Freie Universität Berlin

Philipp Altmann

The Concept of Interculturality in Ecuador.

Development and Importance for its Agents

CAS - Center for Area Studies

CAS Working Papers

Edited by the Center for Area Studies (CAS), Freie Universität Berlin, Germany.

The CAS Working Paper Series serves to disseminate first results of ongoing research about transregional and transcultural questions.

All papers are reviewed by two experts. They are published online and can be downloaded free of charge from the Document Server of Freie Universität (http://edocs.fu-berlin.de) as well as from www.fu-berlin.de/cas/forschung/publikationen/working-papers/.

Through publishing first results in this online paper series we aim to encourage the exchange of ideas. Inclusion of a paper in the CAS Working Paper Series should not limit publication in any other work. The copyright remains with the authors.

Further information at: www.fu-berlin.de/sites/en/cas/forschung/publikationen/.

Center for Area Studies
Goßlerstr. 2-4
14195 Berlin
Germany
Tel. +49 (0)30 838-52881
Fax: +49 (0)30 838-52873
geschaeftsstelle@cas.fu-berlin.de
www.fu-berlin.de/cas/

Disclaimer:

The Concept of Interculturality in Ecuador – Development and importance for its agents

Philipp Altmann

Abstract

The fight of indigenous movement organizations in Ecuador since the 1980s has been not only for equal economical, political or cultural rights, but also for a reconstruction of the Ecuadorean society and State. This reconstruction is formed alongside quite specific concepts, such as Interculturality and Plurinationality. Even if those concepts has been adopted in the 2008 Constitution, from the perspective of the indigenous movement, they are yet to implement. This text is an analysis of the development of both indigenous movement and their concepts with a focus on the interrelation between the different organizations and concepts.

Zusammenfassung

Der Kampf der Organisationen der Indigenenbewegung in Ecuador seit den 1980ern war nicht nur ein Kampf für gleiche wirtschaftliche, politische oder kulturelle Rechte, sondern auch einer für einen Wiederaufbau der ecuadorianischen Gesellschaft und des ecuadorianischen Staates. Dieser Wiederaufbau soll an bestimmten Begriffen, wie Interkulturalität und Plurinationalität, entlang erfolgen. Auch wenn diese Begriffe in der Verfassung von 2008 übernommen wurden, müssen sie, aus Sicht der Indigenenbewegung, erst noch umgesetzt werden. Der vorliegende Text ist eine Analyse der Entwicklung sowohl der Indigenenbewegung, als auch ihrer Begriffe mit einem Schwerpunkt auf die Beziehungen zwischen den verschiedenen Organisationen und Begriffen.

About the Author

Philipp Altmann, M.A., studied Sociology, Spanish Philology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Trier and the Autonomous University Madrid. The text here presented is a product of his PhD-research, which started with a scholarship by the German DAAD in Quito, Ecuador and is going to be concluded at the FU Berlin in the next months.
Contact: PhilippAltmann@gmx.de

In the last two decades concepts like culture, nation and identity have become important discoursive dispositifs in the Ecuadorian society. This discoursive shift has been pushed mainly by the different organizations of the indigenous movement (CONAIE[1], FENOCIN[2], FEINE[3] are the most important). The political parties (the most important being the governmental party ALIANZA PAÍS) and unions began to assimilate parts of this identitarian discourse in their programs and policy.

It is a commonplace that there is a broad variety of peoples -in the cultural, historical, ethnic sense-living and interrelating in the territory of Ecuador. Since the independence, different theories of Ecuatoriality or a distinctive Ecuadorian identity have been elaborated. In a society structured as a homogeneous culture by the construct of the mestizo, and mestizos in positions of political and economical power, these theories systematically excluded everything visibly marked as non-mestizo: the black and indigenous peoples.

The concepts of multiculturality, interculturality and plurinationality were used to break this mono-cultural construct of identity. They aimed at an inclusion of the marginalized peoples or nationalities of Ecuador by constructing a new, inclusive national culture. Politically, these concepts play a double role: "When we speak about interculturality, when we speak about plurinationality, we are saying that we should think in two fundamental axis. First, in a political struggle; second, in a struggle from the epistemology." (Macas 2005: 40)[4] Therefore, there is always a specific political interest and strategy behind the different definitions, varying from a change in the national discourse to revolutionary strategies.

The broad field of different interpretations of cultural or ethnic relations in Ecuador is a problem also highlighted by some actors within the social movements. In the IV. Cumbre de los Pueblos Indígenas de la Abya Yala, in summer 2009, the Peruvian Epifanio Pacheco stated: "We have to define theories, concepts, so that we won't be dispersed."[5] Also ECUARUNARI's[6] Floresmilo Simbaña admitted "There is no definition [of interculturality, P.A.]" and explained "More than a social theory, it is a political project."

---

1   Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador: Ecuadorean Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities
2   Federación Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas, Indigenas y Negras: National Federation of Peasant, Indigenous and Black Organisations
3   Federación Ecuatoriana de Indígenas Evangélicos: Ecuadorian Federation of Evangelican Indigenous
4   All translations by the author.
5   The quotes above are taken from my field diary and interview protocols.
6   One of the three main sub-organisations of the CONAIE, based in the Sierra and mainly composed by Kichwa.

This article will analyse different definitions of cultural relations in Ecuador, giving special attention to their political and economical implications. The following text could be called `work in progress´, so there might be inaccuracies and superficialities, which I ask the reader to ignore.

General concepts

The concepts of multiculturality, interculturality and plurinationality, with their respective backgrounds, have a long and complicated history, which cannot be repeated here. Nevertheless, it will be useful to analyse the different implications these concepts have on a general, international level. They express different understandings of the idea of a people or nation, of history, nationality and –of course- culture. It can be underlined that these concepts are not merely descriptions of cultural relations, but also part of a political, economical and –in a broader sense- cultural struggle.

The distinction between pluri-/multinational and pluriethnic states as explained by Cabrera (2002: 96) is just one first conceptual refinement in relation to the degree of institutionality of the peoples or nations in one state. Here, pluri-/multinationality is defined as a situation where the different ethnic communities can maintain or establish their own institutional structures. This is the case of the indigenous (and Black!) peoples in Ecuador. Pluriethnic states -on the other hand- are defined by a lack of institutionality of the ethnic groups, so they are not confronted to the same degree by the problem of cultural/ethnic relations as it were the case with a strong institutionality inside of the ethnic communities.

Inside the conceptual complex pluri-/multinationality, there is a distinction between interculturality and multiculturality to be made. The concept of interculturality gained importance especially in the 1990s, while multiculturality acquired a negative sense.

> "The European Council and the documents published by European official institutions in the decades of the eighties and nineties prefer to use the term *intercultural* when they want to put education in pluralistic contexts. At the same time, the word *multicultural*, related to education, gets a negative value, being put frequently in opposition to *intercultural*. While multicultural education –it is often said- simply describes the given education in multicultural contexts, […] it refers to a `de facto´ situation, the intercultural education defines the adopted pedagogical option." (Bartolomé 2002: 18f.)

Ramón states that these concepts have a much longer history in the US-American

scientific community, even if he does not mention the above distinction. Interculturality is closely linked to education and pedagogical theories. "The proposal of the construction of interculturality, as a theoretical concept, was born in the so-called `first world´, in the United States in the 60s, in the field of education." (Ramón 2009: 133)

Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that there are other definitions of the distinction between multicultural and intercultural. For instance, Acosta/Gurza (2006: 249) speaks about an empirical concept of interculturality, getting close to the above definition of multiculturality[7]. Especially when studying early texts about cultural/ethnical relations in Ecuador (for example Macas 1991), we can notice that the the indigenous organisations does not make an explicit difference between the terms multicultural and intercultural.

If we understand interculturality as a normative concept within a situation of pluri-/multinationality, leaving the concepts multicultural and pluriethnic behind as merely descriptive, it is possible to establish an idea of plurinationality and interculturality as a political project. This is what de Sousa Santos, a Portuguese sociologist who presented his ideas -for example- before the constitutive assembly of Ecuador, tries to do. In his way of thinking, which has been widely adapted in the Bolivarian movements, plurinationality -in combination with interculturality- is forcibly tied to a postcolonial re-foundation of the modern state (de Sousa Santos 2009: 37). The condition is a stable cultural frame, which serves as an orientation for the cultural diversity inside a state.

> "The important thing with intercultural constitutionalism is that there are differences, the objective is not a consensus by uniformity but a consensus by the acknowledgement of the differences. And here is a fundamental principle for intercultural constitutionalism: the differences demand appropriate institutions, similarities demand shared institutions. That is why the state should have shared institutions and institutions appropriate to the cultural identity of the plurinations inside the state." (de Sousa Santos 2009: 42)

This European and US-American schools of multi-/interculturalism –which certainly are much bigger and more diverse than can be reflected here- had their repercussions in the Latin-American academic community, from where it was adapted from social movements. Especially the concept of interculturality has inspired broad intellectual production. One of the most important academics in Ecuador that work on interculturality, is an US expatriate, Catherine Walsh. In a

---

7   Acosta still uses these two terms as near-synonyms (for instance Acosta 2009: 19, cited further on).

ground-breaking essay, she analysed the entry of these concepts into the Andean social space.

> "Even if there is no evidence about when exactly interculturality entered Latin-American lexis, we know that it started to be of use in the field of education, especially indigenous bilingual education at the beginning of the eighties. […] The adoption of the term intercultural, first used in the Andean countries, was assumed to be a duty not for the whole society, but a reflex of the cultural condition of the indigenous world." (Walsh 2000: 11)

In fact, the importance of bilingual education not only for interculturality, but also for the indigenous movement in Ecuador as a whole has to be stressed. Since its beginnings, the fight for indigenous rights has always been a fight for bilingual intercultural education as well, not only within the indigenous communities, but in the Ecuadorian society as a whole. In fact, one of the actual demands of CONAIE is the expansion of bilingual intercultural education also to mestizo communities.

The Development of the Ecuadorian Indigenous Movement

The size of the indigenous population in Ecuador is not really clear, as there is no reliable data. Even if president Correa speaks of less than 2% (quoted in Simbaña 2008), there are more reliable academics who speak of 3.5 million (Lucas 2000: 13) indigenous persons in Ecuador, the Kichwa being the most numerous. Here cannot be the place to make a resume of the history of the Ecuadorian indigenous movement, with its development from rural, class-based structures to the more culturally and politically inspired current tendencies, for instance the CONAIE. This organisation is without a doubt the most influential and the biggest in quantitative terms. Saltos/Vázquez even speak of a membership of 70% of the organized indigenous (2005: 372) but also here is no reliable data available. A history of the indigenous movement in Ecuador can be found in Guamán 2003 and 2006, León 1994, Lucas 2000, Moreno/Figueroa 1992, Becker 2008.

In the twentieth century, the struggles of the indigenous have been marked principally by three thematic complex: fights for autonomy, especially in the sense of collective and land rights, fights for inclusion, where we can place bilingual intercultural education, and fights for political and economical participation, where we can speak of social movements in the classic sense, with participation of many non-indigenous actors. In the last complex, the political influence of the indigenous movement is notorious.

As already stated before, the constitution of a system of bilingual education has

been one of the most important objectives for the indigenous organizations, at least in the second half of the twentieth century. The possibility to have access to an inclusive and equal education which allows to preserve and develop an own ethnic identity was never given to the indigenous communities. Instead, the centralistic state engaged since the independence in the civilizing and disciplinizing liberal project of building the new Latin-American race -mestizaje and blanqueamiento- within the context of the rational individual of post-enlightenment political conception (see further: Walsh 2000:12). In short, the Ecuadorian state was in all of its institutions, for instance the education, profoundly racist and exclusive. This is what Quijano (e.g. 2000) describes as the coloniality of power or González Casanova (1969) as internal coloniality.

The first modern indigenous organization, the FEI[8], was born in this context, and the first indigenous leaders in the twentieth century won influence as institutional anti-racists.

> "But it is in the 20th century when the indigenous of different regions of Ecuador start to integrate, and in the first decades women like Dolores Cacuango and Tránsito Amaguaña emerged, who created the first agricultural syndicate of the country, lead the first indigenous-peasant strike in 1944, participated in the foundation of the Ecuadorian Federation of Indians and initiated rural schools where for the first time the classes were taught in Kichwa." (Lucas 2000: 10)

The objective of an institutionalization of bilingual intercultural education could finally be achieved -at least partly- by the construction of the National Direction of Bilingual Intercultural Education in 1989 (Guamán 2003: 95) under the common responsibility of CONAIE and the Ecuadorian government (Moreno/Figueroa 1992: 44). Here again it is necessary to emphasize the strict limitations bilingual education suffers. Not only the lack of resources and influence, but also a marked lack of interest in society restricts the range of the National Direction of Bilingual Intercultural Education to only a few rural indigenous communities.

The indigenous movement of those times was not able to expand in terms of political influence. Even if there were important strikes and revolts, they mostly focussed on local contexts and specific topics. Lucas speaks of "more than half a century" (2000: 10) before indigenous people could regain political weight.

The struggles for autonomy and participation achieved a peak of political attention

---

8 Federación Ecuatoriana de Indios, engl. Ecuadorian Federation of Indians.

in the revolt of the Inti Raymi in 1990. This is where the indigenous organizations, first of all CONAIE, could gain a lot of influence in civil society and political space.

> "The indigenous revolt of *Inti Raymi* of June 1990 changed principally the relation of the indigenous peoples with the state. It is correct that it did not achieve all the objectives of the platform of struggle (of a political, social and ethnical character), but it did make clear that from then on the indigenous sector, by its organizations could constitute as an important actor, subject and social and political referent for the Ecuadorian society and state." (Guamán 2003: 102)

The revolt of 1990 has to be considered the turning point in the history of the indigenous movement. In the years after the Inti Raymi revolt, political actions of indigenous organizations became frequent to a point where direct influence on parliamentarian politics became common (see further: Santillana Ortiz 2006: 217).

> "From then on [1990 and 1992, P.A.], the Ecuadorian indigenous movement became the most transcendent social movement in Ecuador, and one of the best organized in Latin America. The only one able to paralyse the country totally from one day to another, and an obligatory reference in the political life of Ecuador." (Lucas 2000: 11)

One product of the growing politicization of the indigenous movement was the foundation of the foundation of the Movement of Plurinational Unity Pachakutik in 1996. From there on, Pachakutik participated with growing success in elections at all levels.

The most notorious outcome of this growth can be seen in the constitution of 1998, where the indigenous movement could take decisive influence and was able to place some of their most important demands in the constitution –which did not always lead to the correspondent laws. Nevertheless, the inclusion of collective rights, the terms "pluricultural" and "multiethnical" (Article 1 of the Constitution of 1998) and the recognition of the ILO Agreement 169 about the rights of indigenous peoples can be seen as a mayor progress (see further: Lucas 2000: 13). Only the ideas of Plurinationality and Interculturality remained excluded (Simbaña 2005: 206).

After 1998, the indigenous movement could achieve a still bigger growth in influence and political participation, being the highlight the revolt of 2000, where a broad social movement –included parts of the army and many other social movements- could force the president Mahuad out of government.

Even if the indigenous movement has experienced a considerable gain in

importance and influence, the participation in the government of Lucio Gutiérrez (2002-2005) marked the beginning of a severe crisis and hard internal discussions about its political project. From 2005 on, the indigenous movement and its political representation, the Movement of Plurinational Unity Pachakutik [9], started a reorientation towards local problems, connected with a certain radicalization.

> "On these heights it is evident that the principal indigenous organization suffers the insufficiency of a political project whose central axis is the construction of a Plurinational State; it suffers the constriction of a social basis which does not build a bloc of strong alliances with other sectors of the exploited-excluded, and the loss of political directionality before the totality of the hegemonic program which is being implemented." (Hidalgo 2005: 344)

The concentration toward the concept of Plurinationality has indeed been a critical point, especially for those organizations which are characterized by a certain distance towards indigenous issues.

Concepts of the indigenous movement

    a. Plurinationality

> "Plurinationality: Principle that establishes the existence of different nationalities and peoples, which constitute juridically and politically the Ecuadorian state, which promotes interculturality to harmonize their political, cultural, administrative and economic relations." (Saltos/Vázquez 2007: 384 (Glossary))

In Ecuador, there was no lack of attempts to outline what a nation can be, aiming mostly at concepts like history, language, tradition (for example: Saltos/Vázquez 2007: 383). Especially the term nationality has been systematically inserted in the Ecuadorian context for the description of Indigenous peoples (see further: Saltos/Vázquez 2005: 145). Here, the FEI played a key-role. "In employing the discourse of nationalities as an organizing tool, whether consciously or not, CONAIE built on a long, rich tradition." (Becker 2008: 173) This variety of definitions is reflected by the concept of Plurinationality which can be understood in many different ways, from a simple ethnical acknowledgement to a much more radical notion (Sánchez-Parga 1997: 118). For the moment it will suffice to say that the use of terms like the above has to be seen strictly in a context of a political struggle for access to power -and not in the tradition of European

---

9   The relation between indigenous movement and Pachakutik is not as easy and clear as it might appear here, see further: Santillana Ortiz 2006: 229f.

academic definitions.

It may be interesting to know that the term plurinational was preferred to the term multinational because, as Trujillo (2009: 64) explains, it could be misunderstood as the name which internationally active companies –seen as the arch-enemy of the indigenous peoples- receive. In fact, a barely defined anticapitalism is often present in the background of the paradigmatic positioning of the indigenous movement.[10]

The concept of Plurinationality has been a claim especially by the CONAIE since the mid 1980s[11], and became part of the political ideas of many of the indigenous movements in Latin America. In the II. Cumbre Continental de los Pueblos Indígenas de América, in Quito in June 2004, Plurinationality has been proclaimed as a continental project (Simbaña 2008: 106f.). For the indigenous movement in Ecuador, Plurinationality has been a central concept of growing importance. "[A]s an invisible thread, as a symbolical and epistemic core, the notion of the Plurinationality of Ecuador remained constant since its first formulation in 1990." (Dávalos 2003: 44)

In fact, the concept of Plurinationality proved to be an important discursive resource for CONAIE, which was able to use it to gain a position to speak from in Ecuadorian civil society. It not only helped to increase the importance of the Indigenous movement as a whole, but was also a decisive factor for the hegemonial position of the CONAIE within the movement.

> "The call to acknowledge Ecuador's plurinational character became CONAIE's key and most contentious demand. […] The success of CONAIE in this project was not so much because `nationalities´ reflected reality but because they were able to mobilize around this discourse." (Becker 2008: 173)

Maybe Ecuador is predestined for concepts of economical, political, and cultural difference. At least, not only the indigenous movement perceives this country – more than many others in Latin America, that might also have problems to fit in the idea of a `grown´ nation- as a largely artificial construct with a lack of homogeneity.

---

10   An example of the notoriety of this not reflected anticapitalism may be the statement of a Guatemalan speaker in the IV. Cumbre de Pueblos Indígenas de la Abya Yala, who explained that it is the objective (sic!) of transnational companies to expulse and expropriate indigenous people; another hind can be found in Macas 2005: 39.
11   Dávalos (2003: 44) and Walsh (2009: 174) speak of 1990, see further down this page; CONAIE itself speaks of 1988 (1999: 51); see also Becker (2008: 172).

> "Ecuador was born without national economic integration, without a defined territory, without a consolidated national culture, and with a dispersed and divided population: costeños-serranos, huasipungueros-land owners, mestizos-indios..." (Simbaña 2005: 201)

A nation which never has been one, a state which has been controlled almost all of its existence by local power groups, and an economy which could be taken as an example for dependency and frustrated interior development. Ecuador has never been able to offer its citizens a common nationality or a homogeneous culture –which would be a prerequisite for a nation state in the classic sense. In this context, the indigenous peoples are more a nation than the nation state itself –and this could be one explanation of their understanding of plurinationality. But we should leave the definitions to the actors. In their constitutional proposition in 2007, the CONAIE gives some key-words which will be of help in the task to understand these concepts.

> "[T]he Plurinational State is, in the first place, a model of political organisation for the *decolonialization* of our nationalities and peoples and to make reality the principle of a country with unity in diversity. In the framework of the actual political and economical situation of Latin America, it is a proposal to *recover and strengthen the State and the society* to guarantee the plain exercise of the popular sovereignty and to overcome the neoliberal economic model which privatized, weakened and used it for the benefit of tiny minorities." (CONAIE 2007: 9)[12]

This plurinational state has to be built through constitutional and juridical reform, modifying the state into a pluricultural, pluralist and democratic one (Macas 1991: 11)[13]. By this, it will be an inclusive state not only for indigenous persons but virtually for everyone. Here, the motto of "unity in diversity" (for example: CONAIE 2007: 10) becomes reality –and here, other minorities (ethnical, sexual or cultural ones) can find a connection to the Indigenous movement. The collective-oriented tendency in the concept of plurinationality which CONAIE has developed is remarkable (see further Simbaña 2008: 112) –and has to be seen in relation to its core idea, the existence of different nationalities within the Ecuadorian nation.[14]

Until now, the concept of plurinationality has proven to be not only inclusive in a political sense but also –maybe even more- in a paradigmatic, semiotic sense. A

---

12   The italics are from the original author, as in any other quotation in this text.
13   This statement, written in the aftermaths of the Inti Raymi revolt of 1990, explains the principles of a Plurinational State. These principles have not changed much from then on.
14   I have to remark that this concept also was slowly opened for non-indigenous peoples, as the definition from CONAIE in 1999 (CONAIE 1999: 72) suggests.

simple basic idea allows the addition of a whole series of widely different notions. Maybe this is one of the reasons for its growing importance.

> "The challenge is to see plurinationality as an exercise of inclusive democracy, but especially as a proposal for diverse life in greater harmony and closer to Nature. So, plurinationality has to be read together with other definitions which have to do with territory and the administration of the natural riches." (Acosta 2009: 17)

This inclusive structure of the proposal of plurinationality has –as outlined earlier- an integrative function for the indigenous movement as a social movement. A such has to search continuously for coalitions and allies to strengthen its proposals and demands. This task is to a certain degree related with the motto "unity in diversity" and plurinationality. By this, the indigenous movement has a series of proposals and demands which allow –theoretically- the broadest coalitions. Territory is not an issue for the urban middle-class, but for the non-indigenous peasants, pluralism may be no issue for them but for the afrodescendents and so on.

> "This proposal of plurinationality of the State reveals itself as some kind of strategic-political mean of which the indigenous make use to overcome their internal contradictions as their problems and conflicts with the political system and the State. A strategic mean which does not want to be defined as a concluded discourse nor as a wholly reflexive proposal, but as a political and historical-organizative process in constant change and reformulation from its bases and from its own organizative structure." (Dávalos 2003: 43)

Plurinationality, as a culture-centred concept, cannot be thought without the inclusion of economy and politics. In fact, as Simbaña pointed out in an interview, the separation of these spheres is the common strategy used by the opponents of plurinationality. Therefore, as Vargas (2009: 99) explains, the concept of plurinationality is directed towards a radical deconstruction and transformation of society and state. Diversity and difference had been suppressed and thus a reconstruction of the social and political imaginary is necessary.

Although plurinationality is a quite inclusive proposal, it is as a concept limited to the indigenous movement itself, and, with regard to the differences between CONAIE, FENOCIN, FEINE and the other indigenous organisations, the conceptual framework has its power as a whole only inside the several movements, and, above all, CONAIE as the protagonist of the implementation of plurinationality. In fact, even if the Correa administration adapted the concepts of

plurinationality, interculturality, and so on, we can by no means speak of unity of action.

> "The proposal of the Plurinational State in Ecuador is not new; from 1990 until today the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador – CONAIE, has presented four times the proposal, each time with more details. Nevertheless, being seen as a radical indigenous proposal and not for the whole of the society, these proposals had hardly have acceptation, described as divisionist, antidemocratic, and against national unity." (Walsh 2009: 174)

In fact, most of the opponents of Plurinationality hold these arguments. "The demand of Ecuador as a plurinational country has been understood by some sectors as the geographical division in various states." (Lucas 2000: 14) This opposition has forced CONAIE itself and independent researchers and politicians to many explanations (Lucas 2000: 14). An explanation by CONAIE will help to understand both the concept of Plurinationality and its critics.

> "Far from division, the superior objective of the demand of the Plurinational State is the construction of a new, decentralized, culturally heterogeneous political-administrative structure, open to participative self-representation of all indigenous nationalities and social sectors, especially those which has been marginalized and excluded from the statal structure and the governing pattern of socio-economic development. It implies, in consequence, an institutional amplification that includes the socio-cultural diversity of Ecuador inside a new concept of State, Development and Citizenship that, instead of dominating, oppressing increases economically and politically that cultural richness and versatility." (CONAIE 1999: 51f.)

 b. From Multiculturality to Interculturality

> "Interculturality: Acknowledgement and mutual respect for ethnic and cultural values. This is the right that any person, without consideration of his/her origin, culture, language, traditions, spirituality, etc., has to be acknowledged and respected as what he/she is. It is a space of self-reflection and self-esteem based in the valuation of oneself, holding up the own and respecting the other." (Saltos/Vázquez 2007: 383 (Glossary))

Interculturality needed a long time before it could leave the limited imaginary of multiculturalism behind and become –and by the way "make culture"- a central point in the agenda of many social movements. As we already could see, this concept is broader and politically more interesting being understood in a

processual way instead of a structural one. But Interculturality was not a product of social agents in the Latin American or Andean space. It was introduced by agencies of development and some other organizations, often with a foreign background. Walsh (2000: 13) gives as an example the agreement of the Ecuadorian state with the German development agency GTZ in 1986, which referred explicitly to intercultural bilingual education –the topic, the indigenous movement had fought for about 50 years.

This new concept offered a place for the indigenous demands which previously had been developed without a conceptual location. These demands could be described as cultural resistance (Macas 1991: 8f.). Macas, long-time president of the CONAIE, explained just after the Inti Raymi uprising 1990 this position:

> "Our cultural values have been despised and an alienating culture that suppresses our own cultural expressions has been imposed on us. […] This is why we search for the way of unity of the different peoples, because we face the hope of the construction of new societies, where the ethnic and cultural rights of the indigenous peoples are appreciated; namely a plurinational and multicultural society which is based on the principle of legitimate democracy, which is solidary and respectful towards the cultural differences." (Macas 1991: 6)

In 1991, multiculturality was still in use as an alternative and processual concept. It seemed to be able to overcome the racist and discriminatory structures of the Ecuadorian society. Only a few years later, the concept `multicultural´ has been completely replaced by the concept `intercultural´, which seemed to the indigenous movement more open. Sánchez-Parga (1997: 112) contrasts Multiculturality which can be misunderstood as the description of a special situation or a merely quantitative term with Interculturality. The latter supposes a cultural other which has to be appreciated by every culture in order to appreciate itself. Therefore, it is a much more relevant concept for the purpose of building a new society.

Galo Ramón gives us a theoretically more sophisticated interpretation of this discoursive shift.

> "The new concept `interculturality´ represents an important advance in comparison with the old concepts `multiculturalism´ and `pluriculturality´. These latter only described an empirical situation, the existence of multiple cultures in a certain place and brought up their acknowledgement, respect and tolerance in a scope of equality, notwithstanding, they were not useful to analyze the relations of conflict and community between the different

cultures, they did not allow to examine other forms of regional, gender or generational diversity, but first of all, they did not permit to analyze the capacity which everyone of them has to contribute to the construction of relations of living together, equity, creativity and construction of the new. This new potentiality of the concept `interculturality´ opens a new political agenda: the construction of an intercultural society not only demands the acknowledgement of the diversity, its respect and equality, but also raises the necessity to banish the racism by an active manner, promote permanent negotiations between the diverse to construct new synthesis (inter-fecundation), achieve a plural comprehension of the reality, canalize the conflicts and construct an equitative and inclusive future." (Ramón 2009: 134f.)

The CONAIE itself defines Interculturality as the interrelation between different peoples, based on respect and aimed towards "unity in diversity" (CONAIE 1999: 72). They give more precision to this concept, when they demand in their proposal for the constitution from 2008:

"the construction of real *interculturality* that implies the construction of a project of a country between all that defends the respect and valuation of all forms of cultural expression, knowledge and spirituality that demands the unity of the peoples and nationalities and of the whole society as basic condition for a plurinational democracy and a just and equitative economy." (CONAIE 2007: 10)

This concept of Interculturality is understood as contra-hegemonical process and praxis in relation to the mestizo culture and thought to enforce alternative identities (Walsh 2000: 12).

"From its beginnings, interculturality has meant a struggle about affairs like cultural identification, right and difference, autonomy and nation. It is not strange at all, that one of the central places of this fight is the education, because more than a pedagogic sphere, the education is a political, social and cultural institution, the place of construction and reproduction of values, attitudes and identities and of the historic-hegemonical power of the state." (Walsh 2000: 14)

The move from Multiculturality to Interculturality is basically a move towards a more concrete discoursive place, a place which permits a redefinition of identity, history and the national. One thing, the above academics did not mention is the fact that Interculturality, especially in its CONAIE-definition, is much more orientated towards an inside, a new center that can provide the acclaimed "unity in di-

versity". This new center, it appears, is the renewed, plurinational nation state (see also Acosta 2009: 19).

c. The relation between Interculturality and Plurinationality

Interculturality cannot be reduced to a merely identitarian project. Floresmilo Simbaña explained in an interview[15] that it is indeed about relations between cultures, but these relations are also relations within a certain social structure. From this he -and ECUARUNARI- deduces that only a restructuring of economy and politics can make Interculturality possible. "Interculturality is an integral political project that wants to see economic problems from a cultural logic and vice versa." By this, Interculturality is the necessary precondition for Plurinationality. For the same reason a distinction between a `cultural´, identitarian conception and a political/economical conception of Interculturality, which is often made by scholars and politicians, is not possible. This distinction works as a strategy of division, because it is not possible to understand Interculturality from only one side.

The complex Interculturality/Plurinationality is thought to overcome the repressive structures of actual society, one of its central parts is the autonomy of the indigenous nationalities or peoples, especially in a legal and administrative sense (see also Macas 1991: 11). This autonomy is planned as autonomy within the nation state, which has to be rebuilt as already explained above (also Macas 1991: 12).

The demands for autonomy of the indigenous movement may help to outline some characteristics of Interculturality/Plurinationality. Not only legal, political and administrative autonomy is important, but also self-determination in the fields of education and culture, especially in terms of bilingual intercultural education. Furthermore the demand for respect towards traditional medicine can often be found in the discourse of the indigenous movement (e.g. in Macas 1991: 12). Macas makes clear in the same text that "the most neuralgic points of our demand […] are: the acknowledgement of the Ecuadorian state as plurinational and multicultural, the right to recovery of land and territories and natural resources." (Macas 1991: 19)

We can find some other hints in Macas (2007), who develops in an interview some outlines of the complex Interculturality/Plurinationality. There he states, that this complex refers basically to a historical reconstruction of common attributes which permits the respect towards the difference (Macas 2005: 37). This should be made possible with a participative and communitarian democracy as an

---

15   Taken from my fieldnotes.

alternative to the colonial, monocultural and vertical state of the moment (Macas 2005: 38). And a basic condition for this new societal structure is a different economic system, which does not exploit anyone (Macas 2005: 38f.)

Catherine Walsh points out that the construction of an intercultural and plurinational state needs a collaboration between quite diverse social sectors to "interculturalize" (Walsh 2000: 16) social structures and the state itself. In another text, she explains more in-depth the relation between the two concepts.

> "For the CONAIE, the organization which has leaded the proposal of the plurinational state, the plurinationality is: the acknowledgment of a multicultural society inside the indissoluble political unity of the State that acknowledges respects and promotes the unity, equality and solidarity between all peoples and nationalities existing in Ecuador, alongside of their historical, political and cultural differences. The Plurinational State challenges the character of the uninational State in force; it proposes a model of political organization for the descolonialization directed to: regain, strengthen and democratize the State, construct a real interculturality as project of the country, transform the structures and institutions to acknowledge the political and cultural diversity and acknowledge own communitarian forms of authority, to consolidate like this the unity in diversity." (Walsh 2009: 176)

Economical, political and cultural implications

The conceptual complex Interculturality/Plurinationality has, as already implied, many connections to other areas than the purely movement-related. Becker explained the successful combination of class and ethnic aspects in the demands of the CONAIE (2008: 168) as one reason for CONAIE's enormous gain in importance and ability to speak. He even goes so far to interpret the ethnic component as in some way instrumental for economic demands: "CONAIE exploited ethnic identities to press an economic agenda. Class and ethnicity appeared at the same time to be mutually conflictive and reinforcing. " (Becker 2008: 170) By this, he agrees with Macas and Simbaña in stating: "Ecuador's national problems, CONAIE asserted, were not the result of the presence of distinct ethnic groups, but rather existed because of socioeconomic inequalities." (Becker 2008: 173) Macas expressed the same relation much earlier in much clearer words: "We believe that there will not be a solution for the indigenous problem if the problem of land is not solved, the essential for us is the recovery of land. " (Macas 1991: 10)

The cultural anthropologists Moreno and Figueroa also see this as the most important characteristic of CONAIE, adding, "The access to the land is the base for the creation of a multiethnic, pluricultural society that makes possible the economical, political and cultural development of the different peoples that constitute Ecuador. " (Moreno/Figueroa 1992: 23f.) They list the objectives that were formulated in the first Congress of CONAIE in 1986:

> "to pursue before the government the total restitution of indigenous lands under a communitarian form of property; defend the indigenous cultures, for what programs of bilingual bicultural education should be promoted that include the elaboration of didactic materials in all indigenous languages; to make the society aware of the value of traditional medicine; to organize courses of ideological, political and technological qualification, with the assistance of the member organizations; to search for external financing for the realization of projects of the indigenous nationalities, to pursue with them the formation of an indigenous bank, with the contribution of the organizations themselves; finally, to coordinate on the national level the politics of all indigenous organizations of Ecuador." (Moreno/Figueroa 1992: 43f.)

From the beginning, CONAIE combined cultural demands and strategies like the bilingual education or the promotion of traditional medicine with economic ones like the demand for land and the search for external financing.

Alternative Interpretations

The above analysis applies largely only to the concepts CONAIE handles. As Plurinationality and Interculturality became more and more accepted in the Ecuadorian public discourse, also the other Indigenous organizations were forced to deal with them. Mostly, they do this by distancing themselves from the concepts marked by CONAIE. This distance is often implicit, it is difficult to find documents by the organizations themselves that deal with these concepts -partly because of an overall institutional weakness. "There did not lack groups of the [indigenous, P.A.] movement itself that expressed their disagreement with this historical proposal, by confronting Plurinationality with Interculturality; the latter, foundational part of a plurinational State." (Acosta/Martínez 2009: 8)

Catherine Walsh gives FENOCIN room to explain their point of view. The syndical FENOCIN has, in the moment, a prominent position in the official discourse because of the participation of some of its members, most notably, its president Pedro de la Cruz, in the governing ALIANZA PAÍS and the federal and regional

governments.

> "Interculturality has in our context a different legacy and significance than in other countries. It is a principle that comes from the indigenous movement, it is thought as a political and social project that requires not only a relational but also a structural transformation of the Ecuadorian society and state; finally, it is considered a process and instrument of decolonialization. While the multicultural and plurinational are descriptive terms that aim at diversity and acknowledgment (and inclusion) within the existing society, interculturality still does not exist. It is something that has to be built. It allows to imagine and to construct steps towards a different society based on conditions of respect, mutual legitimacy, equity, symmetry and equality, where the difference is a constitutive element and not a simple addition. This is why interculturality is central for the refoundation of the state: because of the relations and articulations to be built not only between groups but also between structures, institutions and rights that this state proposes, understanding that behind them there are different logics, rationalities, customs and knowledge." (Walsh 2009: 178)

So FENOCIN aims at a refoundation of the Ecuadorian state to make Interculturality possible, it is a utopia which can lead today's struggles. Galo Ramón extends this point of view in a more analytical way. He understands the Plurinationality as an empirical concept which does not emphasize "unity in diversity", and is thus incapable to transform the deeply racist and exclusionary society in Ecuador. For him, Plurinationality can only be applied to the regions where one ethnic group lives but not to the regions populated by different groups. Galo Ramón contrasts this with his interpretation of Interculturality. Interculturality emphasizes difference and diversity but within a larger unity, creating institutions and mechanisms which permit the creative encounter between different groups, it penetrates the social structures of the state, not leaving anyone in a minority position. Finally, the concept of Interculturality is perfectly applicable to multiethnic and monoethnic territories, promoting all citizens. Furthermore, Interculturality also applies to the black people and the mestizo majority and integrates them in the construction of a new nation with a new identity (Ramón 2009: 125 – 127).

This is a different interpretation of the concepts which CONAIE developed in the first place. Even if the above use of the concepts Plurinational and Intercultural is a minority position within the indigenous movement itself, it has a certain influence in the overall societal discourse and especially -in part because of the prominent position of some FENOCIN members in the governmental party- in state policy.

Conclusions

The concept of Interculturality, completed by the concept of Plurinationality, is in the Ecuadorian space a movement-concept in the sense of a discoursive instrument in political, social and cultural fights. These movement-concepts lack often a more or less clear definition, as they are thought to be a medium for political conflicts. They are to some degree empty in order to be (re-)filled in concrete situations with different contents. This text is the attempt to trace the contents of Interculturality in Ecuador. It was made clear that there is almost no connection to the concept of Interculturality used in international academic discourse, a fact that may explain some of the misunderstandings or disagreements portrayed in sections 2 and 5.

The permanent contents of the conceptual complex Interculturality/Plurinationality can -basically- be reduced to demands for a more pluralistic and democratic society and state. Nevertheless, they have implications that extent to the whole civil society in Ecuador, being an important part of the discussion and a discoursive dispositif no actor can escape.

Bibliography

- Acosta, Alberto. *Breve Historia Económica del Ecuador*. Quito: Corporación Editorial Nacional, 2001.

- Acosta, Alberto. "El Estado Plurinacional, puerta para una sociedad democrática. A manera de prólogo", in: Acosta, Alberto and Esperanza Martínez, ed. *Plurinacionalidad. Democracia en la Diversidad.* Quito: Abya-Yala, 2009, pp. 15 – 20.

- Acosta, Alberto and Esperanza Martínez, ed. *Plurinacionalidad. Democracia en la Diversidad.* Quito: Abya-Yala, 2009.

- Almeida Vinueza, José. "Identidades múltiples y estado unitario en el Ecuador." in: ILDIS. *Identidad nacional y globalización*, ILDIS: Quito, 1997, pp. 173 – 181.

- Bartolomé, Margarita. "Introducción: un reto a la educación intercultural." in: Bartolomé, Margarita, ed. *Identidad y ciudadanía. Un reto a la educación intercultural*. Madrid: Narcea, 2002, pp. 13 – 25.

- Becker, Marc. *Indians and Leftists in the Making of Ecuador's Modern Indian Movements*. Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2008.

- Cabrera, Flor. "Hacia una nueva concepción de la ciudadanía en una sociedad multicultural." in: Bartolomé, Margarita, ed. *Identidad y ciudadanía. Un reto a la educación intercultural*. Madrid: Narcea, 2002, pp. 79 – 104.

- CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador). *Las Nacionalidades Indígenas y sus derechos colectivos en la Constitución*. Quito: CONAIE, 1999.

- CONAIE (Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador). *Propuesta de la CONAIE frente a la Asamblea Constituyente. Principios y lineamientos para la nueva constitución del Ecuador. Por un Estado Plurinacional, Unitario, Soberano, Incluyente, Equitativo y Laico*. Quito: CONAIE, 2007.

- Costa, Sérgio and Adrián Gurza. "Cohesión social y coexistencia intercultural en América Latina." in: Cotler, Julio, ed. *La cohesión social en la agenda de América Latina y de la Unión Europea*. Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 2006, pp. 247 – 279.

- Dávalos, Pablo. "Plurinacionalidad y poder político en el movimiento indígena ecuatoriano." Observatorio Social de América Latina, No. 9 (January 2003), Buenos Aires: CLACSO, pp. 43 – 50. 7 December 2008 <http://bibliotecavirtual.clacso.org.ar/ar/libros/osal/osal9/davalos.pdf>.

- de Sousa Santos, Boaventura. "Las paradojas de nuestro tiempo y la Plurinacionalidad." in: Acosta, Alberto and Esperanza Martínez, ed. *Plurinacionalidad. Democracia en la Diversidad.* Quito: Abya-Yala, 2009, pp. 21 – 62.

- González Casanova, Pablo (1969): *Sociología de la explotación*, Mexico: Siglo XXI.

- Guamán, Julián. *Indígenas evangélicos ecuatorianos. Evangelización, organización e ideología.* Quito: FEINE, 2003.

- Guamán, Julián. *FEINE, la organización de los indígenas evangélicos en Ecuador.* Quito: Abya-Yala, Corporación Editora Nacional, 2006.

- Hidalgo Flor, Francisco. "Los movimientos indígenas y la lucha por la hegemonía: el caso de Ecuador." in: Dávalos, Pablo, ed. *Pueblos Indígenas, Estado y democracia.* Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2005, pp. 341 – 347.

- León, Juan. "La Sociedad Ecuatoriana." in: Grijalva Jiménez, Agustín, ed. *Datos Básicos de la Realidad Nacional.* Quito: Cooperación Editora Nacional, 1994, pp. 61 – 79.

- Lucas, Kintto. *La Rebelión de los Indios.* Quito: Abya-Yala, 2000.

- Macas, Luis. *El Levantamiento Indígena visto por sus protagonistas.* Quito: Instituto Científico de Culturas Indígenas, 1991.

- Macas, Luis. "La necesidad política de una reconstrucción epistémica de los saberes ancestrales." in: Dávalos, Pablo, ed. *Pueblos Indígenas, Estado y democracia.* Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2005, S. 35 – 42.

- Moreno Yánez, Segundo and José Figueroa. *El Levantamiento Indígena del Inti Raymi de 1990.* Quito: FESO, Abya-Yala, 1992.

- Quijano, Aníbal (2000): *Colonialidad del Poder, Globalización y Democracia*, Lima. 26 January 2009. <http://www.rrojasdatabank.info/pfpc/quijano2.pdf>.

- Ramón, Galo. "¿Plurinacionalidad o interculturalidad en la Constitución?" in: Acosta, Alberto and Esperanza Martínez. *Plurinacionalidad. Democracia en la Diversidad*. Quito: Abya-Yala, 2009, pp. 125 – 160.

- Saltos, Napoleón and Lola Vázquez. *Ecuador: su realidad 2005 – 2006.* Quito: Fundación de Investigación y Promoción social "José Peralta", 2005.

- Saltos, Napoleón and Lola Vázquez. *Ecuador: su realidad 2007 – 2008*. Quito: Fundación de Investigación y Promoción social "José Peralta", 2007.

- Sánchez-Parga, José. "Identidad nacional, cultura y globalización." in: ILDIS. *Identidad nacional y globalización.* ILDIS: Quito, 1997, pp. 95 – 123.

- Santillana Ortiz, Alejandra. "Proceso organizativo y límites del proyecto político de Pachakutik" in: Ospina Peralta, Pablo, ed. *En las fisuras del poder. Movimiento indígena, cambio social y gobiernos locales.* Quito: Instituto de Estudios Ecuatorianos, 2006, pp. 215 – 265.

- Simbaña, Floresmilo. "Plurinacionalidad y derechos colectivos. El caso ecuatoriano." in: Dávalos, Pablo, ed. *Pueblos Indígenas, Estado y democracia*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2005, pp. 197 – 215.

- Simbaña, Floresmilo. "La Plurinacionalidad en la nueva Constitución." in: ILDIS. *Análisis Nueva Constitución*. Quito: ILDIS, 2008, pp. 102 – 117.

- Trujillo, Julio César. "El Ecuador como Estado Plurinacional" in: Acosta, Alberto and Esperanza Martínez, ed. *Plurinacionalidad. Democracia en la Diversidad*. Quito: Abya-Yala, 2009, pp. 63 – 79.

- Vargas, Edwar. "La Plurinacionalidad. Un paradigma de transformación social." in: Acosta, Alberto and Esperanza Martínez, ed. *Plurinacionalidad. Democracia en la Diversidad*. Quito: Abya-Yala, 2009, S. 99 – 105.

- Walsh, Catherine. "Políticas y Significados Conflictivos" *Estudios Interculturales*, No. 2, Guaranda/Ecuador: Editorial Pedagógica Freire, 2000. pp. 9 – 24.

- Walsh, Catherine. "Estado Plurinacional e intercultural. Complementariedad y complicidad hacia el `Buen Vivir´." in: Acosta, Alberto and Esperanza Martínez, ed. *Plurinacionalidad. Democracia en la Diversidad*. Quito: Abya-Yala, 2009, pp. 161 – 184.

About the Center for Area Studies

The Center for Area Studies (CAS) supports the development of Freie Universitaet Berlin as a center of disciplinary-based and interdisciplinary-connected research in various fields of area studies. It unites the competence that exists in different research networks in the humanities and social sciences at Freie Universität Berlin. Traditionally, a major focus at FU has been placed on North America, Latin America, Eastern Europe, East Asia and the Middle East. Today, also the other regions of the World like Western Europe or Afrika are taken into account. CAS's scientific purpose is to analyze transcultural phenomena and processes with an interdisciplinary approach.

For further information, please visit the CAS website: www.fu-berlin.de/sites/en/cas/.

Freie Universität Berlin

Center for Area Studies

Call for Papers:
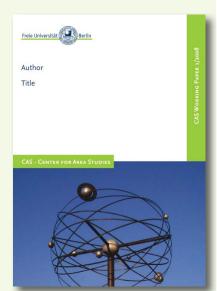# Center for Area Studies - Working Paper Series

Das Center for Area Studies gibt eine eigene
Working-Paper-Reihe heraus.

Wir möchten insbesondere den wissenschaftlichen Nachwuchs ermuntern, eigene Beiträge dafür zu verfassen.
Die Papers sollen eine transkulturelle und/oder
interdisziplinäre Ausrichtung haben und können jederzeit
eingereicht werden.

Nähere Informationen:
www.fu-berlin.de/cas/forschung/publikationen/

CAS-Geschäftsstelle
geschaeftsstelle@cas.fu-berlin.de
Tel. 030-838-52881

Freie Universität Berlin

Author

Title

CAS Working Paper 1/2008

CAS - Center for Area Studies

The Center for Area Studies publishes a working-paper series of its own.

We would like to encourage especially young scientistis to submit contributions to it.
Papers should include a transcultural and/or interdisciplinary perspective.

Details: www.fu-berlin.de/cas/forschung/publikationen/
CAS-Office, geschaeftsstelle@cas.fu-berlin.de, Tel. 030-838-52881

El Centro de Estudios Regionales publica una propia colección de los Working Papers.

Queremos animar especialmente a los/las cientificos/as de la nueva generación para que entreguen sus propios papeles.
Los papers deben que tener una orientación transcultural y/o interdisciplinaria y se puede entregarlos en todo momento.

Más informaciones: www.fu-berlin.de/cas/forschung/publikationen/
Oficina del CAS, geschaeftsstelle@cas.fu-berlin.de, Tel. 030-838-52881