

**PRODUCTION OF INTERCULTURALITY AND THIRD SPACES AT THE
INTERCULTURAL UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF HIDALGO (UICEH)**

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UNIVERSIDADE INTERCULTURAL DO ESTADO DE HIDALGO (UICEH)***

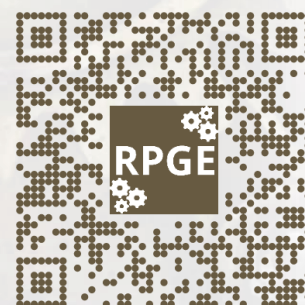
***PRODUCCIÓN DE INTERCULTURALIDAD Y TERCEROS ESPACIOS EN LA
UNIVERSIDAD INTERCULTURAL DEL ESTADO DE HIDALGO (UICEH)***



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ABSTRACT: This research shows the results of a study conducted on the Intercultural University of the State of Hidalgo (UICEH), whose objective was to learn about the production of interculturality from third spaces (BHABHA, 1998, 2002). The construction of this work was achieved thanks to a theoretical-conceptual review, in-depth interviews (TAYLOR; BOGDAN, 2000), and ethnographic photography (BRANDES, [199-?]). The results show the production of other interculturalities from murals and practices carried out in the university from the category of "third spaces", as those where the possibility of production of other interculturalities is conceived, invisible to the eyes, to the experiences, between the institutional and the community, between the inclusive and the exclusive and that give rise to reflections on the generation of safe spaces where students can reflect on their own indigenous culture.

KEYWORDS: Interculturality. University. Third space. Indigenous people.

RESUMO: Esta investigação mostra os resultados de um estudo realizado na Universidade Intercultural do Estado de Hidalgo (UICEH), cujo objetivo foi conhecer a produção da interculturalidade a partir de espaços terceiros (BHABHA, 1998, 2002). A construção deste trabalho foi realizada graças a uma revisão teórico-conceitual, entrevistas em profundidade (TAYLOR; BOGDAN, 2000) e fotografia etnográfica (BRANDES, [199-?]). Os resultados mostram a produção de outras interculturalidades a partir de murais e práticas realizadas na universidade a partir da categoria de "terceiros espaços", como aqueles onde é concebida a possibilidade de produção de outras interculturalidades, invisíveis aos olhos, às experiências, entre o institucional e a comunidade, entre o inclusivo e o exclusivo e que dão lugar a reflexões sobre a geração de espaços seguros onde os estudantes podem refletir sobre a sua própria cultura indígena.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Interculturalidade. Universidade. Terceiros espaços. Povos indígenas.

RESUMEN: Esta investigación muestra resultados de un estudio realizado sobre la Universidad Intercultural del Estado de Hidalgo (UICEH), cuyo objetivo fue conocer la producción de interculturalidad desde los terceros espacios (BHABHA, 1998, 2002). La construcción de este trabajo se logró gracias a una revisión teórica-conceptual, las entrevistas a profundidad (TAYLOR; BOGDAN, 2000), y la fotografía etnográfica (BRANDES, [199-?]). Los resultados muestran la producción de otras interculturalidades desde murales y prácticas efectuadas en la universidad desde la categoría de "terceros espacios", como aquellos en donde se concibe la posibilidad de producción de otras interculturalidades, invisibles a los ojos, a las experiencias, entre lo institucional y comunitario, entre lo incluyente y lo excluyente y que dan pie a reflexiones sobre la generación de espacios seguros en donde los estudiantes pueden reflexionar sobre su propia cultura indígena.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Interculturalidad. Universidad. Terceros espacios. Indígenas.

Introduction

The Intercultural University of the State of Hidalgo (UICEH) was established in 2012 and is located in Tenango de Doria, in the State of Hidalgo, Mexico. As a result of the construction of the new facilities, it was requested, through a call addressed to the students, to paint murals with perspectives of interculturality. This fact generated critical proposals on the part of the students, proposing several murals that reflected visions of struggle of indigenous peoples and the recognition of territories from their historical, cultural and linguistic aspects. Therefore, this work displays a mural that emerged from this call that is entitled: "Zi nana maka hai, 5 continents in the same heart". The research aimed to recognize the type of interculturality production incorporated by the students in the murals, and the construction of this research work was carried out thanks to a theoretical-conceptual review, in-depth interviews (TAYLOR; BOGDAN, 2000) and ethnographic photography (BRANDES, [199-?]), achieving interesting results on the critical contributions regarding the interculturality of the students in the murals, in which they captured Latin American indigenous fighters and perspectives of interculturality recovered from the Otomi territories themselves. This work is considered important for innovating in an educational study that rescues the visions of interculturality at a higher level from artistic works such as murals, which account for a production of knowledge from non-institutional positions.

With the construction of the building of the Intercultural University of the State of Hidalgo (UICEH), a call for murals was promoted, in which three large teams of students were formed and three murals were made, in addition to another, which, although it arose from a project conceived at the institutional level (Tenango mural), was made freely by a student who had the freedom to express his own idea. Here, I will present the experience of the mural: "Zi nana maka hai, 5 continents in one heart".

Initially, the methodological framework that guided the research is disclosed, then I will present a conceptual discussion on interculturality, later the history of the mural and its elaboration process will be disclosed, and finally, the conclusions of the study, the acknowledgments and the bibliographical references.

Methodology

Interculturality studies require new approaches and methodological tools that allow us to account for the complex processes that characterize them. In this context, I thought of conducting a study that would give an account of how interculturality is produced through murals at the Intercultural University of the State of Hidalgo (UICEH)? This guiding question allowed us to recognize that the murals painted by the students produced a type of interculturality.

The construction of this research work was carried out thanks to a theoretical-conceptual review, in-depth interviews (TAYLOR; BOGDAN, 2000) and ethnographic photography (BRANDES, [199-?]) and digital ethnography (PINK *et al.*, 2016).

More than 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with students of the University:

In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique (consisting of) repeated, face-to-face encounters between a researcher and his informants, which aim to understand the interviewee's perspectives on his or her life, experience, or personal situations expressed in his or her own words" (TAYLOR; BOGDAN, 2000, p. 101, our translation).

In this case, I had repeated meetings with the students, and some interviews were developed in Tenango de Doria, Hidalgo in Mexico where the University is located, others, in turn, were carried out through video calls, since there were students who were outside the place that hosts the institution. The interviews lasted an hour or two, where they spoke freely of their experiences to paint the murals and in which they shared emotions, reflections and even sketches of the murals that were not considered suitable to be painted. The interviews allowed us to understand their visions, their ideals, their frustrations, their gaps, their meanings, etc., fundamental elements for the construction of this work.

The interviews were conducted through the field diary, but the recordings were also used, since part of the interviews were conducted with video calls, due to the complications of the COVID-19 pandemic, and digital ethnography was used (O' REILLY *apud* PINK *et al.*, 2016) which implied having contact with students in a digital way. Contact was maintained with students from March to September 2020, through different digital media such as *WhatsApp*, video calls, *Facebook* and *Messenger*. And they texted, chatted, shared photographs, reflections; The longest conversations were two hours on average, in addition, we communicated in other ways, with other means, with other resources.

Ethnographic photography played a very important role in the recovery of images of murals, signs, collections, colors, shapes, walls, etc., Brandes ([199-?]) states that: "Black and white photography contributes to the sense of reality of ethnographic study. It sustains our reputation as researchers of merit. Basically, that's why we use them." In this case, color played an elementary role in showing how lived space also relates to the color incorporated in the murals; intending, at all times, to recover in the most faithful way what the students painted.

The photographs have a very clear motive, they are linked to the descriptions, the experiences, the processes, the way they are presented, leads the reader to understand the importance of the spaces and what they hide behind. Through the images, it is shown how in these third spaces interculturalities are also produced and subjectivities are visible. The photographs of the murals linked to the dense descriptions of these played a fundamental role in understanding the production of interculturality.

Interculturality in Latin America

Fornet-Betancourt (1998) points out that interculturality is a characteristic that anyone can have, it is not something limited, but rather to let oneself be "affected", "touched", "impressed". It is not a topic related only to theory, but to practice, where aspects of life are exchanged and shared.

This way of seeing the intercultural as something that is already present in the culture that we inherit as our own, emerges in the background of the historical conception of culture that I have tried to explain. But the decisive thing is to understand that this historical vision of ours helps us to explain the contexts of our region, the borders of our locality, that is, not to isolate or absolutize it. Or, to put it positively, it builds a bridge to everything that seems strange to us and motivates us to foster contact and dialogue (FORNET-BETANCOURT, 1998, p. 257, our translation).

This proposal brings to the theme the need for intercultural dialogue for the knowledge and recognition of diversity in America, introducing the idea that "intercultural dialogue presupposes cultural identities aware of their differences." "The introduction of intercultural dialogue as a means of recognizing the other in their difference and power" (FORNET-BETANCOURT, 1998, our translation) leads us to think: what kind of dialogue do indigenous and Afro-descendant groups want?

Along the same lines, Tubino (2005) states that in Latin America interculturality appears in the seventies as an alternative to bicultural bilingual education and at that time this idea of

interculturality begins to be introduced, but it is until 1983, at the meeting headed by UNESCO, that they decide to incorporate the term "intercultural education".

In addition to the previous ones, there are other proposals that debate the "must be" of interculturality, the place from which the approach should be built, the groups to which it will be directed, the type of diversity that should be treated (JIMÉNEZ, 2012).

In turn, Walsh (2009) explores the meanings and uses that have been attributed to interculturality: relational, functional and critical.

Interculturality from a "relational" perspective is one that refers to contacts between different cultures, something that has always existed in Latin America as an example: relations between mestizo populations, Creoles, Afro-descendants, etc. The author criticizes this perspective because it "hides or minimizes conflicts and contexts of power, domination and coloniality"; in addition, "it presents limitations in considering only at the level of contact and relationship, leaving out social, political, economic and epistemic structures" (WALSH, 2009, our translation).

In the same line of discussion, within the functional perspective in which Tubino (2005) is situated, interculturality arises from the promotion of dialogue and coexistence in the recognition of diversity and difference, which leaves out the causes of asymmetry and social and cultural inequality. (ibid.: 3) Unlike these previous perspectives, the latter is situated in the critical interculturality where the structural-colonial-racial problem begins, understood as such because it must emerge as a project of the people, exercised from below. Walsh states that this type of interculturality does not yet exist, that it must be built and understands it as follows:

As a strategy, action and permanent process of relationship and negotiation between, in conditions of respect, legitimate is its understanding, construction and positioning as, symmetry, equity and equality. But even more important – the political, social, ethical and epistemic project of knowledge and knowledge – which affirms the need to change not only the relations, but also the structures, conditions and devices of power that maintain inequality, subordination, racialization and discrimination. (WALSH, 2009, p. 4, our translation).

This vision puts into debate the proposals of interculturality that do not arise from society, which propose the incorporation of the different within already established structures, but here Walsh's proposal is to rethink the concept from other logics that contemplate all sectors of society and from the political, social, epistemic and ethical.

Mural "Zi nana maka hai", "5 continents in one heart"

The following paragraphs will show the process of construction of the mural "5 continents in the same heart", product of the call for murals launched by UICEH and analyze how visions of interculturality were produced from a "third space"?

The mural "5 continents in the same heart" was painted by students Erik Abraham Ávalos, Rebeca Cruz, Matilde Doñu, Joel Flor, Sami Irais, María Elisa Granillo, Emilia Hilario, Rossana Roque, Jessica Salinas, Erika Vargas and Adrián Zapote.

Figure 1 – Mural "Zi nana maka hai", "5 continents in one heart"



Source: Dalia Peña Islas²

The work is located on a fence outside the students' classrooms and, as can be seen in the image (Figure 1), is visible from the inside through the glass.

I didn't want to participate, but they invited me, I thought Fernando was the good one, but they said no, that we have good ideas and that we set up a team, I didn't know what to do, so I told Ros, Jéssica Salinas and the idea was to do something very controversial (ANONYMOUS STUDENT, 25 years old, field diary of 2018).

The construction of a first draft

I have a style of putting together a lot of things and colors and we had to send a one-page summary and it was really cool that we captured the cultural sense of the land [...] in the beginning it was called five continents one heart, the indigenous populations suffering from capitalism, we based ourselves on a band called Escape Bastard Sons of Capitalism, From this sentence we began to write, it was that yes, that indigenous peoples are so intercultural that they understand capitalism, we talk about symbolic, social heritage, this was the initial text that they are inviting us to see if they can stand us" (ANONYMOUS STUDENT, 25 years old, 2018).

² Photos taken at the Intercultural University of Hidalgo State (UICEH)

The mural was initially different from the one depicted (Figure 2). It represented the face of a woman, the river and the people walking, the students wanted to highlight the violence of women, and were based on a poem by Larva "Cursed the fruit of your womb", in which the mother/mother earth analogy is played.

Figure 2 – First sketch of the mural



Source: Provided by STUDENT ANONYMOUS

An excerpt from the poem the students were inspired by is presented below:

"Mother, I have sinned of pride, greed and ambition.
I explored all the signs of affection,
Every selfless gesture and every drop of your love.
I turned your blood into oil
And today I see the results of my mistake.
Mother, I beg your pardon.
Mother I am a hungry pig feeding on your erosion,
I'm a cretin with no reason
And let him turn his face when he sees you cry.
I know you're hurting and I don't care.
As long as I can keep using you.
Mother I beat you, lied to you and mistreated you,
I walked on your neck and I pride myself on being better than you.
Mother, forgive me.
Mother, you ask for my help and I try hard not to listen to you.
I see you lethargic and pale, thin and dying."
(Composers: Christian Inchaustegui, shared by UICEH student).

As mentioned by UICEH ANONYMOUS STUDENT:

In this mural these songs intervene, it is protesting music that we hear, we feel identified with what she says. We are bored with the romanticism of the intercultural. We approach the intercultural from a real perspective" (ANONYMOUS STUDENT, 27 years old, 2019 field diary)

Critical positions began to be observed to the functionalist visions of interculturality, emerging from the students in their own spaces of creation, of hybridization, in which they could generate new identities, proposing a space contradictory to the one conceived and even lived, a space of tensions, "a third space". (BHABHA, 1998)

The students conceived Mother Nature as a woman, drew day and night, based on a work by Jacques (1987), thought that mother earth is a woman, but also a man.

The themes of the mural: violence, the bastard children of globalization, the peoples in defense of their territory, cosmogony, all this is intercultural, we wanted to have a political position, they will not end us, even if they kill us, interculturality is to respect all this, but they are all issues, ahh! Indigenous peoples are the saviors, they are the ones who make beautiful trades, but they are also subjects of rights, from which indigenous peoples defend themselves" (STUDENT ANONYMOUS, 25 years old, 2018 fieldwork).

The students, at the moment of making an approach to interculturality from the struggles and defense of indigenous peoples, located themselves in a critical process "a space where other interculturalities are produced", spaces that they themselves built with their ideologies, approaches and positions.

At the beginning in the sketch Mother Earth had a face of I will face you as you come, I don't know, but it was changed, because everything is politics in that university, the doctor loved and defended and there were many people who did not want that mural to be painted, we attached faces of social fighters: Bertha Cázares, and they did not like them, Maximina Acuña, Bertha who defended Acaxochitlán, wanted to put a Zapatista, but they wouldn't let him. The mural was enlarged, the facilities belonged to the CDI and nothing could be done other than the CDI. (STUDENT ANONYMOUS, 25, 2019 field diary) (Our translation).

The position of the students was clear and placed in a critique of the institutional versions (CASILLAS; SANTINI, 2013), its ethical-political positioning was the ideology that marked this first draft (WALSH, 2012).

The frictions are once again visible: the positions of the students, the institutions such as the CDI today INPI and the positions of the UICEH produced heterogeneous encounters:

A study of global connections shows the footprint of the encounter: friction. A wheel turns due to its encounter with the road surface; spinning in the air isn't going anywhere. Rubbing two sticks together produces heat and light; A single stick is just a stick. As a metaphorical image, friction reminds us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (TSING, 2005, p. 5).

The students did not position themselves in the way of thinking about functional interculturality, in imposed positions, they lived a process of production of interculturality in a "third space" where proposals that were confused with the institutional ones emerged. The students' proposals enriched the space with critical positions that raised not only the beautiful, the diverse, the cultural and the linguistic, introduced other visions of interculturality alternative to the visions of walls, signage and green spaces. I introduced the theme of the struggle that has existed in indigenous populations for spaces such as those involving natural resources, their languages and their historicity. These frictions contributed to the enrichment of the spaces of third-order positions: "We wanted to add a Zapatista fighter, but those of the CDI did not like it. (ANONYMOUS STUDENT, 25, field diary in 2019).

The mural proposed in a first draft wove symbolic perceptions of peoples that did not fit the positions of the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples (CDI), which has defended indigenous peoples since 1948.

We also did it thinking about interculturality, but it is not about putting the beautiful, but we wanted to make it known that interculturality goes further, more than dancing in a ritual, interculturality goes beyond, outsiders have to respect us and try to dialogue so as not to hurt us. The political positioning, although there is interculturality, often the outside world does not understand us, it is sad because of this that Mother Earth was sad, for this, because indigenous peoples are not understood, because she suffers damage, she must be sad I say, for the ecological issue" (ANONYMOUS STUDENT, 25 years old, field diary 2019).

The students expressed their feelings and their imagination about Why didn't they let them paint the original idea?:

At the beginning of the sketch Mother Earth had a face of I will face you as you come, I don't know, but it was changed, because there were many people who did not want that mural to be painted, and that we attached faces of social fighters, such as: Bertha Cázares, Maximina Acuña, Filiberta who defended Acaxochitlán, we wanted to put a Zapatista woman, but they wouldn't let me. As the facilities were CDI's, and nothing could be done other than the CDI (ANONYMOUS STUDENT, 25 years old, 2019 field diary).

In this first version, a position of the students is appreciated from another perspective of interculturality that, according to Antequera, taken up by Erdösová (2013), is defined as follows: "Interculturality can also be understood as a process of decolonization and, therefore, be used "from below" by ethnic actors to carry out local transformations." This view understands cultures in a dynamic and relational way.

In the case of this mural, the students proposed a questioning of subordination and its patterns of power (WALSH, 2012, p. 12) Later, in the last sketch they added other faces in the final mural or fifth sketch (Figure 3):

Figure 3 – Last sketch of the mural



Source: Dalia Peña Islas³

The mural depicted at the end the following:

The faces are social fighters, Bertha Cáceres, the lady with cute black hair, we all investigate about these social actors, who has the hat is Maximina Acuña, defender of Peru, she defended a pond of a mining project was awarded for this defense, it was very good for us to put: Filiberta Nevado Temples, defender of the forest of Acaxochitlán, inspired us his defense and love for nature: Vandana Shiva, has already done projects of feminism, conservation of the native seed, has done many things, she is indigenous: Chico Mendez, defended a forest in the Amazon that killed him. It was good for us to remind them at an Intercultural University. The woman at the center is mother earth, she is a created face that belongs to no one. It has indigenous characteristics; mother earth is indigenous in our worldview. Night and day are preserved and we are inspired by Galinier's book. The night of the scare is the old moon, we had to finish it in a week. The sun that appears in the mural was Hadrian's idea, the corn, he drinks. We decided to name the sacred mother earth (Zi nana maka hai) at first, but it was actually like five continents the same heart (STUDENT ANONYMOUS, 25 years old, fieldwork 2019).

³ Photos taken at UICEH

The part where the corn, the baby and the girl appear was painted by Adrián Zapote, Matilde Doñu and Erika Vargas.

We participated in the part of the mural of corn with belly. We are inspired by the Mexican culture in which man comes from corn, from what we read. We represent her with the grains in different colors to represent the different cultures, the girl is the mother earth, the fetus represents that from the corn comes the man. The interculturality in the mural is the relationship of several crops, in the case of corn represents all of Mexico, it is not a single crop. Erika, Matilda and I agreed and created corn in different colors. The mural is the mixture of all cultures, a part of the Mezquital Valley. The Serra, the faces are of defenders of indigenous peoples" (ADRIÁN ZAPOTE, 25 years, 2019 fieldwork).

Erika Vargas and Adrián Zapote expressed the following regarding the girl:

The girl has the dress of the Mezquital Valley, a skirt with embroidery on the skirt with flowers and birds, a blue quexquemtl, this is from Santa Catarina, Acaxochitlán" (ERIKA VARGAS, fieldwork 2019).

The owl, vegetation, *tenangos*, birds and woman of the center representing the following:

The owl is for Canada, for the totem, the Tenango is what represents the Otomí-Tepehua. There are indigenous peoples from various countries. The birds are for you to realize that whoever painted that mural is from the valley of the mezquital. The mountain that represents all people to Mother Earth." (STUDENT ANONYMOUS, 25, 2019 fieldwork).

In this last part of the mural, they agree to soften the theme of the "critical interculturality" approach that emerged in the "third space," eliminating the faces of the Zapatistas but keeping the other faces of the indigenous fighters.

Final remarks

It was found that in the production of the mural "Zi nana maka hai, 5 continents in the same heart", "third spaces" emerge, in which students produce alternative interculturalities to institutional ones, generating "frictions" (TSING, 2005) that feed back into the spaces and allow them to generate skills and recognition of the limits between opposing versions of interculturality. The functional versions of interculturality, which arise from institutions and criticisms, which come from below (WALSH, 2012), from the students' own ethical-political positions (WALSH, 2012). The polarities "university" and "community" thus combine in a

hybridity (BHABHA, 2002) of enrichment of cultural differences and learning with possibilities of conflict and "dialogue of *living*" (ESTEVA, 2019).

Undoubtedly, the third spaces are possibilities of productions of critical interculturalities from below, with ethical-political positions of historically violated groups. In this case, in these third spaces produced by the students, it was possible for critical visions of interculturality to emerge, allowing these experiences to be fundamental to recognize other visions of interculturality beyond the institutional ones.

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