to consider and promote cultural diversity and new counter-hegemonic epistemologies with personnel formed within a conservative hegemonic and eventually neocolonial paradigm? This question is crucial. We have tried hard to solve it creatively and efficiently. Indeed, the selection process of public employees in Brazil follows previously established rules, oriented by competition, but we started by modifying the system of recruitment of our faculty and staff. Before carrying out public tenders for all vacancies, as typically done by other federal institutions of higher education, we launched public calls for reassignment of teachers from other federal universities who identified themselves with the project. Many candidates showed up and, after selection of proposals and evaluation of curricula, they were invited to participate in what we call seminar-workshops, where we discussed scenarios, problems, and details of the proposal. This helped us also to identify applicants who demonstrated a critical stance to the current models, who understood the real intention to break paradigms and were eager effectively to incorporate UFSB's concepts and principles.

Only after that we opened public contests, testing a format of recruitment totally different yet feasible within the parameters allowed by Brazilian law. On the one hand, in our job descriptions, we do not require disciplinary degrees, restricted to professional education and specific training, as the conventional university usually does. Rather, the topics for selection are broad, defined inter-transdisciplinarily, and virtually any combination of knowledge area and graduate degree can be accepted. On the other hand, we have held a competition system in qualifying stages. The first stage consists of two tests, in electronic form, in the areas of expertise and, more importantly, in knowledge and appreciation of the university's Master Plan. The examination of the curriculum vitae is a second stage, which is a qualifying round to select the two best candidates who would finally be invited for the last step. This third stage consists of a lecture class and, instead of defense of a Memorial [evaluative document of the teacher's past experience], there is an oral examination of a research and teaching proposal to verify the candidate's position regarding counter-hegemonic epistemologies and prospecting for the future he/she foresees in our institution. We have performed a thorough evaluation and consider this experience very positive; so we have

improved the model for the next contests. Finally, we intend to leave a significant proportion of the teaching positions unfilled, reserved for international visiting professors, preferably coming from regions, contexts, and institutions that are partners in projects that take higher education as a liberating and civilizing action.

We endeavor to recover the university as a house of culture—that is, the space for a dialogical, critical, and productive encounter among the arts, the sciences, and the humanities. To carry on this project, we cannot be naive about the role of the public university in a social context, such as in Brazil, where education is a strong factor for promoting inequality and the domination of ruling classes. We agree with Muniz Sodré (2012, 14), who thinks it is time for Brazil's formal education to face the crucial question, "whether or not education, as a double bottom of history, can open the possibility of circumventing monoculturalist claims of universal truth." More specifically, this author addresses scientism, a perversion of scientific rationality, understood as "effect of social class upon subordinate knowledges and also of the coloniality that seeks downgrading the Other's culture by interpretive monism," representative of a "pan-European knowledge," which many times operates as a sort of "doctrinaire racism" (Sodré, 2012, 51).

Converging with our proposal, Sousa-Santos' early initiative of a *People's University of Social Movements* is an appealing strategy for building a counter-hegemonic globalization through higher education. However, instead of becoming an institution that is co-opted by social movements and uses their strategies and tactics for higher education, the university should rather be a kind of academic branch of social movements. Despite being European in early historical roots, a new kind of university, to be radical and critical, has to emerge within a Southern perspective. This is the position we have defended in *The University of the XXI Century—For a New University* (Sousa-Santos & Almeida Filho, 2008).

At this point, to actually face and confront market and external political forces, the public university needs to be creative and efficient while maintaining quality and excellence, but not only to the heirs. The heirs—this is how Bourdieu, not without fine irony, referred to wealthy students who manage to enter elite educational institutions, which in Brazil may be public but do not belong to the people. For Bourdieu, the "elected few" are chosen from the dominant social group at an early age and

their social destiny is claimed to be a result of individual actions carried out throughout their life-course. The feeling of individual responsibility for success or failure is fostered by the ideological game played to convey the idea that the school is not responsible for giving the extra support to those that come from the dominant hegemonic culture even as a minority, conforming a white, bourgeois, male, Eurocentric way of life, and hence making invisible other agents who do not share these characteristics.

The university requires that all who wish to access it become part of a game in which the rules of competition follow features convenient to the school system that, in turn, coincides with the social system of reproduction of the ruling elites. Equality, among students, is formal but not real, because "this system finds its fulfillment in the contest, which fully ensures the formal equality of the candidates, but throwing into anonymity real inequalities before the culture" (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2014, 92). Once in the university, students from a popular background actually need to learn a new culture, that is, to affiliate to a different and somewhat hostile environment (Coulon, 2008). This new culture—with rules and codes often not explicit and naturalized—acts as a promoter of "failures," in that students who have not received certain elements of the dominant culture in the family and at school arrive at the university as doubly foreigners: either because the university environment is different from the school environment, or because the university reproduces the hegemonic culture and has historically neglected other forms of knowledge, skills, and practices. To accommodate the mass of excluded ones and to gain an important role in the social integration of these subjects, to produce local-regional knowledge, and to acquire relevance in national development projects, the university needs to recreate itself as a popular university.

Given all these challenges, this renewed university must increasingly demonstrate productivity in all dimensions of its action. And more than productive, it must be militant in a triple endeavor, in the formation of critically concerned citizens, respecting their cultural roots as much as in the production of research, creation, and innovation. And this productivity has nothing to do with the recent fashion of the university rankings. In practice, the effect of rankings has been consolidation and restructuring of knowledge institutions, especially in the North hemisphere. Throughout the past century, there was a clear dispersion

of universities in Europe. In these countries, recently, programs for regrouping institutions have been promoted as aiming at building new institutional arrangements to improve the relative position of the universities of these countries in international rankings. To the extent that this is essentially a competitive classification, based on performance measures in comparable criteria, the most prestigious universities tend to reinforce the instruments thus ratifying their original position of domination. In addition, there is another opportunity element that universities of international scope draw out of the rankings fashion, which we should not underestimate. Considering the necessary precautions, they function as a device for generating institutional distinction in relation to private and non-university models of higher education.

Let us take the case of public tenders for faculty recruitment, on which we spoke earlier. A tender notice for university teachers is full of items to ensure impartiality of the process, preserving rights of staff and teachers who are barely effective, but that hinder recognition and selection of the most creative and competent. The selection mode is for several reasons less academic and more managerial, allowing endless lawsuits and legal proceedings. On top of that, to make public procurement for technical and administrative staff, we have to follow the list of functions of the Ministry of Planning, Budget, and Management of the federal government. This submission of the university to the standards of the general public service hampers even the management oriented for social efficiency and academic productivity, which would entail greater flexibility to admit, to oversee, to evaluate, and, where appropriate, to dispense inefficient personnel.

And most of all, this set of constraints and disagreements among the public character and the social mission can become a glaring contradiction, actually setting obstacles to the viability of the concrete project of a popular university, as it is our intention in Southern Bahia. We argue that the mythical autonomy of the nineteenth-century Humboldtian or Newmanian University is no longer justified. Previously, the university presented itself as the *avant-gard* of an elite, as critical conscience of society, and for that reason was little questioned. The world has changed since then. Today the university must persistently demonstrate its political and social value as a tool necessary for economic and human development of a given nation. We need to regain our autonomy, paradoxically, by engaging the community in a participatory manner, so that society starts not to charge us for standards and well-enforced rules, but rather for socially relevant goals effectively achieved.

No doubt that UFSB must comply with the legal apparatus of our country, applicable to all federal universities, whether in management or evaluation or selection of professors. In this regard, the absence of a specific legal juridical apparatus in relation to the listed dimensions may be an obstacle to achieving a progressive, democratic, and popular higher education project. In our case, such a submission is inevitable, because we are a federal institution under the rules of the Ministry of Education, and our core funding comes from the public budget. Unfortunately, the Brazilian State is still in the reconstruction process after the military dictatorship. It has not yet dealt with the question of what university Brazilian society needs and deserves. We have to decide whether the university required for this twenty-first-century Brazil is a bureaucracy, another government agency, or a true institution of knowledge and creation. We do think the core issue is principles. The public management in general is governed by constitutional principles of fairness, legality, economy, impartiality, and efficiency. Excellence, scientificity, aesthetics, creativity, and plurality are to be taken as structuring principles of this peculiar institution called the university, which has the historical mission of higher education, knowledge production and original creation, respect for diversity, and the critical transformation of society. At times, there will even be contradiction between the bureaucratic spirit of public service and the university ethos: Efficiency can impair excellence; impersonality may reject talent and plurality; legality can stifle creativity; economic viability can compromise the aesthetic and the scientific.

Final Comments

Before concluding, we have to consider the differences, from the political-pedagogical point of view, between UFSB's new institutional framework and traditional institutional matrices. The biggest challenge faced by public universities in Brazil nowadays reveals an apparent contradiction: how to make them socially responsible, at the same time reaffirming quality and competence, values that define the university as an institution. This challenge unfolds on crucial issues. How do we strengthen the scientific and artistic competence of the university and, at the same time, increase slots on a large scale, opening doors to social groups historically excluded, and thereby paying a debt of 200 years of inertia, immobility, and elitism? How do we instill political responsibility in the continuous search for autonomy and creativity, and simultaneously

foster the principles of efficiency and economy crucial to the duty of public administration? How do we reaffirm our social commitment and, in doing so, introduce the values of interdisciplinarity, versatility, mobility, and internationalization, which define the contemporary *zeitgeist*?

We intend to get involved in simultaneous movements of incorporation of global and regional peculiarities as a strategy for a counter-hegemonic globalization, producing knowledge appropriate to the context and forming people able to cope with the task of understanding and intervening in this complex, changing reality. But we know we are fighting against the current because the Brazilian conventional university has failed as an instrument or device of social integration. As part of our country's social reproduction system, it acts more as a keeper, if not a promoter, of inequality. Slots in better-quality public universities and in courses of greater social prestige were—and still to a great extent, are, despite compensatory affirmative action policies—aimed almost exclusively at a privileged minority. As seen above, this is when injustice becomes perversion, a really absurd triple perversion.

As a result, in Brazil, well-to-do people are trained in public universities that disregard the public character of the State, engaged in individualistic designs, in a relationship with the public institution of education, often predatory. These students relate to the public university as if it were theirs, the place where they will guarantee a professional future as their personal or family project, with no construction of solidarity or feelings of belonging to the university supported by the State. To challenge this perversion, it means that we have to break down the conservative culture of omission, producing creative forms of resistance.

So the dream-project of UFSB is intended, without prejudice and with imagination, to help make the Brazilian university an open institution, radically public, popular indeed. This brings a set of crucial questions: how to popularize without vulgarizing, how to scale up without losing quality? how to pay the social debt of Brazilian education without destroying the dream of a competent and creative university?

The model we have designed to tackle these challenging questions can be summarized in the following features: exposure to cultural diversity, recognition of an iniquitous and adverse socioeconomic reality, review of a painful historical context, openness to true community participation, immersion plans into concrete practices, breach of pedagogical roles, implementing post-disciplinary forms of learning, breaking disciplinary and epistemological boundaries, practicing shared and joint

self-reflexivity, promoting the active education of critical and politically engaged social subjects, without losing scientific, technological, and praxiological expertise ever. Each and every one of these points is controversial and prone to reactions, resistance, sabotage, and boycotts.

Nevertheless, even considering that we must confront the logic of marketization and productivity that threatens so many teaching–learning innovations that are supposedly emancipatory, the potential sources of reactionary pressures we have faced so far are not only external. In this regard, some faculty members, mostly graduates from Brazilian elite universities, have already organized a domestic opposition movement, joined by a few students and staff members, fueled by estrangement regarding several features of the UFSB project: (a) the cycle curriculum structure, (b) the academic quarter calendar, (c) the intensive use of digital technologies, (d) the innovative pedagogical model, and (e) the acceptance of popular leaders and traditional wise persons as lay teachers. But the most surprising is that they have openly disagreed with and are against the participation of the popular Social Councils in the governance of the institution.

This is not the time and place to analyze in depth the internal political context of our young university. Perhaps we shall do it elsewhere and afterward, waiting for the social and political unrest which followed upon the juridical-parliamentary coup that displaced the Workers' Party popular government that ruled Brazil for the past decade to pass. We have only to say that, in spite of the teachers' local resistance, our new university has been received enthusiastically by all segments of the social fabric of the Southern region of Bahia. Political bodies, government agencies, community organizations, and social movements have collaborated with us in every way, often embracing and promoting collective forms of support. However, many of the actors in this process are not yet aware that political activism, social control, and participatory effects are to be generated and promoted by our pedagogical action and transformative education. Maybe that is the reason why we still have not faced major obstacles in the process; in fact, we have found much convergence and enthusiasm from school teachers, peasant and indigenous leaders, high school students, and representatives of different segments of the *grapiúna* (Tupi word that designates people born in Southern Bahia) territory and society. In short, we have seen that the political forces of the Southern Bahia hinterland, and much of the population, are already galvanized by the social and cultural transformative potential made possible by the arrival of our university.

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CHAPTER 8

Community University of the Rivers: Cultivating Transformative Pedagogies within Formal Education in the Amazon

Dan Baron Cohen

Contexts

Year of Choice

Stop, my brother, give-up that screen in your palm
retrieve the creative time of your imagination.
Now leap, and stand by my side
on the steel horizon where everything began.
Can you see, through the fumes
the indistinct contours of the River Tocantins?
See the boardwalk blurred by frenetic clouds
of crazed dengue mosquitos
reproducing in the fetid drains?
Now, fly, above the cement dam
camouflaged by murals and premiered graffiti
and see Cabelo Seco, before its "revitalization".

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See the *Backyard Drums*[1] singing their alert
on the tilted stage of the little blue house?
And there, *AfroMundi*,[2] beneath the trees in the little square
dancing a river-source on fire?
Now see *Leaves of Life*,[3] its portable library
passing from house to house, cultivating reading?
And there, a little plaza of children beneath the stars
mouth agape in front of the homemade screen of *Owl Cine*[4]
See "it's coming! *Radio Stingray*[5]…"
announcing the great bike-ride 'Let Our River Pass'?
And *Rabetas Videos*[6] filming a gathering of families
their hair braided with the rays of the sun?

Now, beside the school, our well of pure water
can you make out a wee girl, so thin
huge Afro, looking at us, filling plastic bottles?
Recognize her? Look carefully! It's me! Yes, your gran
dancer, reader and singer in the university of the rivers!
I cycled with my mum, our hair on fire!
I set up the cinema, even won a book in the raffle
on the last Saturday before that dawn
when we left with a multitude of people.
We knew we were exchanging
açaí, jambú and Paraense rice festivals
for clean, air-conditioned dreams from overseas …

But we never imagined the tension of that endless boredom
fenced by fear, in our *new habitat*.
Kissing on the river in Belém, we saw the ships, yes
but I never realized, they were actually mining the future!
See that guy, staring at the immense desert
looking at me from the horizon?
Till today his questions echo
in the craters of my stolen *imaginário*.[7]
Who is responsible for such devastation?
How will we survive such violence?
What project invites a community to gaze
at its revival in a museum where everything ended?

Leap now to 2015, my brother, to the world stage
of that beautiful little square!
Gather all the youth and children of the community
and tell them all you have seen, at my side!

They know that 2015 was declared ‘year of light’
and that Brazil will produce solar energy so cheap
that there’ll be no more argument for hydroelectric dams!
Go, invite youth from projects around the world
that have already lived green lies
to meet between the Rivers Tocantins and Itacaiúnas
and together, create a solidarity and generosity
that fit in the palm of every hand!

Photo 8.1 Flanked by an installation in the ‘people’s gallery’, the Backyard Drums transform their village square into a theatre of liberation through Afro-contemporary song and music (2014) © Dan Baron Cohen Used with Permission from *Transformance Institute Archive*

More Culture in School

The packed auditorium is a tense mixture of authoritarian threat and shy adolescent admiration. Teachers police pupils and parents threaten children, but today, a new project is being born. Carla stands in one corner, elegant, poised, her Senegalese costume glowing on the over-lit school assembly stage. It highlights her strong, long legs and curved muscular bottom, sculpted bare belly and proud, tapering back, erect shoulders and small, almost invisible

breasts. Her body records the meeting of enslaved African warrior and silent indigenous planter, and her light complexion and Portuguese surname, the plantation where they met. The same rich fabric gathers her voluminous braided hair in an intuitive celebration of African femininity.

But this Carla is not just a reinvention of traditional African aesthetics, viscerally studied through videos found on the Internet, interpellated into her body. She embodies an impossible dream: that a young *cabocla*[8] woman can emerge from a wooden home without water, toilet or fridge, sustained by little more than rice and beans sauce, to create choreographies of hope, be respected for her intelligence and resilience, and become a new symbol of a vital, autonomous, sustainable Amazon. Everyone in the auditorium read the photo and the caption that accompanied the interview in yesterday's newspaper or saw Carla on TV. She has just won a national award to research the silent, invisible indigenous narratives of her *cabocla* history, as a radical metaphor for the violation of the rivers and forests of the Amazon, through workshops with Butoh and Maori dancers, from the most advanced indigenous urbanized cultures in the world.

Carla looks out at the upturned faces. She recognizes children and adults from her *AfroMundi* dance school. She looks across at Rodrigo, ready to film. She turns now to Eliane, Carina and Emília, across the stage, their *drums of freedom* poised between their legs, also in African costume, ready to perform. She looks at the obese teachers seated at the end of each row in the auditorium. Gradually, they have come to recognize and understand the everyday aggression and submission in the classroom, and compulsive eating as the performance of hidden, unresolved dramas of the feminine Amazon that Carla suffers in her mother's home. They know that today, they are transforming these dramas into a grammar and vocabulary of self-liberating Afro-Amazonian community dance. All recognize in Carla, the celebrated, afro-contemporary dancer, their own gestures, silences and desires. But do they know that the tension that runs deep within her self-confident onstage identity, the energy of her poise and steely determination that aches in the *arca* just below her breasts, threatens to fracture her very life?

The children from *AfroMundi* dance school feel her tension, but Carla knows the *Drums of Freedom*[9] understand it. They know her as the glamorous nineteen-year-old who beneath the costume and braids compulsively straightens and tints her hair and dedicates hours each day to perfecting another performance, virtual and weekend, to attracting male desire and the unconditional love of an absent father, and to healing a stolen, violated childhood.

Carla nods at Rodrigo. He starts his video. She glances at Carina, Eliane, and Emília, dressed in vibrant Senegalese fabrics of green and orange prints, djembes between their legs, and smiles. All are experimenting with their sexuality, which threatens to flood rehearsals and subvert the weekly collective *formation*[10] processes. But now, Carla remembers them all on the opening night of the project, seven years earlier, all seated in the same positions, when she and two other eleven-year-olds gyrated above upturned beer bottles in the village square, unaware of the male leer that encircled them. She nods at them, and the percussionists begin a powerful Guinean rhythm. The entire school auditorium, even the teachers, erupts in adulation and appreciation. Some instantly stand up and dance, without even knowing why.

The live drumming intensifies Carla's solo, and the audience's collective, empathetic response generates another synergy, which inspires the percussionists. The school is transformed and the morning exceeds all expectations. Carla sits exhilarated and recovers her breath. The percussionists caress bruised palms, exchanging smiles. Nilva, the head teacher, laughs out loud and takes the mic. *This is so much more than a celebration of black awareness or the launch of our new project collaboration 'More Culture in School'*[11] *with our Community University of the Rivers.*[12] She smiles at her teachers, animated, already sharing clips of the performance between mobile phones. She is dealing with chronic teacher absenteeism, her own ill-health and that of her most motivated, experienced teachers, and apathy that permeates all the schools in Marabá. *This is more than a performance of our human rights. It is a performance that heals and transforms the imaginário, of each of us, those of us that carry the wounds of Araguaia*[13] *and the threats of Belo Monte.*[14] *You give us hope that the Amazon will revive!*

Carla smiles, but I recognize the tension that now hunches her shoulders and is spreading to the *Drums of Freedom*. All are desperate to recover their mobile phones in Maria's bag, to read the few hundred messages of the early morning.[15] In all her years of pedagogical coordination, this one responsibility tests Maria's capacity to avoid turning a collective agreement into terse command. Nilva calls me to the stage, and I embrace her and Carla and present the percussionists by name. *Thanks everyone for your focused energy and generosity! After the interval, we will work with all the teachers, and in the coming weeks, with you all, class by class, to transform the school into a huge workshop of dance, percussion, song, theatre and video, to create a festival of transformation through performance. Agreed?* Sustained applause.

But let me ask you one question. You know these performers. You know Rodrigo. You have seen them all grow into arts educators. Is it fair that they, that you, are failed again and again, just because the pen, only one of our languages, just one of our intelligences, just one door into our imagination, is all that's valued? And that the knowledge of our ancestors, that comes from our hands, our bodies, our land, forests and rivers, has no place in school?

The auditorium is silent, reflexive, open. Two of the scores of young mothers present, who danced with Carla above upturned beer bottles seven years ago, feel a rush of indignation. Their young sons sit beside them, already practiced in the armed poses of Toím, Douglinho, and Renan.[16] *Please leave with this in your mind. You created this stage where we performed another kind of education, without walls, rooted in the culture of Cabelo Seco, past, present and future, and the celebration of our full intelligence!*

I look at Carla. Her eyes brim with tears. She learned yesterday that she failed Portuguese and Mathematics, and is condemned to repeat and 'pay' her final year.

Photo 8.2 Poster montage of *AfroMundi Dance Company's* first performance on a landing platform transformed into a stage on the banks of the River Tocantins, during the current drought ('Dry Tears', 2016) © Dan Baron Cohen Used with Permission from *Transformance Institute Archive*

Universities

I create a kite
and see your care, mum
in my hands
cutting and sewing
my clothes.
I tie the ribbons of its tail
and see your wisdom, dad
in the dance of your fingers
weaving nets
in the shade of the square.

I fly my dreams
their cord vibrating
with so much history and desire
and though mute
failed and condemned
I read the future in the winds
and write
the ethics of the rivers
on the parched red sky
to reveal
the values of the giants
and keep safe
my life in my home.

Rodrigo looks down over Cabelo Seco. He lifts the recycled pocket video camera to his eye. I film him, filming his community vanishing, as his worldview expands. He smiles to himself. *The ice in my belly has melted*. As we pass through the clouds, he turns to catch the last glimpse of Cabelo Seco, an arrowhead in the point where the River Itacaiúnas and River Tocantins meet. *The day I became an angel.* His distinctive ancient profile, more indigenous than African, is sharply defined in the frame of the plane window. He is not just filming his first flight. He is filming for Toím, Douglinho, and Renan, three of the five friends in an iconic photographic portrait that appeared in our third artistic-pedagogic calendar, all murdered before reaching eighteen. And he is researching the future, for those who survive in the 'red zone' of development, who will read and reread every nuance in his photos, imprisoned for being born black, poor and too literate about the languages of power and the

health of the Amazon, to endure their fragility and complicity, or be allowed to move freely in Old Marabá at night.

Rodrigo's features are almost inscrutable, an inherited, self-aware ancestral mask as dry as his spare words, but the emotions of his own stolen childhood, tremble in an almost perceptible smile. *What happens if you need the toilet in the sky?* Later, he will smile at the radical innocence of his question.

We leave my bag in my room and go into his apartment. Rodrigo opens the sliding glass door of his bedroom and looks out over a garden of native trees, contemporary ceramic sculptures and indigenous wooden carvings beside landscaped ponds, filled with more fish than our stretch of the River Tocantins. I'm glad his first hotel is an ecological retreat, deep in the old city of Recife. He studies every detail, recording everything in a finely gradated, acutely sensitive memory. He points at a huge majestic tree with bold, twined roots, across the gardens. *Isn't that the Baobá*[17] *that priests brought over from Africa as seeds in their hair?* Rodrigo opens the hot-water tap and lets the water run, noting its temperature, before we leave his room.

We descend antique wooden stairs, and as we reach the garden, Rodrigo turns suddenly. *Did we turn off the air-conditioning?* I smile at his economizing reflex and nod. I open my camera bag. When I look up, Rodrigo is already in the garden beneath the Baobá tree. By the time I join him, he is on his knees, smelling the leaves and caressing the seeds between his forefinger and thumb. *These will not bud. But I'll take some back to show the Rabetas.* He films the thick roots, braiding out of the ground, the camera tilted up from the ground. This perspective, from below, is already an aesthetic reflex. He is nineteen, struggling to graduate primary school.

Carla has agreed we can show Dry Tears,[18] I confirm to Rodrigo, on his veranda, after lunch. He'd tried, in vain, to digest the rich white-wine sauce that accompanied the only dish with rice and beans on the menu, and almost fainted with cramps. But he is already deeply immersed in preparation for the National Forum on Audio-Visual Interaction with Education. His fine, steady forefinger accompanies the movement of his lips as he traces the shape and reads aloud every word. I browse the program. *You're on the roundtable I'm chairing, Rodrigo.* He looks up, panic triggering decisive certainty in the fraction of a second. *I'm here to learn. I'm not ready to speak. I'll document.* I smile. *We'll speak to the organizers. They'll understand.*

My opening words on our Community University of the Rivers turn Rodrigo into a celebrity. He lowers his eyes before the insistent gaze of well-intentioned university scholars and leaders of extension projects when they insist on being photographed with him, but by the second day, he meets their gaze, for a few seconds, and replies with a phrase crafted to explain his presence and to avoid being turned into an exotic trophy. *I coordinate the audio-visual department of our university, the memory of our micro-projects, the formation of our coordinators, our work in the community and in schools, the graphic design for our billboard and our solar-powered radio-bike.* I complete his presentation: *Rodrigo and his audio-visual collective won a national award from the Ministry of Culture, last year.*

Rodrigo learns not even to smile in empathetic embarrassment when even scholars ask me if he speaks Portuguese, if his body is painted, if alligators walk our streets. In just hours he has travelled the vast distance from smoldering terse replies slapped out of him in the deserted midnight streets of Cabelo Seco by brutal military police, when asked to explain the *Reais* in his pocket. They trampled his scholarship into the dirt and then kicked and mocked him when he kneeled to retrieve it. A month later, it was the sergeant who looked away when Rodrigo offered him a glass of water before the start of the community bike-ride. Rabetas Videos Collective named the bike-ride *Don't Kill Me: I am the Amazon*, in memory of nightly violence they suffer at the hands of the police. Astride their bicycles, in twos and threes, all the kids noted Rodrigo's lowered eyes and the officer's searching gaze, and the video-maker's outstretched hand that bridged the two worlds. The scene disturbed the teachers' conversation in the staff-room the next day, and then entered the collective narrative in the calendar in 2015, approved by the youth coordinators of the community university.

I step onto the stage, the forum program in my hand, and introduce two national video-makers. Rodrigo films. *Our third panelist is Rodrigo Mendes.* I gesture to the only youth in the forum. There is a palpable thrill of expectation. *Rodrigo has asked me to thank you for the honour of being invited. As this is his first forum and the first time he has left his community of Cabelo Seco, he has chosen to listen. He will speak through video, and in intimate dialogues.* The disappointment is almost as visceral as Rodrigo's refusal to speak. *It may take him many years to break the law of silence on public stage, a silence that keeps him alive today.*

The two video-makers are eloquent, calm, and coherent. They choose polemical themes and are experimental in their forms of presentation, but they are at home. They affirm an agreed consensus. Rodrigo is bewildered by their video language, but open and intrigued. A few questions from an audience immersed in the mobile phones and netbooks in their laps are answered with reasonable, rehearsed anecdotes. The video-makers return to their seats in the auditorium and I ask for the video fragments from *Dry Tears* and *I am the Amazon*. The first begins with the pulsing sound of crickets, and Rodrigo's distinctive view, angled up from the cracked cement and stagnant puddles of Cabelo Seco. Fingertips suspended above keyboards…

A member of the audience takes the microphone and after a long comment concludes with two questions. *Rodrigo, how do you develop the narratives in your videos? And why did you choose video to transform yourself?* Rodrigo lowers his camera and gazes at the questioner, the microphone in her outstretched hand invading his silence. She has already photographed him in the morning, and achieved a selfie with him before the session.

We exchange glances. I too am being coerced. If I mediate to protect Rodrigo, I fulfill our agreed, shared principles, but in the public gaze, devalue his authority and contradict our university's pedagogy of self-determination and commitment to youth as co-researchers and community pedagogues. If I concede, I perhaps irretrievably betray my word and wound an emerging, still-fragile self-confidence, let alone the confidence between us. How to explain our process of healing the hidden, intersubjective labyrinthine wounds of centuries of colonization, exclusion and resistance, hunger and permanent, intimate betrayal, in just a few words? How to illustrate our territorial distinction between the *community*[19] dramas of silent, lived, unresolved inarticulate intimate histories, and the *public* theater of lucid, contested interpretations of distant, already documented narratives? How to defend Rodrigo's right to be silent, and his huge post-colonial challenge and struggle to say *no*? I smile at Rodrigo. He too is reading this threshold. I decide to trust his knowledge. *Your choice, amigo.*

Rodrigo weighs the risk. In a split second, he steps away from the camera, takes the mic, and climbs onstage. *I didn't understand your question.* The woman rephrases, becoming more obtuse and seeking refuge in a theoretical language. Rodrigo turns to me and whispers: *what is she saying?* I build the bridge: *Rodrigo, how do you use video to tell your stories, and why did you choose to make videos?* Without looking up, knowing the weight of each word, and the silence between, Rodrigo replies. *I try to*

reveal what is hidden, from the ground up, to save our river, and all that our community knows. He lifts his eyes to meet his questioner's. *If I were not making videos, I'd be involved in some scam, caught up in trafficking, and probably dead.*

I need to return to reality, Rodrigo notes drily, as we stride through the airport.

Teacher Education

Let our river pass

Even though there are no more fish
I will hold on to my grandpa's canoe
its *taúba* benches preserve
the curve of my learning
in his lap of how to read the rivers
the smell of *tucunaré* fish
drying on the clothes-line in our backyard
and of mum's peels of laughter, discovering
my first summer of love.

That world sustains the roots
of my hope
that the murder of life-sources
in the name of green progress
will open your nut-brown eyes
encourage you to fit your *rabeta*[20]
and cross the Tocantins, again
at sunset, with me
to defend our Amazon.

Carina passes out drumsticks, while Eliane places thirty chairs in a circle. They are not lovers, but Carina gazes with unconditional love for Eliane who was coerced at fourteen and at fifteen, gained Pietro and wounding judgment from two powerful women in Cabelo Seco. They tried to use Eliane's precocious pregnancy as evidence of the project's immorality, to destroy it. Instead, the two young women formed *Clothes to the Wind,* a percussion-based, song-writing micro-project for children, young girls and women, to turn violation into human rights. Carina hands out the final drumsticks as Eliane completes the introduction. She then picks

up her guitar, and the two sing and drum the song *Cabelo Seco* to present who they are. They follow with a funk version, just with drumsticks. Amazed applause. *I taught you for five years,* a senior pedagogue exclaims. *I never knew you had so much culture!*

Carina also co-coordinates the children's library *Leaves of Life* and the community cinema *Owl Cine* and writes excellent poetry and short stories, but she never speaks in public, except to tell truths no one can bear to hear. Even at seven years of age, the youngest in the project, she was the same. But then, she had to overcome hysterical laughter to find and build the momentum to tell the truth. In a community and country that seeks refuge in saying *yes*, to avoid punishment, exclusion, and execution, and to keep every doorway open to dribble starvation and rape, Carina's courage is rare. *Were the lovers active or passive, in that summer*? Carina asked when the poem was read, opening the pathways for the community university to talk about sexuality, and for Eliane to deny the rumor that she had exchanged her virginity for the brace on her teeth.

The teachers listen to the two girls with respect, and Eliane asks them to turn to one another in pairs. It is the first time all 30 teachers are present in a *formation* session, joined by other professionals who know *Rivers of Meeting* and are curious to see how teenagers form adults. Carina reads the poem and now that an environment of care, sensitivity, and confidence has been defined, Eliane explains the structure of the workshop. She invites the teachers to form into seated pairs, turn their chairs toward one another, and exchange a story about the human right that most defines their needs. Within seconds, the circle is polyphony of trialogues.[21] Carina and Eliane check that no one is excluded, self-excluding or touching an unresolved, painful story.

After seven minutes, Eliane beats the *agogô*,[22] reminds everyone to share their dialogic time with care, and that she will call them together in a few minutes. When she judges the banter has almost subsided, she calls the taller teacher in each pair to stand. She and Carina demonstrate. Carina creates a human sculpture of the human rights story Eliane has shared, and Eliane reads herself in Carina's embodiment and then adds emotional, psychological, and narrative detail. The pair inverts, each actor now becoming active audience, and then the pairs embrace in thanks.

Now take your drumsticks, and accompany each of these rhythms. Carina beats out a rhythm of *funk*, and the teachers find the rhythm, the generational differences appearing with laughter. Eliane beats out a *samba*,

and the teachers find the rhythm with more confidence. Carina creates a *carimbó*, and once the teachers find the rhythm, Eliane creates a *boi*. With each new rhythm, the pleasure visibly increases, the relationships between the teachers are being transformed, and the respect for two teenage arts educators deepens. Maria is supporting them invisibly, as one of the pedagogues. I am photographing. Rodrigo is filming. But the pedagogic culture comes from Eliane and Carina's mutual respect, artistic confidence, and thorough preparation.

Now please return to your pairs, smiles Eliane. She can feel the workshop is going well and risks a smile to Carina. *I'm really enjoying this!* Carina laughs aloud. *We invite you to create a lyric, based in your stories, and to choose a rhythm, to guide the improvisation and structure its…, well, just to structure its rhythm!* Both laugh and the entire workshop laughs with them.

Twenty minutes later, we listen to fifteen raps, each using a mixture of Amazonian rhythms. Carina and Eliane are stunned, but less so than the teachers. In the circle of reflection that concludes this first of twenty-four 80-minute workshops, apart from the candor and quality of the lyrics and collective self-confidence of the teachers, two insights stand out. *I've always condemned funk as violent, macho, irrelevant to the educational process,* says the pedagogical coordinator of the school. *This workshop has sensitized me to start from where my pupils are, culturally, and to work from their energy, their life experience, their pleasure. And frankly, I thought I had no rhythm!*

Carina offers her reflection on what the pedagogic coordinator has just shared. *As far as I can see, the relations of power, between the senhora* [all laugh], *and the different generations of teachers, have also become more aware, more equal and horizontal.* There is a hushed awe, as the teachers listen to the youngest pedagogue in the circle. *It starts from a mutual confidence, the sharing of intimate stories. But it's also the decision to experiment with the unknown, in public. And it's the rhythm itself. It creates more than a unity, how do you say, a synchrony? It creates the desire to walk together, to integrate, to support. And it's free of words!*

Everyone applauds, and a younger teacher risks the second insight that will appear in the report passed to the Ministries of Culture and of Education. *Carina has demonstrated what I have seen today: the capacity of young people to collaborate with us, as co-researchers, as co-pedagogues, as partners in the educational process. And this completely changes not just how we see young people, but how we all see education. And because their*

priority is on ethics, human rights and justice, the drama of becoming and determining the self, Carina and Eliane remind me of why I chose to become a teacher.

And she cries.

Ethics

Rodrigo is early. In the Amazon, that is remarkable. In the capital, people meet before or after the rain. On the river, the currents decide. And in these times of blind, unregulated industrial development and corruption, drought and minimal resources disturb the ancient equilibrium between the rivers and the rains. Leaves, rustled by a wind promising rain, are likely to be misread, even by the subtlest eco-cultural literate eye. So to meet, organize, and create, is now more than ever a question of persistence, and respect for the time of others. For some reason, in a searingly poor family home depressed by an alcoholic father dying from starvation and a mother too pneumonic to leave her bed, Rodrigo and all of his brothers and sisters arrive early. Even his cousin arrives early to trade her teenage body for a burger, beneath the boardwalk, beside sewers spewing the city's waste into the River Tocantins.

Rodrigo opens and dusts his Mac and turns it on. He puts on his glasses, imagining the effects of real lenses that he is saving for, and reopens his monthly report. Two years ago, he wrote single words that stretched across two full pages, just as he spoke. *Like a long journey along the river*. Gradually, the words became organized into phrases and he randomly placed commas and full stops here and there, for effect, experimenting with their aesthetic effect. Gradually, he structured his phrases with punctuation as precise as his editing, integrating new concepts from the discussions about the weekly film the youth coordinators watch together, and the videos he devoured about the Amazon. *You never stop asking questions, even with your eyes*, Carla smiles, admiring his 3-minute videos of *AfroMundi*. They were born on the same day, same year, and both have remarkable memories.

Rodrigo has arrived early to give his first tutorials. He has a pedagogic plan, which he has built through our dialogue, copied with painstakingly care so that it is clean and accurate. It guides him to enable Carina and then Emília to discover how to edit. He sits beside each of them, gently pointing at each relevant key, his long left arm drooped casually across the back of the chair of his apprentice, his right hand toying with a pencil, smiling, playful, as each manipulates the tools he has taught

himself to use. The ease and pace of the others' learning reflects their intelligence, but also Rodrigo's pedagogy. He is patient, supportive, interested, and empathetic. All that he has learned, he shares. Hours pass quickly, they learn together.

Rodrigo has already filmed with Adriano and Beto, and when they film, each too also places the camera on the ground, kneeling before the scene, reading it intently for social and poetic detail. They too are patient, perfectionist, and as unhurried as waiting for a storm to pass before crossing the Tocantins. They are bound to one another, in unconditional solidarity, by the law of silence.

But each is very different. Beto is fragile, sensitive, alert, fearless, and unpredictable in his filming, but difficult to understand when he speaks. His words, smile and decaying teeth, are all constantly being hidden by his trembling hand, making it impossible to understand his speech. But when he films and edits, his fingers are steady. He taught me to edit with the same generosity that Rodrigo demonstrates, but could not keep to our agreed times. He can't even remember the sequence of the days of the week and months of the year. It's too abstract. The movement of the river and its winds, the cycles of trees in constant flower and fruit, the rhythms of the wet and dry seasons, and the visceral memory that fixes his stare[23] are the cogs that will continue to organize time, long after the river's source dries up.

Adriano stares in intense concentration, alert to all detail. His back is hunched in silent, brooding indignation. His innocent openness has disappeared. *You don't need to be quoted by name, in the piece we write for the paper*, I reassure him. It was the night when he was arrested for an armed assault that everyone knows he would not commit. A little more than a hundred days later, when he is found innocent and released from prison, he is still living the beatings at the hands of the police and older inmates. Was he raped for being pretty? *You have the right to compensation*, I explain, but I know his mother is terrified of police revenge. Adriano doesn't look up. *You can include my name. They need to know we're not afraid.*

In the little *Cottage of Culture*, the heart of our community university, we agree to include the photo of Rodrigo teaching him to accompany the article. It will ease the pain and embarrassment of his family and clear his name in the eyes of the community and of the future, a concession the news editor immediately agreed when I explained who Adriano is. It will also undo the devastating effects of his head teacher's angry prejudice, which marched her from classroom to classroom, newspaper in hand, pointing to what happens to vagabonds. But it will not enable Adriano to recover his academic year and graduate primary school before he is 19.

Photo 8.3 Byron, Rodrigo and Adriano of Rabetas Videos Collective discuss the ethics of representation during the production of a video on the Leaves of Life community library (2016) © Dan Baron Cohen Used with Permission from *Transformance Institute Archive*

Adriano, Rodrigo, and Byron return to editing the community library video. Rodrigo has explained how it needs to show that *Leaves of Life* expands the definition of literacy to include all our human languages and integrated intelligence, valuing the knowledge of the community. They immediately understand. They are studying, together, through production, how to create an audio narrative to structure, complement, and reveal the complexity of the video footage. They know a reading and drawing circle in the street, in the 'red zone,' is profound.

Suddenly, they huddle close to the screen in intense debate. They rewind footage again and again. They call me over. Adriano points. *Should we cut this piece?* I watch an older youth arrive at the circle, look over, ask Andreia for a plain piece of paper, lie down among the children, and begin to draw. I nod. *He stayed until it began to rain, and even then, continued to draw, using the cracked wall as his surface. What's the doubt?* Adriano explains. *If we include him, he might over-react.* They read my eyes.

Some will say he's using the children as a shield, even scouting for little planes and a future market. A pause. *He could say this is how the police will read it.*

Community cultural literacy. No sociologist would even read a dealer lying among children. Or his intention. The *Rabetas* know he's recovering stolen childhood. He's found the only place where he can draw and imagine, a failed youth holding in thrall the living community that sustains him. He is more than a dealer. He is a son and grandson, a cousin and nephew, a shared childhood friend within a network of extended families, each a labyrinth of unresolved histories, suspended in a taut web of silences. A single loose photo or clip, with him just in the background, could have appalling human consequences. In a few frames, they've glimpsed the world, and the breath that separates them. *You're best to judge.*

We should consult him. Rodrigo and Byron are cousins, Adriano's uncles, but Adriano has just been released. His street status has changed. *I'll talk to him tonight.* I smile. *In just a few minutes, you've focused the ethics of image rights, multiple perspectives, community politics and the value of mediation to maintain the confidence of the community and authority of your video. Can I document this moment, with the clip in the background?* I smile. *Out of focus.* They smile. They don't look at the camera. They know this photo of the process will have a pedagogic and historical value for the calendar and the community.

Byron returns that night. *He loved the afternoon, but we can't use that clip.* Next morning, Rodrigo notes the decision in his project diary. It will enter his monthly report. Unlike Byron and Adriano, he has already made the decision to teach, and use video to transform. He needs a team, not just to record and edit all that occurs every week but to keep his childhood friends alive. He has reintegrated Adriano as an editor.

Literacies

Leaves of Life

Every Saturday
I go to the center
enter a circle
hear stories
play with colors
and without threat
sing dancing
opening myself
with care

to read
and recognize
my stories.

And at sunset
right there
I pick up a pencil
which does not judge
or cut me
or fell
my calm
and I invent
without fear
the first comic-book
with afro-amazonian
pages of life.

Photo 8.4 Andreia leads a collective storytelling workshop for literacy in the 'Leaves of Life' community library (2016) © Dan Baron Cohen Used with Permission from *Transformance Institute Archive*

Carina and Andreia select photos for their monthly report and website in the *Cottage* kitchen. They sit at the table where every week all the young coordinators of the university's micro-projects watch a provocative, independent film. At this old wooden table, they visit cultures of other peoples and extend the boundaries of their palate and imagination. Here, they also prepare their courses and workshops, learn to write academic essays, and prepare for the exams to enter the federal university. We are torn about the value of formal education, but they would also change it, by entering it, and meet students and academics from across Brazil. Their chances are slim.

What's 12 x 20?, Carla asks, entering the kitchen, completing her financial report. The two librarians look up. That's when we discover Carla is illiterate in mathematics. We'd imagined that while we were taking care of the artistic and cultural *formation* of our young coordinators, at least the fundamentals of a high school education were being learned. Every day, we ask *how was school today?* Every day, they reply *normal.*

My worst enemy, Rodrigo laughs, entering the kitchen. He has no times tables. I throw a simple multiplication at Carina and Andreia. Embarrassed laughter. In walks Emília. I throw the same at her. *I refused to sleep with the teacher*. She is serious. *Does everybody know this?* They shrug. *And no-one denounces it?* In seconds, we discover all our coordinators are likely to fail high school and have no chance of passing the university entrance exam. All use their fingers and toes, creating cakes and fences to make huge calculations. *But you make lightning calculations when you buy anything and count your change,* I declare in disbelief.

All abandoned maths at 8 years old, ring-fencing it in angry self-defense and *preguiça*[24] when humiliated in school. To gain the academic points to pass from year to year, they organize community raffles to fundraise detergents and sponges. Then, they clean the school as part of a gymkhana. The fast-track option is to remain silent.

Outraged, we go to the school. The able pedagogic coordinator is depressed, suffering petty envy from alienated, passified teachers. I go to the newspaper, radio, and TV journalists. *What did you expect?* asks Ulisses, the only critical, capable, and collaborative journalist in the region. *An educated self-confident population expects human rights, justice, democracy. Our state education in the Amazon needs to be the most precarious in Brazil.* Not even geography teachers here know that Marabá is in the Amazon. Our young people didn't even know they are Afro-Indigenous. They think the Amazon is 'out there.'

Andreia and Carina post the photos of the library in the red zone: storytelling, *AfroMundi Kids*[25] presenting traditional Guinean dance, *Rabetas* projecting new community videos on cracked walls of the new houses. *Will we include photos from the kite festival?* Carina asks. She opens a selection of young people teaching children how to create the technology to write on the wind. As I photograph them working together, I notice cuts, extending from Carina's wrists up her inner forearms. I put down my camera and take her wrist in my hand. I've known her since she was six. *Carina?* She shrugs. *Why?* She glances at Andreia. I turn Andreia' hand over. She too is cutting herself. They see the shock and the questions in our eyes. Carina laughs, Andreia explains. *We are anaesthetized. It's a way to feel the pain of everyday life*. Emilia is standing in the kitchen doorway. She turns her inner forearms toward us and raises her leather and woven bracelets. She too is mutilating herself.

All the cuts are raw, the scabs still forming. *When did this begin?* I ask. *Who knows?* Carina replies. *Does no-one notice, in your homes?* They shake their heads. *Show him,* Carina says to Andreia. She peels back the frayed hems of her shorts and reveals the cuts on her thighs, not to be seen. Emília does the same. Different cuts, deeper. The tears well up in our eyes. The cuts look like indigenous markings. Centuries of unacknowledged violation of women in the Amazon are now perhaps finally being documented on the thighs and wrists of their descendants. *We discovered we are all doing it*. Andreia speaks objectively. *When the cuts heal, the pain writes a new page*.

These are among the most intelligent youth in the community, perhaps the most sensitive and supported. Why have they not spoken to us? *Do you write about this?* I ask. The question seems banal. *Can you show me your thighs again?* So many wounds, on the inner and upper thighs. Scars beneath scars. Shadows of pain. *You should photograph this, Carina, before it disappears. Or write lyrics. Have you written poetry to explain this, Andreia? You're writing the history of the Amazon onto your bodies. Do you know women throughout the world hurt themselves? Men hurt others. But there are other ways to remember, to achieve justice*.

They all know how to listen, to speak, to alert, and to intervene when they are with the small children of the library. You cannot learn these empathetic reflexes of solidarity. Yet they are mutilating themselves. How to tell them? Andreia reads my eyes. *I know it's dangerous. I'm seeing a psychologist. She doesn't understand. But in explaining to her, I can now explain my madness to myself!* She laughs and turns to Carina. *Shall we finish our documentation, girl? We still need to go door-to-door before we set up Owl Cine!*

The next morning, Carina flies to Belém to receive a UNICEF award for Community University of Rivers. She is the only youth present among 150 head teachers and project directors. None can see her cuts. She presents the project with authority and insight, gained at that old wooden table in the kitchen. And she can't multiply to save her life.

I (Too) Am the Amazon

Emília texts us at midnight. *Carina has left Cabelo Seco.* I'm stunned. Twice, she has been our youngest *Young Nelson Mandela*,[26] in 2014 and 2015, recognized for her courage, innovation, and leadership by example, in every sphere of the community university. She has been at the heart of the project from its very first night. *What happened*? Emília responds by *zapzap*. *Too much to explain here.*

At 14 years old, just three years earlier, Emília enchanted a world congress of performing arts education in Paris, responding to my keynote with her *agogô*. Her courage and her pedagogic brilliance with any Amazonian percussion instrument, guitar and sax, cultivated a rare confidence between us. I persist. *Her gran beat her into the ground, then called a removal van and had all her possessions transported to her mother's home in Vila do Rato.* I imagine the humiliation. *Why*? Emília is already messaging. *She cut and shredded all her jeans.* An answer is already forming in my mind. *And her grandfather*? A pause. *Exactly. He turned his back.*

In *Drums of Freedom,* Carina and Emília are percussionists. In *Owl Cine*, the production pulse of the community's independent film culture. On the *Bikerides for Life*,[27] they share a bike, shrieking and laughing with freedom beneath the motorway bridges, blowing whistles, and singing songs of freedom as we pass through the crowded streets. The project's earliest photos show Carina holding the mic to amplify Emília, eyes closed, playing recorder solo to the rapt community, and Emília holding the mic to Carina's drum and, later, to her sensitive acoustic guitar solos.

Perhaps they've always been lovers. But now, increasingly, in the street cinema and on the international tour of *Let Our River Pass*,[28] their insatiable need for love, their transgressive desire, can no longer be contained beneath the old kitchen table during films of *formation* and mathematics workshops. It seeps across every threshold of caution and restraint. In the authoritarian post-colonial gaze of our Afro-Indigenous community, already tense with Catholic repression and labyrinthine jealousy, this compulsive love is dangerous. For them, and for a project that refuses funding or patronage from mining companies and their

institutional allies, this is social suicide. Had her grandparents intuited the truth of their granddaughter's choice? Had their patience snapped?

Do we have to wear jeans? Carina and Emília ask when we launch 24 performance workshops in Jose Mendonça Vergolino middle school. Both know workshop coordinators in a public space are examples, not just of a different kind of education rooted in popular culture and the valuing of arts-rich pedagogies, but of young people as co-researchers, pedagogic collaborators, and as arts educators. We talk it though together. *If we are committed to freedom of expression, diversity, self-determination, why another uniform?* Carina challenges everything, with respect, but with courage. Both wear project t-shirts with pride, themselves declarations of poems and songs they know by heart. But when Carina plays guitar in the *More Culture in School* workshops, and when Emília sits astride her *carão*, they want to be and display the freedom and independence they symbolize.

24 workshops later, Carina and Emília braid red, orange, and yellow fabric into their thick Afro-Indigenous hair and twine the strands around their waists, foreheads, and handlebars. They meet the 1200 pupils who have discovered through dance, percussion, song, and theater that the Amazon is within them, where they live, study, and play. They too are all desperate to become rays of the Amazonian sun that at 8 in the morning already throws bold shadows of their bikes across the street. While Carla and Luísa prepare *AfroMundi Kids*, Rodrigo and the *Rabetas* film, and Andreia reviews her poem. Carina, Emília, and Eliane pass cheese bread and bananas to the military police and municipal guards, inviting them to tie the blazing streamers to the aerials of their motorbikes and cars. Together, the head teacher, her pedagogic team, and the young arts educators implement the collective decision of the teachers and parents who approved the project. Together, they create the itinerate human installation, *I am the Amazon*. As the *bike-ride for life* flows through the streets of Cabelo Seco, Vila do Rato and Santa Rosa communities, children, parents, and teachers see the River Tocantins catching fire, transforming itself into vital solar energy.

But where was the art? rages the former Secretary of Education, a school pedagogue, two days later, urged by the politicians and mining companies, in favour of the projected hydroelectric dam. *Why didn't we create a new play, through 24 workshops, to be performed by our most talented pupils on the Metropolitan University stage?* The young arts educators of the community university know the source of her anger is the news coverage that popularized pedagogic, eco-cultural, and paradigmatic choices to more than a million people across the region.

Carla responds live on TV and radio, a week after the human sculpture. '*I am the Amazon' is our pedagogic installation, a response to the*

multiple violences we suffer and will suffer. It is the performance of our personal and community transformation. Claudia, our social journalist, Carla's co-singer and Emília's older sister, adds: *It is our popular culture, now as pedagogy in movement. We perform our values of care, solidarity and sustainable community,*[29] *when we pedal, in synchrony.*

We cycle over to Carina's mother, in Vila do Rato, five minutes from Cabelo Seco. It's another world. Wooden shacks, no drains, even fewer men, far poorer. Here, Carina is not the only grandchild. She is the oldest child, suddenly responsible for five brothers and sisters, more indigenous than African, in the salacious gaze of adult male visitors. She emerges from the wooden house, tilted toward the River Itacaiúnas, whose life-source has already died. She smiles and embraces us. *Are you okay?* She nods and smiles, concealing a continent of uncried, invisible pain. Her shorts are shredded. *A perfect place for Leaves of Life*. We smile. No need for many words. *They're all waiting for us to organize Owl Cine*.

Good Living

Letter from Mariana

My dear Marabá, Amazonian kin
Greetings from Mariana
your miner-sister
still trembling beneath the mud.
I write against time
within a labyrinth of shame without light
to disturb and encourage you…

Sister, even sensing it was a lie
I let green promises
seduce me to become human
and end once and for all my fear of hunger.
I won a home and became so consumed
by the dreams in the palm of my hand
I spent the future bit by bit, not noticing…

Friend, read the debris of my naivety
mocking my dry scream.
Learn from me, my cousin
the toxic cost
of saying 'yes' when you think 'no'.
Don't even hide behind the law of silence
that today shelters so many giants…

Marabá, when their ships pass
fat with so much iron, beef and wood
your chance will have already passed!
You will only have time
to take one last selfie
in front of a boat rushing
towards the source of the Tocantins in flames!

Sister, preserve the Lourenção Boulders
wise beings that will protect you
from the ships of death
and guide the rains of dawn.
If together we declare "not here, Vale!"
we can free ourselves of this poison
and take care of our Amazonian good life!

Photo 8.5 *AfroMundi Dance Company* imagines the rebirth of the dead River Tocantins in 'Life-Source on Fire!' (Belém, 2015) © Dan Baron Cohen Used with Permission from *Transformance Institute Archive*

Scrambled eggs, sausage, toast, and baked beans in the Community University of Hong Kong are a far cry from beans, rice, and beef. But for Carla, its rain in the desert. She has been struggling with Chinese food for three days, indeed, has been unable to digest anything from the moment she boarded the plane in Dubai. She is not afraid to taste the unknown. In her first international trip, at 15 years old, a ten-day residency in Medellin, she closed her eyes and put *chicharrón* and *arepas* in her mouth, identifying and classifying each taste. She gave brave afro-dance workshops and received questions from Spanish speakers. It was not just to receive recognition as a dancer. *I saw our project 20 years from now,* she said in her community slideshow, when we returned to Cabelo Seco. *The arts can transform drug-abuse into projects, and drug-wars into community cooperatives.*

Smelling everything before risking tasting it, she astonished our hosts in Washington, at 17, spitting out quality vegetarian food, even forcing herself to vomit, before performing her solo 'Roots and Antennas' to an international audience at a congress on climate change in memory of Chico Mendes. Carla shone in the healing warmth of recognition. She was creating international confidence to invite all the young coordinators. And she was performing the humanity of the Amazon, inspiring international solidarity and protection. But she was risking illness and living a permanent, tense state of distress.

Why have you chosen dance as your language? asks Professor Oscar Ho. Carla is keen to find a new answer to a question she has received in so many interviews and roundtables. *I have always been more lucid, more analytical using my body.* She pauses, I translate. *I always let others speak.* He smiles. *You seem extremely lucid to me.* The Taiwanese academic and the post-doctoral Umbrella Movement activist are fascinated. The rhythm of translation gives Carla the opportunity to select her words with great precision. *There's inherited ancestral knowledge, and more lived community intelligence in my body. I mean to say, in my visceral memory.*

She checks the new word with me. I'm astonished by her bravery. She has never risked this explanation, even in her reflexive reports. I remember to translate and explain my pause. Carla picks a piece of chicken from my plate, unaware of the intimacy of her gesture and of its Cabelo Seco community reflex. The Taiwanese academic is enchanted. *What do you mean 'visceral memory'?* Carla pauses again to reflect. The Dean has forgotten to eat.

As a child, we went hungry many nights, even days at a time. When my mother came home from partying, drunk, she would beat me, till she collapsed, exhausted. She forbade me to cry. I even had to thank her. Before the Rivers of Meeting project, I didn't even know I was the descendent of an enslaved African herbal doctor and of a raped indigenous planter. I carry so many silences in my conscious memory. But these…legacies, she turns to me to confirm the word. *In my experience, its more precise to research and narrate these legacies through dance*. She gives me space to translate. *They pass from generation to generation, through compulsive emotions,*[30] *muscular tensions, that bind my chest in knots*. The post-doctoral student is making notes. *If they inhabit the body, maybe these legacies can only be transformed through dance. Like massage. Loosening and restructuring history*. The Dean smiles. *Remember to eat!*

Carla is suddenly crying. A respectful silence. I look again at her, still just 20, remembering the emotional and physical falls she has suffered to be here. I'm stunned at what she has learned from the creative research we completed together. Respiration as memory and echoes of undocumented histories. Respiration as narrative, passing through her resilient but marked, aching body. Now I know the deep massage I gave during our research, created knowledge. I glimpse how she translates that into her dance performance.

It's one of my thresholds—she looks to confirm the word, *I am struggling to cross. I cannot keep any vegetables or unknown tastes down*. The tears fall again. *My stomach knots. I feel nausea. But at least in 'Life-Source on Fire',*[31] *our new solo, I can show this to my community. And women and children can interpret for themselves. Contemporary dance invites. It doesn't direct.*

We return to our rooms to prepare, and then visit the spaces where we will work. Carla's flu is becoming more bronchial by the hour and threatens to become pneumonia. I prepare lemon, ginger, and garlic tea for her twice a day and retrieve the massages she received during research into her respiration. In the ten days we spend together, Carla gives afro-contemporary workshops and performances of *Life-Source on Fire* to students at the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts and to activists and community arts groups from the Umbrella Movement, living on chicken soup I find in backstreet restaurants. She sucks every ounce of nutrition from the bones and then grinds them bite-by-bite into a pulp, which she spits onto the periphery of her plate.

Every morning and night, I bring her lemon, ginger, and honey tea, and she begins to recover. But when we arrive in New Zealand, her health again becomes fragile. Her workshops and performances for Maori youth activists and later for students at Auckland University Dance Academy inspire. But when she is forced to cancel a performance, we face a threshold that cannot be concealed. *We can't lie onstage, amiga. People believe in what we're proposing. And we cannot fly home. So we need a solution.*

We pass from extreme air-conditioning to humid pollution, every day. My body can't take it, Dan! I smile. *You know that's not the whole story. Look at what you do to the bones.* She smiles, looks down, aware. *I know I'm addicted to foods that fill my belly but leave me weak, as a dancer, as a dance educator, as a person. But it's the only food that stays down.*

I've an idea. *These next two weeks Carla, you cook, for us. Experiment. Taste, as you cook. We're in this high-tech apartment. You have a dream kitchen. Take care of yourself. Care for me as I care for you. In exchange, I'll translate you, and mediate.* She nods and looks down at her mobile. Cabelo Seco is always present.

We're here to research the future of the Amazon, to sensitize everyone we meet about new emerging scientific evidence which indigenous peoples have known for millennia: that there is a huge river in the sky,[32] which sustains the rains, rivers, and continents of the world. We are here to learn from the most advanced urbanized indigenous people in the world. But we have stumbled across a simple insight, which illuminates many unresolved questions in our project. We prepare people to care for others, but they do not care for themselves. To research the future of Cabelo Seco and the Amazon, we need to research how Carla will care for herself. I look at Carla, imagining herself as a student in the School of Dance. She takes care of others by obligation, and in emergencies. *Prepare the lemon, ginger, and honey tea for us both.*

Carla cuts, experimenting, tasting.

Five months later, I read these stories to all the youth coordinators, at the wooden table of *formation* in the kitchen of our Community University of the Rivers. They have been writing an essay on state high school education, in preparation for university entrance exams in November. Free state education is threatened by privatization and cuts to the humanities, in the wake of the recent impeachment of President Dilma. Will our university survive this political-juridical coup d'état?

They approve the stories and the use of fictional names to ensure their publication.

I leave to visit Beto in prison. He's been detained, to await trial, for being unable to say *no* when invited to assist an armed assault, with a toy gun. Carla has shown us clips of him on her mobile, being beaten to a pulp by bystanders. *They don't know why they want revenge.* Beto's gaze of shock and fury, as he looks up toward a police photographer who calls his name, is already another front-page portrait of 'black youth.' It passes, hand to hand, from mother to child, neighbor to neighbor, in silence, throughout Cabelo Seco.

Our project opens doors and Beto enters the commander's office, shaven head and thin. He cries inside my hug. *The police punched me, then threw me to the crowd, Dan.* His national award as a video-maker has protected some of his human rights. Now, we need to protect his fragile health. *Can I include you in our chapter?* I explain. He nods his authorization. This book may just save his life.

Notes

1. The original cultural group of children that emerged from community workshops in the backyards of Cabelo Seco in 2009 to develop into acclaimed percussionists and singers/organizer-producers that launched the CD *Amazônia Nossa Terra* in 2013.
2. The first youth scholarship action-research project that emerged from the cultural group in 2012, coordinated by Carla Alves, to recover traditional African dance.
3. The third youth scholarship action-research project that emerged in 2012, coordinated by Gilmara Santos, to create a family-based community library in each of the 510 homes in Cabelo Seco.
4. The fourth youth scholarship action-research project that emerged in 2012 to screen independent Brazilian and international films in the Warehouse of Culture, then in the little square, and on walls of homes in the two streets of Cabelo Seco.
5. A transversal project that links nine action-research projects through a solar-powered community bike-radio, to demonstrate the potential of solar energy and disseminate all our cultural actions. This emerged in 2014 from the second 2012 scholarship project, *Not a Jot*, social journalism to value excluded youth perspectives.
6. The fifth youth scholarship action-research project that emerged in 2013, coordinated by Rodrigo Mendes, to document, celebrate and disseminate the project, through audio-visual media.

7. *Imaginário* (port), the symbolic soil of our cultural consciousness, that simultaneously comprises and generates narratives carried within language, memory and the imagination.
8. The term given to Afro-Indigenous people in Brazil that conceals these two indigenous matrices of its history, sustains a national amnesia at the core of 'Brazilian' identity, and mystifies the truth of how these matrices met and meet, and their psycho-emotional and socioeconomic consequences.
9. The ninth action-research project that emerged in 2014, coordinated by Emília Valente of the action-research project *My Musical Diaspora* (2014), and by Eliane Neves and Carina Souza of *Clothes to the Wind* (2014). This second transversal project developed to extend the percussion repertory of Rivers of Meeting, and to affirm gender rights and sexual choice.
10. I use the pedagogical meaning of 'formation', the forming of the full human being, found in Latin-American cultures, as opposed to the more limited English concept of 'training.'
11. *More Culture in School*, the program developed in 2013 by the Ministry of Culture in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, to value artistic and popular cultures as knowledge, pedagogies and key dimensions for nurturing social inclusion, human rights, citizenship and transformation.
12. Our *Community University of the Rivers* was founded in 2013 from our *Dialogic English* course, in collaboration with Language School of the Federal University of Pará. Initially intended to value local Afro-Indigenous knowledge produced and exchanged in every space in Cabelo Seco, our university today enjoys Unicef and international recognition, and challenges the political-industrial hegemony of and socioeconomic exploitation by the Mining consortium and its allies.
13. The River Araguaia and its surroundings border the River Tocantins. Its name is synonymous with armed resistance to the military dictatorship in the late 1970s, and the still unacknowledged and uncompensated State torture and disappearance of young people, within the gaze of Cabelo Seco.
14. Belo Monte, the third largest hydroelectric dam in the world, based in Altamira, northern Pará. Revived during the first mandate of President Lula and inaugurated during the first mandate of President Dilma, it is synonymous with political and economic corruption, violation of indigenous, river-dweller and constitutional rights, and environmental catastrophe.
15. *Culture in Network,* a program developed by the Ministry of Culture in 2015. The Rivers of Meeting project, co-founder of the Brazilian Network of Arteducators (ABRA), developed a national project to

transform the mobile phone from addictive medium of compulsive, alienated and narcissistic self-isolating youth consumerism, into creative medium of cultural production for social transformation. The project is coordinated from within the Community University of the Rivers.

16. Three teenagers from Cabelo Seco, from the edge of the project, assassinated between 2013–2014, in drug-related disputes, in a region where afro-descendent youth are 12 times more likely to be murdered than in any other region in Brazil. The mere presence of the university has gradually transformed Cabelo Seco from no-go favela into acknowledged territory of the region's *imaginário*, creating a climate of self-respect and citizenship.
17. The Baobab tree (Baobá, in Portuguese) is of African origin, lives for between one and six thousand years and is found in Madagascar. It is called the tree of life because in the savannahs of Africa the largest are known to hold up to 120,000 L of water (and rainwater for the local population). In the late 1500s, the Dutch occupied part of modern Senegal, hence the Baobá in the middle of Recife. Brought as seeds to Brazil by African priests who came as slaves, the trees symbolized resistance to slavery.
18. *Dry Tears* (2014), AfroMundi's second Afro-Contemporary dance performance, performed in the little square and then in Belém and New York. It dramatizes the violent industrialization of the Amazon and emergence of ecological sensitivity in Cabelo Seco.
19. We distinguish between *community space* (replete with living, unresolved histories and incomplete narratives, an extension of the front room, kitchen and bedroom, where residents cross the street dressed just in towels or underwear to visit relatives' and friends' homes), and *public space* (a theatre of rendezvous, accidental encounters, overlapping disconnected narratives that from time to time, connect with more stable, monumentalized or documented narratives of the past). As descendants of the first community on the territory that contains the world's largest deposit of iron ore, contested by world economic powers, Cabelo Seco's residents are frequently photographed by institutions and politicians without their 'consent.' Most think 'no', but say 'yes', or seek recognition and opportunity in the presence of visiting promises. Even progressive local community artists, arts educators, writers and teachers are inter-culturally blind to their post-colonial complicity with this exploitation of Cabelo Seco, urging students and colleagues to develop their own 'public art' projects, sometimes with 'consent forms.' Our conceptual distinction is part of an empowering debate about cultural literacy and cultural self-determination in the Amazon.
20. An outboard motor used by families, for fishing and emergencies.

21. Trialogue, the interaction between two simultaneous processes: dynamic public onstage dialogue that emerges through the *presence* of two intimate dialogues that are set in motion when two people meet in a historical and actual place of possible narratives; and interaction between narrator/author, questioner and focalizing listener (audience), who together enable a circle of storytelling to take place, through agreed principles, as the conditions for the performance of making a new collective story.
22. *Agogô*, percussion instrument made from two husks of the Brazil nut tree, now almost extinct in the South-East of Pará, the world's largest producer until the 1990s.
23. The *deep time* that transfixes survivors of genocide and massacre, and is etched into the stare of their descendants (*Alfabetização Cultural, 2004*).
24. The small hairy, monkey-like creature that moves in slow motion, whose name is synonymous with the easy-going, siesta-loving, relaxed passivity of many Brazilians. We understand this differently, as a challenge to the proactive, motivated self-determination that our youth coordinators and their community need to overcome, the psycho-emotional-social legacies of the recovering slave and manual worker. These are so embodied, compulsive, normalized and reinforced by immobilizing industrialized food as to be misunderstood by the exploited as 'my temperament', and condemned by the exploiter as 'good for nothing idleness.' It is also a powerful alibi for fear of failure, social death and the retreat from ambition and dream.
25. Carla Alves created this children's dance company in 2014. She works as its educator and artistic director, adapting her own dance research to develop its choreographies for community performance. In this space, Carla increasingly confronts the authoritarian legacies of her own violated and stolen childhood, as she understands the need to develop affirmative, ludic pedagogies.
26. An internal award we give every year to our two most outstanding young coordinators.
27. *Bikeride for Life*, a transversal project that emerged in the first Festival of Amazonian Beauty (2012) to transform the tragic assassination of Zequinha's youngest son into a celebration of care, community and Amazonian youth.
28. In 2015, *Let Our River Pass* toured performances and workshops to 21 schools and 4 theaters within Connecticut, New York and New Jersey. More than 12,000 children, pupils and teachers celebrated the collective dedication of our youth. Despite this affirmation and careful preparation, we faced two similarly subversive 'backstage' challenges: the gay male ego of four of the young artists whose constant need to occupy center-stage

conflicted with the collective agreements and culture of the project; and toward the end of the tour, their desire to disappear in New York to chance their future. Though all returned, we are still working out how to integrate such powerful individual desires that are being strengthened by micro-technologies of communication, inside our collective culture of choice.

29. A year earlier, Claudia moved the City Council to applause and tears when asked about the price of the CD that was being launched in the town hall, answered: *our Amazon is not for sale*. Will our youth have the same courage in today's climate of austerity-justified persecution, the dismantling of the Brazilian constitution and erosion of human rights?
30. In her pedagogic planning for and monthly reflexive reports on *AfroMundi Kids*, Carla analyzes with courage and honesty her occasional eruptions of verbal anger and gestural threat, when she is tense or impatient. She has dramatized her understanding of the origins and cure of these legacies in her 2015 solo *Life-Source on Fire,* discussing them openly in her 2016 Asia and Pacific performances.
31. *Life-Source on Fire,* AfroMundi's third Amazonian contemporary dance piece, was first presented in Belém, in December 2015. Based on a year of research into Afro-Indigenous histories of Amazonian women, the performance dramatizes the emergence and publication of an embodied poetics of eco-cultural intervention.
32. See the TED talk *There Is a River Above Us,* by Dr. Antonio Nobre of the National Institute of Space Studies.

CHAPTER 9

(Decolonial) Notes to Paulo Freire: Walking and Asking

Catherine E. Walsh

Opening Paths of Walking and Asking

"We make the road by walking," Paulo Freire said. This thought, adapted from the celebrated phrase of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado ("*se hace camino al andar,*" literally translated as "you make the way as you go"), opens Freire's "speaking" book with the founding director of the Highlander School Myles Horton (Horton & Freire, 1990). Moreover, it gives the book its title and, in so doing, it names its project: spoken reflections on the paths of struggle, on the doing, making, and walking, and on the asking that never rests (what Paulo referred to in other texts as the "pedagogy of the question").

In a radically different context and place, the now "defunct" Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos continued his ongoing conversation with "Viejo Antonio," the wise elder.[1] "In order to know and walk, one must ask," Viejo Antonio explained. "The questions serve to learn how to walk, and not to stand still" (Subcomandante Marcos, 1994). *Asking, we walk* is the Zapatista political-pedagogical vision-stance-project. It also names and guides the four-volume collection edited by the Pakistani feminist and "pilgrim of life" Corinne Kumar, a collection that,

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in her words, is “an invitation to a deeper dialogue from our differences, from our many worlds, continuing *to ask*, *to listen*, *as we walk*; seeking new paths to justice; searching new ways to peace; creating new imaginaries; finding sacred mountains everywhere” (Kumar, 2013, xxii).

It is the idea, practice, and project—the pedagogical praxis—of walking and asking that guides this chapter. It is not a text *about* this pedagogical praxis (or *about* walking and asking per se), nor is it a treaty *about* pedagogy understood from a decolonial perspective. Rather it is a recounting—a chronicling of sorts—of my own pedagogical walking and asking from the 1980s when I had the opportunity to work alongside Paulo Freire in the USA, to the last decades of my pedagogical walking and asking—most especially from a decolonial stance—in Latin America, what many of us prefer to re-name *Abya Yala*.[2] The chapter's conceptualization is not as a biographical text, but instead within the framework of what I have come to understand as my ongoing conversation with Paulo Freire, assumed in recent years, and among other forms, through notes and letters.

Pedagogical Beginnings

Pedagogy—critical, political, insurgent, decolonizing, transformative pedagogy—has long been a defining force of my praxis as a militant intellectual, activist, and educator. It is hard to say exactly when and where all this began. Was it in my early years of revolutionary activism, in my beginning years as a radical teacher in alternative schools, in the work with collectives struggling for racial, social, cultural, and linguistic justice, in the experiences of popular education, or in other political moments and in all of this together combined?

Certainly central was the time in the 1980s spent alongside Paulo Freire. Through an agreement made with Harvard University where Paulo, still in exile, had been invited for a three-year period, we were able to negotiate Paulo's presence for a semester a year at the University of Massachusetts (UMASS) Amherst, where I was at the time. Over this period, I had the privilege of co-facilitating university seminars with Paulo and working together with him in the popular education spaces of the region's Puerto Rican community. He was my teacher, my colleague, a *compañero* in struggle, and friend.

In 1986, several of us organized the First Working Conference on Critical Pedagogy at UMASS; Paulo, Myles Horton, Maxine Greene,

Meyer Weinberg, Stanley Aronowitz, Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren, Ira Shor, Peter Park, Madeleine Grumet, and many others including collectives of activists, educators, feminists, cultural workers, and others from throughout the USA and Canada came together to debate, discuss, and share perspectives, postures, and experiences of transformative pedagogy and social struggle and/or praxis. Paulo's thought, writings, and dialogical presence served as the guiding force in what then began to be positioned as "critical pedagogy," a movement of sorts with which I identified until my permanent move to Ecuador in the mid-90s.

In Ecuador and Abya Yala, the tenets of my thought, practice, and reason began to shift. While Paulo never totally disappeared from my heart and mind, his presence waned, as I endeavored to understand the political, epistemic, and existence-based otherwise of struggle of indigenous and Afro-descendant movements, and of my own being and becoming. Paulo was no longer enough.

Yet it has not been until more recent years, and in my efforts to more explicitly "pedagogize" the decolonial, and to name, engender, and think from and with decolonial pedagogies of resistance and re-existence, pedagogies of/in movement and struggle, that Paulo has once again appeared. I reread his texts and ponder his words today not as truths set in time, or simply as theoretical/conceptual postulates and premises. They are texts that speak to me in their "pedagogizations," wisdom, and also in their limitations, the latter of which Paulo recognized and wrote about in his last years.

For me, Paulo is a grandfather and ancestor of sorts; I yearn now to once more dialogue with him. I long to tell him of my own shifts, movements, unlearnings, and relearnings, since we last met. And above all, I desire to share with him my praxical thoughts on the what, why, and how of decolonial pedagogies walking and asking. It is in this context and wants that I write the following notes to Paulo and to others who wish to read them.

Emergent Paths Walking and Asking

The last time I saw and spoke with you in living person Paulo was at your 70th birthday celebration at New York's New School for Social Research. Hundreds of us gathered to celebrate you. You were beaming with joy and love. Nita, your new wife, was by your side and, as you spoke, you cried. You cried for the joy in once again finding love after

the death of your first *compañera* and wife Elsa. And you cried because crying—as loving—is an emotion and a feeling that is constitutive of being human and of course, of humanizing pedagogies as well; as such, they need not—should not—be hidden. With this action, you reminded us that being a critical educator and thinker means being with and in the world. It means understanding oneself in a constant process of becoming where the "critical" is not a set postulate or an abstract of thought. Rather, it is a stance, posture, and attitude, an actional standpoint (something that Frantz Fanon also understood well) in which one's own being and becoming are constitutive to the acts of thinking, imagining, and intervening in transformation—that is, in the construction, creation and "walking" of a radically different world.

For me, this celebration and meeting also had significance in my own walking. I was beginning my immigration—in body, spirit, and mind—from North to South, from the USA to Ecuador. This meant starting to move from paths well known, from the sites of struggle, activism, and political-intellectual-pedagogical work that for so many years were home. And it meant starting to separate from the collectives and walking partners with whom these paths and work had been imagined, crafted, and created. Here I refer to the collectives of Puerto Rican intellectuals and activists in the US Northeast struggling to confront and dismantle the still-present colonial condition, and who taught me about the lived significance of colonial and decolonial struggle.[3] I refer to the groups of Latino youth from across the USA with whom I was actively engaged, and to the lawyers, advocates, and Latino, Asian, Haitian, and Cape Verdean community-activists involved in the fights for cultural, linguistic, and education rights. And I refer to the then national network of critical pedagogy, most especially to my close colleagues/*compañeras* and *compañeros*, including you Paulo, with whom we regularly did seminars and workshops throughout the USA, endeavoring to think with activist educators and activist youth, and to walk, plot, and plow transformative paths of action.[4] In all of this, you Paulo, your writings, work and words, had always served as guides.

At your birthday event, I spoke to you briefly of my move. Later, I wrote to you in Sao Paulo where you then were, about the movement I felt it entailed and about the uncertainties and challenges of finding walking paths, directions, and partners. Your response could not have been more pedagogical. You told me to just walk, to walk questioning and asking. I did not quite understand the significance of that then.

Now, and as I will make clear later in these notes, this advisement—reflected as well in the words of Subcomandante Marcos and Viejo Antonio of the Zapatista National Army of Liberation—has in fact been central in my intellectual-activist-pedagogical thinking, being, becoming, and doing.

In Ecuador, my understandings of the spheres of pedagogy began to expand. Over time, I came to more deeply understand pedagogy in the frame of sociopolitical struggle. And I began to become more cognizant of the pedagogical nature of this struggle. You referred to this in a sense in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* when you talked about the "educational nature" of the contexts of struggle, and the inseparableness of the pedagogical and the political, that is the political action that involves the organization of groups and popular classes in order to intervene in the reinvention of society. Here, you argued as well that: "political action on the side of the oppressed must be pedagogical action in the authentic sense of the word, and, therefore action *with* the oppressed" (Freire, 1970/1974, 53).

Your concern in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was with an educational praxis of reflection and action that endeavored to work against oppression and for liberation. In this sense, your position was hopeful. Yet while it certainly had roots—your roots—in Latin America, its class-based focus seemed somehow out of place with what I began to witness with respect to the postures and struggles of communities and social movements in the Andes, and South and Central America.

Ecuador's indigenous movement was, at the end of the twentieth century, considered the strongest in Abya Yala and possibly the world. Through its multiple uprisings, mobilizations, and politically educational actions, I came to see indigenous resistance as much more than an actional response to and against oppression. As the Kichwa intellectual and historical leader Luis Macas told me in 2001, the struggle of indigenous peoples is about decolonization—that is to confront the structural problem of the "colonial tare," which means to resist but also to fight for and contribute to the building of decolonial conditions and possibilities (in Walsh, 2012, 23). Here, resistance proffers movements—pedagogical actions if you will—not just of defense and reaction, but also and more importantly of offense, insurgence, and (re)existence circumscribed in/by the continuous construction, creation, and maintenance of the "otherwise."

By "otherwise" I mean those other ways of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, feeling, doing, and living in relation that challenge the hegemony and universality of capitalism, Euro-centered modernity, and the Western civilizatory logic, including its anthropocentrism and binary-based foundation. The "otherwise" here, and most especially in the Andes, denotes and constructs a lived pedagogy and praxis that is not human-centered or humanistic, but instead grounded in the interrelation of all of nature of which humans are only a part. As I have come to recognize and comprehend it, the otherwise is that which exists in the borders, edges, fissures, and cracks of the modern/colonial order; it is that which continues to be (re)molded, (re)constituted, and (re)shaped both against and despite coloniality.[5]

Of course, coming to this recognition and comprehension has itself been part of my own political and pedagogical processes. My collaborative work in the 1990s with the indigenous movement at their request, including on the conceptualizing of an indigenous university, pushed me to think *from, alongside, and with* a radically distinct politics and lived pedagogy grounded in the intertwine of collective identity, territory, cosmogony, worldview, spirituality, and knowledge. Such intertwine challenged not only many of my Western beliefs but also the Western tenets of my "critical" thought, politics, and pedagogy.

At the center of these collaborations and my own emergent praxistical muse was "interculturality," one of the key ideological principles of the Ecuadorian Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities' (CONAIE) political project first introduced in 1990. In contrast to Western multiculturalism or even revolutionary multiculturalism (McLaren, 1997), CONAIE defined interculturality as a political process, practice, and project of fundamental structural and institutional transformation, including of state. The project of an intercultural and plurinational state was, in fact, primordial in CONAIE's political platform (recognized finally in Ecuador's 2008 Constitution). In this context, interculturality meant—and means—not only horizontal relationality, but also and most importantly, the rebuilding (in decolonial terms) of a vastly different social project for all. Understanding and thinking with and from interculturality as a political and epistemic project became the organizing focus of my work and writing, replacing, if you will, our shared interest and project of critical pedagogy (see Walsh, 2012).

These learnings with the indigenous movement began to trace and mark out different paths of walking and of asking. Popular education and critical

pedagogy had taught me about the centrality of experience and of what you, Paulo, called epistemological curiosity. Yet it was through the conversations and collaborations with indigenous leaders and communities that I started to doubt what I thought I knew. Could it be that my emergent perceptions were correct, that critical pedagogy and popular education were, in many ways, still Western-modern postures, practices, and constructions? Was not their "criticalness," I asked, postured primarily in Western terms, from Western theory, and from within modernity itself? What about modernity's outsides? And what to do about the dominant geopolitics of knowledge, this understood as the universalization of a Western-centric (Euro-USA-centric) definition, frame, logic, and approach to knowledge—rational knowledge—that effectively denies and negates other sites, modes, and practices of knowing and of knowledge production?

This is not to say that your referents, Paulo, were only of the West, or that Western modernity was necessarily your project. Certainly your reflections on and your ruminations with Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau are evidence of this. In fact, it was after your lived experiences in Africa and with communities of color in the USA that you began to question your own Western and Marxist biases that for many years made you unable to see how the ideas of race and gender, and the practices of racialization, genderization, and hetero-patriarchy operate within a colonial matrix of power that is not just class-based. Your last books, most especially the *Pedagogy of Hope*, are reflective of this questioning, opening, and self-critique.

Still, critical pedagogy in its theoretical formulations then—and in its resonances in what Peter McLaren refers to as "revolutionary" critical pedagogy today—remains in project, thought and paradigmatic assumptions, a Western, anthropocentric, and largely Marxist-informed endeavor. The Native American intellectual Sandy Grande reminds us of this in her writings on "Red Pedagogy."

> Revolutionary critical pedagogy remains rooted in the Western paradigm and therefore in tension with indigenous knowledge and praxis. In particular, the root constructs of democratization, subjectivity, and property are all defined through Western frames of reference that presume the individual as the primary subject of "rights" and social status. (Grande, 2008, 238)

In the Andes, I began to see the radical distinctiveness of an indigenous-thought project in which culture, cosmology, spirituality, wisdom,

knowledge, land and nature and/as life interweave self-determination, decolonization, mobilization, and transformation. And I began to see coloniality and the lived colonial difference as constitutive of pedagogies otherwise, pedagogies that modernity, Western critical theory, and even you Paulo, did not directly consider or address. I guess this was the beginning of my distancing from critical pedagogy, Western critical thought, and from you; of my search for and my making of new and different paths, asking and walking.

In the years hence, ongoing collaborations with Afro-descendant movements, struggles, processes, and projects have pushed further my unlearnings, and my relearning to learn *alongside, from, and with* knowledges and ways of being in the world that modernity and Western ideologies have rendered invisible and continue to negate. This of course has engendered shifts in my reading and writing, in the choices of whom to dialogue with, and in the how, what, and why of such dialogue and its implications for practice and praxis.

Until fairly recently, your texts that had traveled with me to Ecuador remained untouched on the shelf. Although I never stopped thinking of myself as a pedagogue and teaching never stopped being an important part of my praxis—that is, of my political action-reflection-action aimed at structural social transformation—education was not now my primary concern and focus. My interest instead was—and still is—with the lived decolonial struggles—social, political, epistemic, and existential or existence-based—in Ecuador, the Andes and more broadly in Abya Yala against the ongoing colonial matrices of power and toward creations of a decolonial otherwise. As I will explain later, today this interest is increasingly with *the how*. That is with *how* the decolonial otherwise is constructed, reconstructed, engendered, maintained, and sustained in struggle, practice, and life. And, it is with *how to think with, alongside, and from* these struggles, knowledges, and becomings in my own praxis, including, but not only, in higher education where the evasion of lived reality and the reification of Eurocentric frameworks of analysis are predominant.

It is *the how* that has recently incited my re-coming to pedagogy and, in some ways Paulo, my re-coming to you, now from this place of “South,” from a decolonial stance and perspective, and from and in dialogue, engagement, and praxis with other *compañeras* and *compañeros* that share this project, perspective, and struggle.

Decolonial Pedagogies Rising

As I come back to your teachings Paulo, I now more clearly grasp your comprehension of pedagogy as a productive sociopolitical process and practice—as an essential indispensable methodology—grounded in peoples' realities, subjectivities, histories, and struggles. It is in the social, political, epistemic, and existential contexts of struggle where "leaders and peoples, mutually identified, together create the directive lines of their action [educational, political and of liberation]," you said (1970/1974, 183). For you, social struggles are pedagogical settings of learning, unlearning, relearning, reflection, and action. The educational nature of struggle is what interested you most, along with the pedagogical practice of working toward individual and collective liberation.

As such, I think you would agree with my assessment that pedagogy is more of a verb than a noun; to use Vázquez's (2012) expression, it is a "verbality." I am not interested in pedagogy as a discipline, nor were you. Instead I ponder its signification in the actional, in the practices, strategies, methodologies, and ways of making and doing that interweave with and are constructed in resistance and opposition, as well as in insurgence, affirmation, and re-existence, in imagining and building a different world. This postulation of pedagogy grounds my work as I come to more deeply seek, engage, and incite "pedagogizings" of the decolonial.

Here our walking paths both cross and diverge. They cross in the ties of the political-pedagogical and the pedagogical-political. And, they cross in the shared interest in and appreciation of the pedagogical nature of struggle, and in the comprehension that the aim of this struggle—liberation from and transformation of the structures of power and oppression—must be conceived and orchestrated from the people themselves. The divergence comes in the conceptions of this power and its analytic. Marxism and modernity grounded your politics and thought. My paths, however, have made me leery of the critical theory of the West, or at least suspect of its blindness to coloniality as modernity's underside. As I mentioned above, you yourself began to recognize some of this blindness in your later years, speaking in the *Pedagogy of Hope* of the "color of ideology" (1993, 149), and the relation colonizer-colonized, colonialism-(no)existence. Frantz Fanon, present in your work since the first texts, was an especially key interlocutor and influence in your later years

when you began to link decolonization and (re)humanization.[6] I hesitate to say that if you were alive today, you too would be concerned with coloniality; if so, our divergent walking paths could have come to connect and re-cross.

However, as I know you recognize, the approaches derived from and present in the bulk of your work have their base in Western emancipatory paradigms, postures, and worldviews. The problem here, as the Maori anthropologist Linda Tuhiwai Smith argues, is that all too frequently paradigms, postures, and views—"often regarded as deriving from Freirian approaches"—have worked to negate and obscure the methodological standpoints, practices, processes, and approaches of feminist theorists of color, ethnic minorities, and indigenous peoples—that is of methodologies and/or pedagogies that derive from the lived experience of colonialism, racism, and the struggles for self-determination and decolonization (Smith, 1999, 167). I wonder what you would say—and do—about that today.

Thinking from and with the lived experience of coloniality and its matrix of power that traverses practically all aspects of life including the realms of subjectivity, knowledge, being, spirituality, sexuality, and nature affords a perspective and analytic that challenges many of the presuppositions of Western knowledge and thought. Moreover, it brings to the fore the decolonial otherwise, its social, political, epistemic, and existence-based insurgencies, its pedagogies, pedagogizations, and praxis, an otherwise that stands up to what the Bolivian Rafael Bautista (2009) referred to as "the racist myth that inaugurated modernity and the monologue of modern-western reason."

In her powerful book *Pedagogies of Crossing*, the Caribbean feminist Jacqui Alexander allies herself with your understanding of pedagogy as method. Yet, at the same time, she defines her project as traversing other realms that take her beyond the confines of modernity and the imprisonment of what she refers to as its "secularized episteme." Alexander's project is to "disturb and reassemble the inherited divides of the Sacred and the secular, the embodied and disembodied" through pedagogies that are derived from "the Crossing," this conceived as signifier, existential message, and passage toward the configuration of new ways of being and knowing. While Alexander does not explicitly position herself from the decolonial, she engages this perspective in her analysis of the material and psychic fragmentation and dismemberment produced by colonization,

and in her emphasis on the work of decolonization with respect to the yearning of wholeness.[7] Here she sustains that "anticolonial and Left liberation movements have not understood this sufficiently in their psychology of liberation" (Alexander, 2005, 281). "What we have devised as an oppositional politic has been necessary," she says, "but it will never sustain us, for while it may give us some temporary gains (which become more ephemeral the greater the threat, which is not a reason not to fight), it can never ultimately feed that deep place within us: that space of the erotic, …the Soul, … the Divine" (Alexander, 2005, 282). For this author, pedagogies must be conceived in this sense; called forth is the decolonial otherwise of which I have been speaking.

In this sense, Alexander's multiple understanding of pedagogies is particularly relevant:

> … As something given, as in handed, revealed; as in breaking through, transgressing, disrupting, displacing, inverting inherited concepts and practices, those psychic, analytic and organizational methodologies we deploy to know what we believe we know so as to make different conversations and solidarities possible; as both epistemic and ontological project bound to our beingness and, therefore, akin to Freire's formulation of pedagogy as indispensable methodology. Pedagogies [that] summon subordinated knowledges that are produced in the context of the practices of marginalization in order that we might destabilize existing practices of knowing and thus cross the fictive boundaries of exclusion and marginalization. (Alexander, 2005, 7)

Alexander seems to be both thinking with and beyond you Paulo. She locates her perspective of pedagogies as akin to yours—that is, of pedagogies as indispensable methodologies of and for transformation. And, at the same time, she reveals the limits of the psychology of liberation that, of course, was constitutive of your work. Yet, in so doing, she does not reject you. Rather, you Paulo are part of the crossroads she evokes and invokes, of the cross-currents of genealogies, theorizings, politics, and practice that she fashions, of course not for your contribution to feminism, sexual politics, or the sacred, but rather for your political signification and use of pedagogy in concept and praxis.

Reading Alexander was what, in part, brought me back to pedagogy and to you. In her understanding, positing, and posturings of pedagogies, I found resonance, solace, meaning, and accompaniment. I also

found a distinctive way to engage you and your thought that was not about compartmentalization (i.e., as locating you simply within modernity and the Western Left). Instead it was about moving beyond the existential impasse and divide that coloniality has proffered.

Such "finding" made me realize your continued presence all these years, not as authoritative voice, but as grandfather, ancestor, and pedagogical—political guide. I began to ponder the difference of paths as well as the crossroads, the points of encounter and reencounter that break the linearity of time and sketch serpentinian and spiral movements. These ruminations were also key in taking me beyond the discussion of the "what," "why," and "for what" of coloniality and decoloniality, the focus of most of the work up until now by those of us engaged in the collective project of modernity/(de)coloniality.[8] The movement here for me was to the decolonial "how," to its pedagogies and praxis.[9]

The movement toward *the how* departs from the recognition that the decolonial otherwise has existed in Abya Yala since the so-called colonial conquest or invasion. It is a phenomenon, reality, and practice of long duration that has always crossed the political, epistemic, aesthetic, spiritual, territorial, and existence-based realms. Interrogating *the how* means also asking about the "with whom" and "from where," questions that bring to the fore the importance of relationality and relation (see Glissant, 1997; Vázquez, 2012). Seldom has attention been given to the ways that the decolonial otherwise has operated—and continues to operate—within and in the margins of the modern/colonial order: that is to the pedagogies of resistance, insurgence, rebellion, disruption, transgression, and re-existence that construct and enable the otherwise; to the pedagogies that traverse collective memory, the body, sentiment, ways of knowing, and being (human and else) with/and/in nature, as well as the fields of the socioeconomic, the spiritual-ancestral, the erotic, the visual and sonorous, and the skin (see essays in Walsh, 2013, 2017, as well as Ferrera-Balanquet, 2014; Gomez, 2014; Vargas, 2014).[10] These pedagogies, in essence decolonial pedagogies, and their *how* are what most interest and attract me now; they give orientation, purpose, and project to my walking and asking.

With the present-day crisis of not just capitalism but more profoundly of Western civilization (Lander, 2010), decolonial pedagogies are rising. Opening and expanding as well are what I have referred to elsewhere as the decolonial cracks (Walsh, 2014). By this I mean the fissures and cracks within the modern/colonial order.

The cracks become the place and space from which action, militancy, resistance, insurgence, transgression, and/or pedagogization are advanced, alliances are built, and the otherwise is invented, created, and constructed. Although the cracks are virtually everywhere in the spheres, institutions, structures of modern/colonial reason and power, and continue to grow by the day, they often go unperceived, unseen, and unheard. How can we become more cognizant of these fissures and of the processes, practices, and pedagogies of the crack making? And, how can we further open and extend the cracks, affording a pedagogical praxis of accompaniment and engagement that endeavors to move within and connect the cracks, pushing further the possibility of decolonial pedagogies rising? These are the questions that I ask walking.

Asking and Walking in the Decolonial Cracks

In November 2013, I received a special invitation from Subcomandante Marcos and Subcomandante Moises to participate as a first-grade student in the *Escuelita Zapatista* (the Zapatista "little school") in Chiapas, Mexico. This experience, intensely lived the last week of December 2013 deep inside the Lacandon Jungle—Mexico's decolonial crack—has left a mark that I am still unable to fully grasp, process, and describe. Its depth and significance are still becoming as the learnings, unlearnings, and relearnings continuing to surface and emerge, opening new questions about the significance and possibility of decolonial pedagogies asking and walking.

Autonomy and freedom were the thematic threads; the "teachers" were the Zapatista communities themselves and most particularly the youth, those born, raised, and educated in the Zapatista struggle. Each "student" was assigned a *votán*, literally translated as guardian-heart of the people; the *votanes* were these young women and men who served as guardian-teacher-translator-interpreter-guide, accompanying us 24 hours a day. The mode of learning was experience-based. Yet this "experience" was radically different from any I had had before. It brought to the fore the complexity, difficulty, and lived sentiment of unlearning, the first step in beginning to relearn. The sense of being a first grader was real; all seemed new, different, and outside my frame and practice of knowing, doing, learning, and living.

Yes, of course, the experience served to evidence—in real-life form—the profoundness of both the Zapatista-opened fissure and its

otherwise—*esa forma muy otra* (this form that is very other)—that has its ground in autonomy, freedom, and community as lived praxis, a praxis that effectively undermines and undoes the capitalist order. The political tensions and threats of danger were real. The pickup truck that brought a group of us from the *Caracol* of Morelia (one of the five regional centers of Zapatista "good" government and organization) to the communities was followed and filmed by military forces. The small village where my partner and I stayed was co-inhabited by paramilitaries. And, the seven churches—the majority evangelical—exerted low-intensity warfare with speakers blasting biblical messages into the late hours of the evening.

Our "school" consisted primarily of the family with whom we stayed. It brought to reality, through the shared practice of daily living, the real significance of autonomy and freedom in struggle, outside, in the margins, and in the decolonial cracks of state, its services, resources, and institutions, but also, in our particular case, in the decolonial cracks of this village where the 13 Zapatista families were the clear minority. Zapatista communities run their own educational institutions, hospitals, and healthcare systems, accept no state services (including electricity and water), and are self-sufficient in food. Their three-tiered "good" government (a contrast with the "bad" government of state), made up of women and men with equal power, is based on the belief that "the people rule and government obeys." The practice of this autonomy was certainly more complex in the community that I was assigned to given the clear presence—and tension—of state control; in fact, many would probably consider it inconceivable. However, for the Zapatistas, it is demonstrative of their pedagogy and practice of freedom in struggle. The lessons are too extensive to describe here and too complex and politically sensitive to put on paper. As I muse about their significance for me and re-experience them not just in my mind, but in my heart, body, soul, spirit, and skin, I also wonder what you Paulo would have thought. How do this autonomy and decolonial otherwise challenge (or maybe converse with) your idea of the practice of freedom?

The experience of the *Escuelita* also, and maybe more importantly, humbled me. It humbled me by displacing and decentering what I thought I knew, how I thought I knew it, and how it is, or at least I thought it is, that we come to know, this despite my more than 20 years in the Andes. In so doing, the experience also confronted the

suppositions that, despite my avowed criticalness and decolonial positioning, have gone unchallenged in my own practice and identification—and privileged authority I should add—as pedagogue and teacher. It humbled me by taking away the clarity of day, replacing it with a brume. And it humbled me to personally assume that which I have long preached and taught: unlearning to relearn, experiencing—not for the first time but in a particularly "other" way—its difficulty, conflict, and discomfort. Is this not part of my coming to decolonial pedagogies in body and not just discourse and theory?

Today the brume remains although its hue is much less dense. Subcomandante Marcos and Viejo Antonio's advisement, presented as the beginning of this text, that the questions serve to walk increasingly guides me: "in order to know and walk one must ask." Again I recall your similar words to me as I was beginning my walking South: to just walk asking.

I now see more intensely the complexities of the cracks, the brume, and the dangers circling. The otherwise, or what the Zapatistas call *esa forma muy otra*, is, for the dominant systems and institutions of power (in state, national, and global terms), a menace that must be eliminated and destroyed. While this is true in all contexts where practices and pedagogies of the decolonial otherwise exist, it is especially apparent in Chiapas. The government-led attack on the *Caracol Realidad* (Reality) on May 2, 2014, is evidence. The assassination of teacher José Luis Solís, known as *votán Galeano* in the *Escuelita Zapatista*, the wounding of many, and the destruction of the community school and health clinic were attacks against freedom, dignity and autonomy and/or Life. They were attacks on this decolonial otherwise that for 20 years, and 500 before, the tzotzil, tzeltal, and tojolabal peoples—many Zapatistas since 1994—have struggled to construct, create, and sustain, to pedagogize in practice and praxis. Yet with the EZLN decision (subsequent to the attack) to publically disappear or eliminate Subcomandante Marcos, a new political pedagogy was begun, undoing the world attention to and the fetichization of his persona and re-centering the collective community-based sentiment *desde abajo* (from below) of the struggle to defend, protect, and exercise—to relationally live—life. Among the many learnings here is the way that pedagogy—as decolonial verbality—is shaped in and through struggle in relation, that is, in the relationality that modernity has worked to destroy and deny (Vázquez, 2014).

Outcries as I Walk and Ask

Much has happened in Abya Yala since my time as a first grader. The hopefulness then-present in my *senti-pensar*—my felt-thought—has begun to crumble. Indignation, anger, horror, and fear now circumscribe my feeling and thinking, my being and becoming, and my walking and asking, "verbalities" and actions that for me are necessarily intertwined. My words reverberate in outcries, shouts, shrieks, and screams. And each day I speak and write the word "hope" with increasingly smaller letters.

I recall your pedagogy of indignation, Paulo. In the book with this name published after your death, you speak of anger, outrage, and indignation, your own and that of the dehumanized, colonized, and oppressed. Your argument is that these are not just reactions and responses to injustice; more critically, they are also starting points and tools of rebellion, resistance, and political-pedagogical action. "It is necessary to view the *resistance* that keeps us alive, the *understanding* of future as *problem*, and the inclination toward *being more* as expressions of human nature in process of being," you said. "They are the fundaments of our *rebellion* and not of our *resignation* before destructive injury to being. Not through resignation, but only through *rebellion* against injustice, can we affirm ourselves" (Freire, 2004b, 61).

I read and reread your words and listen to your advisement, prompts, and calls. Yet I wonder if they are enough given the present-day context of Abya Yala in which governments of both the Right and the so-called Left are the protagonists of global capitalism, its modern-colonial-racist-patriarchal matrix of power, and its project of extractivism, violence, and usurpation, a project that the Zapatistas characterize as one of war and death (EZLN, 2015).

Certainly, there is much that I could say about the lived effect of these times and the specifics of a project that works to capture, silence, and eliminate rebellion and resistance, criminalize protest, and to control, extract, exploit, and usurp natural resources, ancestral knowledges, and the territories-communities of life in which they abide. It is a project in which bodies are part of the battlefield, most especially the bodies of community-based defenders of territory, nature and life, of women, and of youth—particularly poor and racialized youth—in both rural areas and urban centers. Your native Brazil, Paulo, is now fifth in the world in the number of feminicides—5500 in just 2017 alone, the majority of which were of black women. The killing of young black men, including at the

hands of police, is an everyday occurrence in Rio and other Brazilian cities that seldom makes the news.

Education and critical thought are central targets. Ayotzinapa is one particularly horrific example. Students from this rural Mexican teacher training school—a school long recognized for its social consciousness and critical thought—were brutally attacked by police forces on September 26, 2014. Five students were killed and 43 students were made "to disappear"; their condition remains to this day "unsolved." With Ayotzinapa, the complicit silences I witnessed several weeks later in Mexican universities, and the personal threats I also received, the *gritos*—the outcries, shouts, and screams—that I had somehow kept inside until then all began to come out. Today they permeate much of what I think, speak, write, and do. But they are not mine alone. They unite with other *gritos* that together begin to assemble a collective pedagogy "becoming" that gathers and draws together outcries, screams, and shouts, that voices silences, and that endeavors to reclaim and reconstruct (in and from the cracks) that which has been negated, eliminated violated, and despoiled, including subjectivities, knowledges, bodies, territories, existence, and life.

The struggles are each day more complex, including in education. In higher education, intellectual somnambulism corroborates with the power of capital. Universities increasingly function as scientific businesses, as centers of professionalization, de-worldliness, and de-humanization. In the social and cultural sciences or disciplines, "De-Humanities" are increasingly the norm (Walsh, 2014).

The modernizing educational reforms present in most countries of the region, especially Mexico, Argentina, Chile, and Brazil (but also, and in a somewhat different sense, in Ecuador), portend to apply market measures and assure state authority through standardization, quality control and the control over knowledge, over social, cultural, and linguistic difference, and over politics and ideology in the classroom. The dismantling of public and community-based schooling, the disarticulation of community-based social networks, and the elimination of all that challenges global capitalism's project (including schools, educational programs, teachers, students, and critical thought and knowledge) are in full-force. In this Paulo, you have become a central target, most notably in Brazil.

In May 2016, Brazil's Senate orchestrated a "soft coup" suspending President Dilma Rousseff for 180 days for supposed fiscal irregularities. Her replacement was Vice President Michel Temer whose ties

to the extreme Right are well known. President Rousseff's suspension opened the process of a political trial and her permanent destitution or impeachment, made official on August 31, 2016. It also opened the way for an ultra Right-wing agenda that has made clear, especially now with president Jair Bolsonaro, its goal to drastically cut social programs and control education, among other spheres, eliminating all semblance of critical thought and knowledge.

On June 28, 2016, your biography published in the online encyclopedia Wikipedia was altered in order to discredit your legacy and contributions and defame your name.[11] *Brasil Wikiedits*, a group that monitors modifications in Wikipedia pages, identified SERPRO (the technical informational network of the Brazilian federal government), as the responsible source. While SERPRO denied direct involvement, it accepted that the alteration came from its network.

The changes made to the page included the insertion of paragraphs from a text entitled "Paulo Freire e o Assassinato do Conhecimiento" ("Paulo Freire and the Assassination of Knowledge") originally published by Brazil's Liberal Institute. These paragraphs argued that you and your work are the backbone of Brazil's backward and weak educational project and the origin of Marxist indoctrination in schools.

> There it is, [Paulo Freire] one of the origins of our well-known Marxist indoctrination in schools and universities that instead of forming citizens and professionals for the country's growth, forms soldiers willing to defend Marxism tooth and nail in academic settings. (Rosa, 2016, my translation)[12]

As your widow Ana Maria Araújo Freire ("Nita") clearly stated in a letter to Brazil's then-interim President Temer, dated June 30, 2016, the absurdity and irony of such "hate claims"; by the present-day state machine can best be understood when measured against the tributes that you Paulo have received in this same year (2016), including your recognition in the USA as the third intellectual most cited in the world and in the history of humanity, and most studied in North American universities where, as Nita argues, Marxism is certainly not the predominant base of thought.[13]

These false claims and alterations are a constitutive part of the extreme Right's movement and project "Escola sem partido" (Schooling without political party), already in place in a number of Brazilian states. The

professed aim is to eliminate ideological indoctrination in universities and schools that, according to this movement, have been dominated for decades by Left-wing parties. The central targets of this "cleansing" are politics, gender, and non-Christian religions. The plan is to prohibit the teaching and discussion of all three in the nation's system of education and, accordingly, to rewrite history, curricula, educational manuals, and texts (Lehmann da Silva, 2016).

There is no neutral education, you once said. Certainly, the current intents to "depoliticize" education, dismantle the educational gains of recent years, and reinstall with force the coloniality of power are by no means neutral. They are part and parcel of global capitalism's project, a project that aims to eliminate all that hinders its path.

In all this Paulo, I come back, now even more critically, to the actions and the tasks—those present and ahead—of asking and walking. It is still, and even more crucially today, *the how* that is my concern—that is, *how* to ask and walk, *how* to crack or fissure the dominant order, and *how* to plant the seeds of an otherwise. Again I wonder what you would think, do, and say.

Closing Notes

In ending these notes to you Paulo, past comrade of struggle and present ancestor, grandfather, and guide, I once again take your hand as I ask and walk. I recall your tenderness, your hopefulness, and your vision-force of struggle that remained alive despite the lived obstacles of the dominant structures and system.

In both the *Pedagogy of Hope* (2004a) and the *Pedagogy of the Heart* (2007) you criticized the intellectuals of postmodernity (those of the Right and the Left) who describe the complications the present times pose to liberation and proclaim them insurmountable. "Accepting the inexorability of what takes place is an excellent contribution to the dominant forces in their unequal fight against the 'condemned of the earth,'" you said in this latter text, referring here to the expression of Frantz Fanon (Freire, 2007, 43). In *Pedagogy of the Hope,* among your numerous references to Fanon, there is one about the need for the colonized and oppressed to take distance from the colonizer-oppressor, "to locate themselves 'outside' as Fanon would say" (1993, 47). Both dialogic admonitions hold relevance here. The complacency among many, including of the so-called Left, remains, as does the inability to comprehend

the condemnation of which Fanon speaks: a factor of capitalism and class struggle but more broadly of colonization and the ongoing matrix of colonial power. The political location "outside," in the margins and decolonial cracks, as I have argued here, has a history of 500+ years in Abya Yala and a presence that is increasingly visible, in struggle and in multiplication.

While the pedagogies of the "outside" and of the cracks and/or the decolonial otherwise were not within your purview and sight Paulo, I believe they would have been part of your epistemological curiosity and your asking if you were alive today. However, the purpose of these notes was not to push you to my place or presuppose your walking alongside. My aim instead was to tell you of the paths I have chosen and the trails I have made asking and walking. But it was also to open the consideration—with you and the readers here—of decolonial pedagogies as actions that promote and provoke the fissuring or cracking of the modern/colonial order, and enable and give sustenance and force to the otherwise. This Paulo is my present-day political-pedagogical project, location, and stance, the course of my walking and asking from Abya Yala. It is an asking and walking not devoid, as I have argued here, of outcries, anger and indignation, of moments of desperation, and of incessant questions and questionings about the "how": how to fissure and crack, how to walk, and how to ask in these current times. Is this not my own lived version of your "pedagogy of the question"? That is of the praxical challenge of making the road by walking, a making and walking, asking that, of course, requires ongoing learnings, unlearnings, and relearnings, including of how to walk and of how to not stand still despite the horrors before us.

Notes

1. At dawn on May 25, 2014, the Insurgent Subcomandante Marcos, Zapatista spokesperson and military chief, died a symbolic death. The collective decision by the EZLN to end SupMarcos's existence, an existence created by the EZLN in 1994, was strategic. "We have come to realize that we now have a generation of Zapatistas that can look us straight in the face, that can hear us and speak to us without waiting for guidance or leadership, without pretending submission or following. …The figure of Marcos is no longer necessary. …The figure was created and now it´s creators, the Zapatista women and men, destroy it. If you are able to understand this lesson, then you have understood one of the foundations of

Zapatismo. See EZLN, "Entre la luz y la sombra," May 25, 2014. http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2014/05/25/entre-la-luz-y-la-sombra/.

2. *Abya Yala* is the name that the *kuna-tule* people (of the lands now known as Panama and Colombia) gave to the "Americas" before the colonial invasion. It signifies "land in full maturity" or "land of vital blood." Its present-day use began to take form in 1992 when indigenous peoples from throughout the continent came together to counter the "Discovery" celebrations. It was in this frame of re-establishing a continental identity, relation, and civilization that *Abya Yala* was proposed as a way to re-name, disrupt, and counter "America," a name-idea imposed in, by, and through "conquest." As such, it was a decolonial proposition not only for indigenous peoples, but more broadly for the continent and to and for the world.
3. See, for example, my first book that reflects this coming to understanding and engagement with the (de)colonial (Walsh, 1991).
4. Some of this work can be found in Walsh (1996).
5. "Coloniality," a concept introduced by the Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano in the early 1990s, refers to a model of ongoing global power—a new world order—which began with the European invasion of Abya Yala and the formation of the Americas and Caribbean, and has as its foundation the idea of "race" (and Eurocentrification) as the base for the social classification and the control of subjectivity, labor, nature, the relations of gender, and the perspective of knowledge (see Quijano, 2007 originally published in 1992).
6. For a detailed discussion of the influence of Fanon on Freire and of Fanon as pedagogue, see Walsh (2013).
7. For Alexander, this wholeness and yearning to belong "is not to be confined to membership or citizenship in community, political movement, Nation, group, or belonging to a family… . The source of that yearning is the deep knowing that we are in fact interdependent…" (Alexander, 2005, 282).
8. While the collective of modernity/coloniality began to use the term decoloniality in 2004, its legacy is much broader than this group. Chicana queer feminists such as Chela Sandoval and Emma Perez referred to decoloniality and the decolonial in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 1950s and 1960s, Fanon thought of decolonization in much the same way as we are defining decoloniality today. And, of course, indigenous peoples have, for more than 500 years, made evident the significance of decolonial struggle. In this sense, the collective did not invent the concept or term. Rather, it has contributed to its visibility (particularly in the academic-intellectual world) and its use as an analytic.

9. I first introduced this idea of the decolonial how at a Talk in the International Workshop "Decoloniality, Indigeneity and @rt," Duke University, May 1, 2014.
10. Also see the performance work of Daniel B. Coleman Chavez (http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCA_q3feOzRaCTUtCNhamY0w) and Raul Moarquech Ferrera-Balanquet (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n95bMl-A4Nw).
11. In English, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paulo_Freire. The modifications made in the Portuguese version of this page were eliminated after several days as a result of the massive protests.
12. "Aí está uma das origens da nossa já conhecida doutrinação marxista nas escolas e universidades, que em vez de formar cidadãos e profissionais para o crescimento do país, forma soldados dispostos a defender com unhas e dentes o marxismo no meio acadêmico." See http://www.brasilpost.com.br/2016/07/01/wikipedia-paulo-freire_n_10760292.html.
13. This letter has widely circulated in the Internet. It is also published in Spanish in the online magazine *ALAI. América Latina en movimiento* (July 8, 2016). http://www.alainet.org/es/articulo/178669.

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