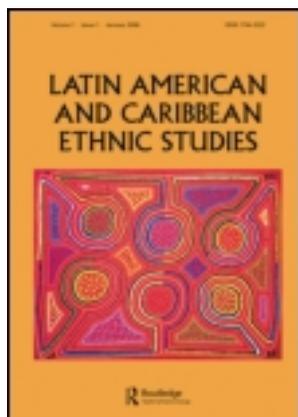


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Publisher: Routledge

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Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rlac20>

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Version of record first published: 09 Jul 2012

To cite this article: Gunther Dietz (2012): Diversity Regimes Beyond Multiculturalism? A Reflexive Ethnography of Intercultural Higher Education in Veracruz, Mexico, *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, 7:2, 173-200

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17442222.2012.686334>

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Diversity Regimes Beyond Multiculturalism? A Reflexive Ethnography of Intercultural Higher Education in Veracruz, Mexico

Gunther Dietz

As part of the Mexican educational system, the subsystem of intercultural higher education seeks to provide a culturally sensitive academic formation for students defined as ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse. In practice, it focuses on students from indigenous areas, who have been historically excluded from formal education. Today's 'intercultural universities' represent a new kind of educational diversity regime. Examining the case of the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural (UVI), this paper shows that these new institutions, while still rooted in traditional indigenista orientations, are beginning to transcend them by targeting diversity in a more complex way that involves strategies to mainstream diversity, recognize difference and counter historically rooted inequalities and asymmetries. This study presents preliminary results of InterSaberes, an ethnographic research project that collects, compares and systematizes the diversity of knowledges and skills being generated in the teaching and non-teaching contexts of the UVI programs. Fieldwork materials are used to analyze how knowledge diversity and diverse ways of knowing are being constructed, managed, intertwined, exchanged and perceived, in the process of 'interculturalizing' higher education.

Keywords: Intercultural education; intercultural university; multiculturalism; diversity management; reflexive ethnography; Veracruz (Mexico)

How are different kinds of diversities included in so-called intercultural higher education? What arrangements of knowledge transfer occur between academia and community when a supposedly culturally pertinent curriculum is developed – one that aims to go beyond the dichotomy of minority ethnic empowerment and majority cultural sensitivity mainstreaming? For almost a decade, the emergence of intercultural higher education as a university subsystem has been a feature of the Mexican educational system. Intercultural higher education aims to provide a culturally sensitive academic formation for students defined and differentiated as ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse. In practice, this new educational offer

focuses on students in indigenous areas, who, historically, have been excluded from formal education and only in recent decades have had access to basic education with sporadic access to secondary education.

The ethnographic research project InterSaberés, whose preliminary results are presented here, started in 2007 when a multidisciplinary team of academics from diverse disciplines, including pedagogy, anthropology, sociology, linguistics and philosophy, came together under the auspices of the Intercultural Studies research unit of the Universidad Veracruzana (UV) in order to collect, compare and systemize the diversity of knowledges and skills being generated in both the teaching and non-teaching contexts of such a new ‘intercultural university’ program, the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural (UVI).¹

In these pilot programs of intercultural higher education, the knowledges [*saberés*], which are both formal and informal, are generated both in urban and rural areas, and are being articulated both by indigenous actors as well as *mestizo* participants. While this kind of knowledge exchange is structured by the academic framework informing curricular and methodological issues within the UVI, it also has a close relationship with extra-curricular actors. As such, a new kind of highly complex and flexible diversity regime is emerging: on the one hand, these new institutions are still rooted in traditional *indigenismo* policies, which are evident through their focus on indigenous regions, languages and ethnicities; but, on the other hand, they are starting to transcend the *indigenismo* legacy as they are targeting diversity in a much more dynamic and complex way (Thies & Raab, 2009). This involves strategies of mainstreaming diversity, of recognizing difference and of countering historically rooted inequalities and asymmetries, as will be illustrated in this paper.

I aim to analyze how knowledge diversity and the diverse ways of knowing are being constructed, managed, intertwined, exchanged and perceived, in a process of mutual enrichment, ever since the introduction of the intercultural university into these regions. To do this, InterSaberés uses participatory and ethnographic approaches to collect data from academic actors, teachers and students. We are furthermore collecting data from community stakeholders, including local civil authorities, agricultural and religious, as well as local knowledge specialists, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The resulting ‘ecology of knowledge’ (De Sousa Santos, 2006), therefore, is a direct result of student, teacher, researcher, community partners and host communities participation in the research process. Accordingly, I will focus in the following on the mutual transfer, the linking and hybridizing of academic knowledge, organizational knowledge and community knowledge, by analyzing and comparing three closely interrelated dimensions: the ‘inter-cultural’ dimension (the dialogue between different cultures and worldviews), the ‘inter-lingual’ dimension (the inter-relationship between linguistic systems that have co-existed for centuries in each of the regions) and the ‘inter-actor’ dimension (the increasing communication between academic actors, communities and social organizations).

As a point of departure, however, and given the pioneering role played by the UVI in the Mexican context, I will briefly sketch the theoretical and conceptual results of this research, which is now also being transferred to analyze other institutional

contexts within the sphere of intercultural higher education. InterSaberés at this stage aims to elucidate the underlying patterns, the ‘grammar’ (Gingrich, 2004) of the emerging networks and institutions that articulate cultural, ethnic, linguistic, gender and generational issues in the context of contemporary higher education. This engagement will contribute further to the definition and concretization of the dialogical potential of the diverse, intertwined and entangled knowledges, which are interrelated through these novel programs, and of possibilities of translating among each of these knowledges.

Multiculturalism and Diversity Regimes in Higher Education

The cultural, linguistic and actor diversity involved in the concrete articulation, production and circulation of hegemonic knowledge, when confronted with other, often subaltern ways of knowing, constitutes an emergent field of study. The focus of these emerging studies is as relevant for intercultural studies as it is for the sociology of knowledge or for cognitive anthropology.² The point of departure for these studies resides in intercultural discourse, which does not merely reflect a *de facto* adaptation of the multiculturalization of these societies. Rather, multiculturalism forms part of a much broader and deeper process of re-defining, re-imagining and ‘re-citizenizing’ the nation-state of European origin and its relations with contemporary society (Koopmans *et al.*, 2005; Modood, 2007).

Appearing originally within countries that define themselves as immigrant countries and that are largely located in North America, Europe and Australasia, multicultural discourse has become the principal ideological basis of intercultural education, understood as a differential approach towards immigrant minority groups in the European context or minority/majority indigenous groups in the Latin American context.³ This paradoxical similarity between opposing approaches shows the need to study the different intercultural, multicultural, bilingual and/or *indigenismo* educational responses using a much wider analytical lens than that offered by pedagogical approaches. The network of normative relations, conceptual and empirical, established between multiculturalism and higher education, requires a contrastive and interdisciplinary analysis (Dietz, 2009b; Pérez Ruiz, 2009).

It is from this perspective that the exploratory study of the UVI is carried out. I aim to anthropologically and pedagogically study the structures and processes constituting the inter-actor, inter-cultural and inter-lingual differentiation and integration of diverse knowledges and skills in a context of increasing global interconnectedness (García Canclini, 2004) and of an equally increasing trans-local and trans-national circulation of skills. To address these issues, it is important to focus on the identity politics that inform the educational and university systems and the actors involved in these supposedly ‘postnational’ societies and states (Habermas, 1998). In Mexico, as in other countries,⁴ higher education has been challenged by an emerging heterogeneity that is not just a consequence of student diversity, but is also related to processes of decentralization that have generated increased competition between academic institutions, leading to the reformulation of academic programs.

Current debates, which still stem largely from the Anglo-Saxon canon, highlight the necessity to turn university systems more multicultural by using affirmative action and positive discrimination mechanisms (Kymlicka, 1995). Programs such as the support program for indigenous students in higher education (ANUIES & Fundación Ford, 2005; Flores-Crespo & Barrón Pastor, 2006; Didou Aupetit, 2008; Didou Aupetit & Remedi Allione, 2009) aim at empowering specific autochthonous ethnic minority groups as well as allochthonous groups in their identity and ethnogenesis processes (Giroux, 1994; McLaren, 1997; Reay *et al.*, 2005). In continental Europe, on the other hand, an urgency to develop intercultural higher education can be perceived – which, rather than engaging with identity politics, seeks to confront the manifest inability of majority groups to cope with the challenges presented by a heterogeneous university population: to deal with the increasing socio-cultural complexity and, to cut a long story short, with diversity as a characteristic of future universities and societies. In this sense, while in the United States and the United Kingdom the tendency is towards a higher education that empowers minority groups, in continental Europe the focus is on the promotion of transversal intercultural competences, for both marginalized minority groups as well as marginalizing majority groups (Dietz, 2007, 2009b). Finally, in Latin America, the co-existence of a sometimes complimentary and sometimes antagonistic empowering and decolonizing approach, on the one hand, and an ‘intercultural education for all’ approach, on the other,⁵ can be observed.

In each of these cases, the roots of both intercultural discourse and practice in multiculturalism are closely linked to new and sometime conflictive social movements. As already extensively detailed for the case of the indigenous movement in Mexico (Oehmichen, 1999; Dietz, 2004), these new social movements, indigenous and non-indigenous, put demands on the state to diversify and interculturalize the educational institutions. However, from the beginning of this institutional programming process, indigenous and *campesino* organizations, as well as supporting NGOs, have generated their own non-academic theorizations (Reyes *et al.*, 1990; Medina Melgarejo, 2003; Díaz Tepepa *et al.*, 2004). As a result, thanks to a threefold analysis – inter-actor, inter-lingual and inter-cultural – InterSaberés explicitly interrelates, for the first time, these heterogeneous sources of knowledge and their divergent organizational, actor and conceptual trajectories.

Converging Diversity, Difference and Inequality Paradigms

As a theoretical departure point, an ‘anthropology of diversity’ is proposed, which is conceived as an anthropological model based on the already classical pairings of ‘culture and identity’ as well as of ‘structure and actor’, in order to analyze contemporary phenomena in educational interculturalization (Dietz, 2007, 2009b). For this purpose, a contrastive and mutually informed definition of culture and identity as well as structure and actor is required to distinguish conceptually and empirically between intercultural phenomena and intra-cultural phenomena. Based on the praxis theory of structuration (Giddens, 1984), I distinguish, on a synchronic level, between habitualized praxis and identity discourse (Bourdieu, 1991); this

permits diachronic deconstruction of intra-group knowledge, articulated between cultural praxis and identity discourse, as a culturally hybridized product, which originates in an ongoing process linked to endogenous intra-group knowledge and skills that are always inter-related, differentiated and hybridized with exogenous, extra-group knowledge (Strauss & Quinn, 1994).

To study these knowledge exchanges, InterSaberés focuses on interculturalism and its discursive transfer (Kaelble & Schriewer, 2003; Mateos Cortés, 2009b, 2011) by exploring the underlying structures of contemporary discourse, as articulated in the processes of generation, diffusion and hybridization of knowledge. To achieve this purpose, it is necessary to distinguish three different, although complementary, conceptual axes – the concepts of inequality, difference and diversity (see figure 1):

- Historically, the inequality paradigm – centered on a vertical analysis of socioeconomic stratification (Marxist theories of class and class conflict) and gender (feminist criticism of patriarchy) – has resulted in compensatory, often assimilationist educational responses. These responses tend to explain inequality with certain deficiencies and handicaps of minorities with regard to the dominant population; it is therefore a universally focused approach that reflects an underlying monolingual and monocultural habitus (Gogolin, 1994).
- The difference paradigm, by contrast, imposed according to the specific identity politics of new social movements, has generated a horizontal analysis of difference in terms of ethnic, cultural, gender, age, generational sexual orientation and varying capabilities (Zarlenga Kerchis & Young, 1995). This has promoted the segregated empowerment of each of the above-mentioned minorities, under a particularistic and multiculturalist focus.
- Finally, the focus on diversity, which arises as much from the criticism of assimilationist monoculturalism as it does from a multiculturalism that

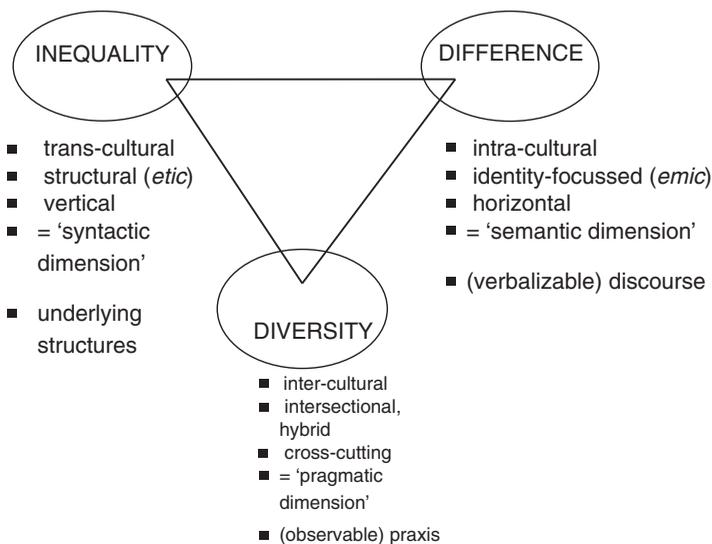


Figure 1. Inequality, difference and diversity in intercultural studies (Dietz, 2009b).

essentializes difference, stems from a characteristically plural, multi-situated, contextual and therefore necessarily hybrid cultural, ethnic, gender and class identity that articulates each individual and collectivity. The corresponding analytical strategy is intercultural – that is, relational, transversal and intersectional – emphasizing the interaction between dimensions of heterogeneous identities.

The National Multicultural Policy Context

Intercultural universities are higher education institutions created in several indigenous regions of Mexico since 2003. Although non-governmental actors have been participating from the very beginning, most of these new universities have been co-sponsored by state governments in close relation to a federal program, promoted by the Department of Education's General Coordination for Intercultural and Bilingual Education (Coordinación General de Educación Intercultural y Bilingüe [CGEIB]).⁶ Its policy of diversifying ethno-cultural profiles and curricular contents of the intercultural universities is not isolated, but coincides with a broader tendency to urge institutions of higher education to become more 'efficient', locally 'adapted' and 'outcome-oriented.' Despite certain criticisms, indigenous leaders frequently claim and celebrate the appearance of these new higher education opportunities as part of a strategy of empowering ethnic actors of indigenous or Afro-descendant origin.

As part of the CGEIB's main objective of providing culturally and linguistically pertinent education for indigenous peoples, the higher education program reacts to two different, still existing gaps in the educational coverage for Mexico's 68 indigenous peoples, who make up approximately 10 percent of the overall Mexican population: the institutional coverage gap, on the one hand, and the interculturality gap, on the other hand (Dietz, 2011). With regard to institutional coverage, Mexico's universities reflect the conventional bias of any western, European-inspired university system: colleges and universities are concentrated in urban, not rural, regions, and they target *mestizo*, not indigenous, students. Only very few agricultural universities, particularly the Universidad Autónoma de Chapingo, and some teacher-training institutions, led by the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, have developed and maintain decentralized campuses that shorten geographical distance for indigenous students.

Apart from these exceptions, Mexican higher education remains highly centralized, urban and focused on conventional, western notions of university careers and study programs. As access to higher education is thus extremely difficult for indigenous students, their enrollment percentage is very low (estimations vary from 1 to 2 percent of all Mexican students). Even those indigenous students who, due to rural–urban migration processes, finally succeed in entering an urban BA program face huge academic difficulties, as they have very frequently evolved through a precarious and badly qualifying elementary and post-elementary school system, which after primary education is limited in many indigenous communities to so-called *telesecundarias* and *telebachilleratos* (TV-based secondary and high schools), in

which a single teacher covers the whole group of students and guides a centralized, television-based distance instruction.

Secondly, the institutional coverage gap is closely linked to an interculturality gap that results from the Mexican policy tradition of *indigenismo*. As part of this long-lasting governmental policy of integrating indigenous peoples into Mexican society, a so-called ‘bilingual indigenous education system’ had been created at the end of the 1970s. This system partly responds to indigenous leaders’ claims for a bilingual and bicultural education, and partly reflects new efforts for indirect hispanization through the use of the indigenous languages. After decades of struggles between federal *indigenismo* institutions and indigenous organizations, this system, currently called ‘intercultural and bilingual education’, provides nursery, primary and increasingly also post-primary education for rural indigenous communities through schools that are parallel to the conventional schools and that complement the national unified and centralized curriculum with some classes in the region’s indigenous language.

The mentioned gap, however, arises as this parallel public school system for indigenous communities does not include pre-university college nor university educational levels. Accordingly, for several years indigenous organizations have been demanding an expansion of the ‘intercultural and bilingual’ approach towards higher education, as until now their students are being forced to either abandon their educational careers or transit towards urban, monocultural and monolingual school and high school alternatives. It is particularly in the political debates following the 1994 public appearance of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional in southern Mexico and the concomitant claims of a new, post-*indigenismo* relationship between the Mexican state and indigenous peoples that the creation of new, culturally and linguistically pertinent institutions of higher education enters the political agenda, as part of broader demands for the recognition of indigenous autonomy on the local and regional levels.

Finally, after the 2000 presidential election, which historically concludes the secular tradition of single-party rule installed in the aftermath of the Mexican Revolution of 1910, the new conservative federal government, while denying the claims for recognizing indigenous autonomy, does concede in 2003 the creation of the first, officially coined ‘intercultural universities.’ Since then, these new higher education institutions, which run their own university network (Red de Universidades Interculturales),⁷ have been created in cooperation between the federal CGEIB agency and the respective state governments in the Mazahua region of central Mexico, in the Chol region of Tabasco, in the multi-ethnic city of San Cristóbal in Chiapas, in the northern Puebla Nahua and Totonaco region, in the Maya region of Yucatán, in the Nahua mountains of Guerrero, and in the Purhépecha region of Lake Pátzcuaro (Schmelkes, 2009; Dietz, 2011).

Veracruz and the Universidad Veracruzana Intercultural Regions

In 2005 the UV – an autonomous, public higher education institution based in Xalapa, the state capital of Veracruz located on the Mexican Gulf coast – decided

to open its own 'Intercultural Program' in close relation to the CGEIB higher education policy. Veracruz is one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse states of Mexico. Throughout this state, both highland and lowland Mesoamerican cultures maintain a huge diversity of community structures, belief systems, languages and economic strategies linked to *milpa* (peasant corn field) agriculture as well as to coffee and sugar plantations. Emigration from these communities to nearby urban centers as well as to central and northern Mexican metropolitan areas and to the United States has been rapidly increasing during the last decade (García Valencia & Romero Redondo, 2010).

The Intercultural Program created inside these regions focuses preferentially on the claims to higher education in and for the indigenous peoples of the state. Their communities are nowadays located in the most economically marginalized and infrastructurally isolated regions of the country (UVI, 2005). In order to attend these populations, and in sharp contrast to the other, above-mentioned intercultural universities promoted by the Mexican federal government, the UVI⁸ was not created as a new university; instead, the UVI emerged from within an established public university. It originated from a 'Multicultural Education Seminar in the State of Veracruz' run by a team consisting mainly of local anthropologists coordinated by Sergio Téllez Galván at the Institute of Research in Education of the UV. They offered continuous learning courses as well as postgraduate courses for professionals in the field of intercultural education and intercultural studies (Téllez *et al.*, 2006).

An academic interest in developing culturally pertinent educational programs was combined with the demands of indigenous organizations and movements for broader and better adapted higher education options in indigenous regions and communities. An agreement was established in 2004 between the UV and the CGEIB of the federal government's Ministry of Education (SEP) to start such an intercultural program from within the university. Since then, the resources for this venture have been provided principally by the general budgets of the Veracruz state government, through federal government funding from the CGEIB and from the university's own budget. In August 2005 this Intercultural Program started by offering two BA degrees in four regional centers: one in Sustainable Regional Development, and the other in Intercultural Management and Education. The first two generations of UVI students entered the university through one of these two degree programs. However, both the community's demands for a greater range of academic courses and the impossibility of generating conventional degree courses in indigenous regions led the UVI staff, composed mainly of anthropologists, educators, agronomists and linguists, to redesign the studies on offer. They opted for just one degree course with a multimodal structure and diverse orientations. Hence, since August 2007 the students who had already started their degree courses were integrated into the new BA Degree in Intercultural Management for Development, which is able to offer a wider range of educational options without reducing the number of regional campus locations where this BA is taught.

Even though Veracruz University already had a decentralized system of five campuses distributed throughout the state, these academic centers were concentrated in urban areas, where conventional degree courses based on western university

models were taught. From the very beginning the new program decided to establish centers in less privileged and in the most marginalized areas of the state. As a colonial or postcolonial legacy, these regions are where a mostly indigenous population lives (Lomnitz Adler, 1995). After carrying out a regional diagnosis that applied a combination of ethnolinguistic and socioeconomic criteria, along with marginalization, social and human development factors (UVI, 2005), four regions were chosen. Within these indigenous communities the new centers of the UVI were established: the Huasteca region based in Ixhuatlán de Madero; the Totonacapan region based in Espinal; the Grandes Montañas region based in Tequila; and the Selvas region based in Huazuntlán. In each of the four regional centers, the UVI hired a regional coordinator, an academic support facilitator, five full-time lecturers and several part-time lecturers.

The central office in Xalapa administers the programs of study and offers continuous training courses for both UVI staff and the wider university community. Apart from rather conventional academic decision-making structures, the UVI seeks to maintain a close relationship to the communities' local mayors, civil, agrarian, and/or religious authorities as well as to representatives of NGOs and civil associations that are active in the respective region. They jointly aim to consult the UVI with regard to its teaching activities and research projects carried out by students and academic staff together with local communities in the regions. Nevertheless, academic decision-making still is strictly centralized in Xalapa, which implies that a real devolution has not taken place until now, mostly due to the university's insistence on holding control of curricular as well as staff-hiring processes.

Experimenting with Transdisciplinary Teaching Methods

As previously mentioned, the BA Degree in Intercultural Management for Development is presently offered in the four regional centers. It comprises an official and formally recognized degree program in eight semesters that responds to an inter-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary, multimodal, flexible curriculum. Students choose 'educational experiences' instead of classical subject courses, which are grouped by area (basic instruction, disciplinary, terminal and free choice courses) and per module (conventional face-to-face classes, virtual or e-learning classes or a combination of both types of teaching styles). Face-to-face classes with the local teaching staff make up the vast majority of teaching lessons at the beginning of the BA program, but these traditional classes are then gradually complemented by more specific courses, which are either taught by 'itinerant' teaching staff from other UVI regions or are offered through virtual teaching and other e-learning modes. Similarly, face-to-face tutoring by the local staff is accompanied by distance-learning tutors, who circulate among the four regions for specific thesis supervision processes.

The educational experiences generate a range of itineraries called 'orientations.' These are not disciplinarily specialized curricula, but are interdisciplinary fields of knowledge that are needed for a professional future as intercultural managers, knowledge-brokers and intercultural translators (see figure 2). Starting from a shared study program, the individual student chooses her or his own itinerary, leading her/

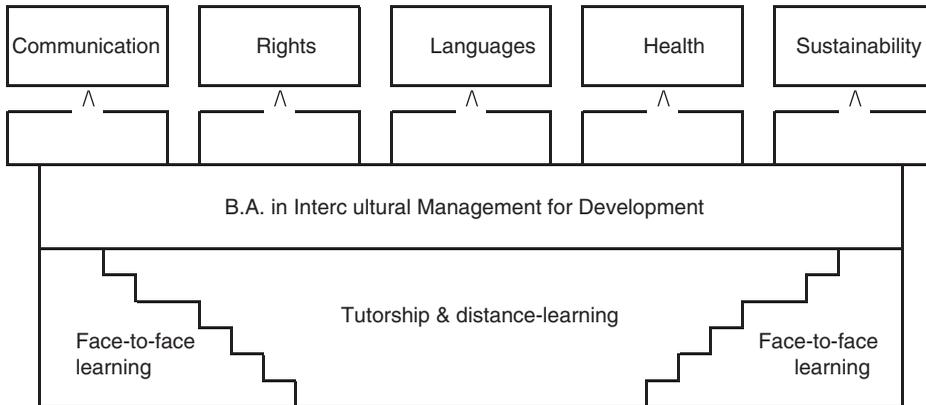


Figure 2. Structure of the Degree in Intercultural Management for Development (UVI, 2007).

him to a particular field of knowledge in which these mediating and translating skills are then applied.

Independently of the orientation the students choose, this BA program is shaped by an early and continuous immersion of students and lecturers in activities carried out inside the host community. The program is based on a cross-cutting methodological axis, so that courses and modules include methodologies of community and regional diagnosis, ethnographic tools, participatory project management and evaluation. From the first semester onwards, students begin to carry out their own research and knowledge transfer activities inside their home communities.

InterSaberes: Towards a Reflexive Ethnography of the UVI Dialogue of Knowledges

Our ethnographic accompaniment of these novel teaching and training processes has allowed the identification of spaces and areas of knowledge that are actively participating in an often claimed 'dialogues of knowledges' (Leff, 2003). In detail, the following domains of knowledge exchanges are being studied:

- (1) On the Huasteca campus, and in close collaboration with the UVI Rights Department, we are analyzing dialogues between the UVI and local and regional actors in the field of legal pluralism, analyzing how students and teachers of the UVI relate the customary law of *usos y costumbres* of the communities of Puyecaco (Nahua), San Pedro Tziltzacuapan (Tepehua) and El Zapote (Otomí) with local authorities and official judges (Bello López, 2009). Students and alumni have been particularly successful as brokers in two directions. On the one hand, they have offered several courses and seminars on human rights issues for local authorities and *jueces de paz* [customarily elected community judges], who through these courses realize the complementary nature of external human rights legislation and their own legal practice. On the other hand, the same students and alumni have been revitalizing and regaining traditional community authorities such as the *huehuetlacatl* [the local Nahua healer-counselor], whose range of conflict management capacities had

been limited by external, non-indigenous health or political authorities. Recently, several communities have recreated these functions as an attempt to re-conquer local autonomy from external institutions.

- (2) In the Totonacapan campus, together with the UVI Health Department, we are focusing on medical and curative knowledges, as practiced in Totonaco as well as *mestizo* communities of Filomeno Mata, Macedonio Alonso y Morgadal; how it is articulated in the activities of UVI intercultural health teaching, and what mediating role it plays in front of the state public health system (Pancardo Escudero, 2008). The local Totonacapan hospital has been hesitantly opening up its institutional practice to include not only Totonaco language interpreters when counseling indigenous patients, but has also asked UVI teachers, students and alumni to offer courses on traditional medicine for physicians and nurses. Despite this success, the western-trained hospital staff still do not fully recognize community health and midwifery specialists as counterparts in their daily healthcare activities. Therefore, the participating UVI researcher and his students focus their broker activities on the internal, intra-community visualization and the external recognition of the importance of traditional local specialists for the health provision of the Totonaco and *mestizo* localities.
- (3) On the Grandes Montañas campus, working in collaboration with the UVI Communications Department, our ethnography centers on the dialogue that the UVI students, teachers and graduates maintain with community actors, such as a migrant returnee organization in the Tehuipango Nahua community, in relation to cultural heritage projects and community empowerment activities (Martínez Canales, 2009). Cultural promotion activities carried out together with UVI students and alumni emphasize the often conflictive relations between school institutions, community authorities, parents' associations and migrant and returnee networks. While migrant remittances are mostly used for single-household economic diversification strategies, supra-household, community-based inversion and capitalization strategies are nearly absent (Martínez Canales, 2010). Therefore, the UVI research team is looking into possibilities of linking and creating synergies between family-driven and community-driven economic and cultural promotion strategies, such as the construction of a community center or the reform and adaptation of the local school facilities.
- (4) Finally, in the Selvas campus the analysis is based on our collaborative work with the UVI Sustainability Department, and is therefore focused on the environmental and agro-ecological knowledge exchange that this department is carrying out together with producer organizations, regional sustainable development advisory councils (COMUDERS) and environmental management units in the Nahua communities of Huazuntlán, Pajapan, and Tatahuicapan as well as in the Popoluca community of Soteapan (Sandoval R., 2008). Inside these externally promoted environmental management units, which have been created by a biodiversity protection scheme, students, alumni and a UVI researcher are identifying *emic* fauna and flora taxonomies and their related local usages, in order to translate them into the official language of environmental service delivery. Thus, local producers can prove their contribution to preservation and sustainable exploitation of endangered species of birds, reptiles, fruits and corn variants.

These four spaces have been chosen because they are intersecting, in the sense that they do not subsume ethnocultural and ethno-scientific knowledge beneath the traditional mono-logicality of the western university. Instead, local identity processes are integrated into preservation, development and cultural revival strategies, as reflected in the BA curriculum. We are studying these knowledge dialogues and exchanges with a hybrid, exploratory, qualitative methodology that combines institutional ethnography, designed for empirical research within institutions, especially educational (Velasco & Díaz de Rada, 1997; Rockwell, 2009), with reflexive ethnography developed for the participative and dialogical study of social movements (Dietz, 2009b, 2009c), and collaborative and co-authored research between academic actors and local communities (Fals Borda, 1986; Leyva *et al.*, 2008).

The dialogical strategy applied here is developed together with UVI researchers, students and alumni who work inside these projects and exchange continuously academic and community-based knowledge. This strategy conceives ethnography and its systematic oscillation between an *emic* and an *etic* – internal, actor-centered versus external, structure-centered – vision of diversity, as a reflexive task that, when functioning from the inside, recovers participant actors' discourses, while at the same time, functioning on the outside, contrasts the corresponding habitualized intra-group praxis with inter-group interactions. Taking into account the hierarchical and asymmetrical institutional context, which is implicit in any academic program related to the indigenous context, these two analytical horizons, which interrelate discourse and practice, actor and inter-actor perspectives, are extended towards a third analytical axis: the underlying institutional structurations that characterize the university itself as well as the participating government institutions and the NGOs. In this way, a tri-dimensional ethnography emerges that combines the following axes of analysis:

- (a) A semantic dimension, focused on intra-academic and non-academic actors who belong to different cultures, ethnicities, genders and generations, whose discourses and knowledges are collected by ethnographic interviews, from an *emic*, intra-cultural and intra-discursive perspective and are interpreted using critical discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1995).
- (b) A pragmatic dimension, focused on modes of interaction (Soenen *et al.*, 1999) of different academic, organizational and community actors, whose exchanges of knowledge are studied principally through participant observations, focal groups and network analysis (Trezzini, 1998; Mateos Cortés, 2009b, 2011), using an *etic* perspective, which is analyzed in terms of their inter-cultural and inter-lingual competencies (Gogolin & Krüger-Potratz, 2006; Dietz, 2009b).
- (c) A syntactic dimension, focused on institutions such as the UVI, the participating NGOs and the community actors, within which are articulated knowledges as well as practices, as part of their inter-exchange and co-management. They are analyzed in an inter-discursive manner, as mutually intersecting *histoires croisées* (Werner & Zimmermann, 2003). Starting with these 'epistemological windows' (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987) made available through field work – that is, the contradictions and divergences that arise from contrasting *emic* and *etic* perspectives – these contradictions are made explicit, exchanged and debated

Semantic Dimension	Pragmatic Dimension	Syntactic Dimension
actor-centred	interaction-centred	institution-centred
identity, ethnicity	culture (intra-culture / inter-culture)	institutional entities (territorialized)
= discourse	= practice	= societal structure
ethnographic interviews	participant observations	intercultural workshops
= <i>emic</i>	= <i>etic</i>	= <i>emic / etic</i> (‘epistemological windows’)

Figure 3. Dimensions of a comparative ethnographic methodology (Dietz, 2009c).

in so-called ‘intercultural workshops’ (Dietz, 2009c), which are being realized for each of the four knowledge areas mentioned above.

The resulting methodological model is graphically summed up in figure 3. Connecting the different inter-cultural, inter-lingual and inter-actor dimensions within this tri-dimensional methodology, the *emic* and *etic* visions of the principal educational actors are contrasted through the use of the mentioned intercultural workshops. In this way we pursue classical objectives of empowerment of (future) indigenous professionals, as well as objectives linked to the mainstreaming of the key competences required for their professional and organizational performances. Accordingly, our main participants and co-researchers are students and teachers-researchers working inside the UVI and recently also alumni already working as intercultural managers outside the UVI. In the following, we briefly characterize the brokerage activities of the UVI students and teaching staff.

The UVI Actors as Hybrid Subjects

Taken together, the five generations of UVI students that have been involved in the BA program in the five different orientations and in the four regional study centers total approximately 600 students, of whom more than one-half are women. Of this

student body, two-thirds are native speakers of an indigenous language and one-third speak only Spanish. The main indigenous languages spoken by students are Náhuatl, Tutunaku (Totonaco), Núnthah+'yi (Popoluca), Diidzaj (Zapoteco), Ñahñü (Otomí), Teenek (Huasteco), Hamasipijni (Tepehua), and Tsa jujmí (Chinanteco).⁹ Classes are normally taught in Spanish, but certain kinds of teaching and project activities are also carried out in the main indigenous language in the region: in Náhuatl (in the Huasteca, Grandes Montañas and Selvas centers), in Totonaco (in the Totonacapan center), in Popoluca (in the Selvas center) and in Otomí (in the Huasteca center).

The indigenous regions of Veracruz are still marked by a striking lack of educational options at high-school level so that students have often been obliged to pursue precarious modes of distant education such as *telesecundarias* and *telebachilleratos*, which are post-primary schools that lack the complete range of teachers and that are therefore run through satellite-television educational programs. For this reason the standard process of choosing students through multiple-choice entrance examinations is not applied in the UVI regional centers. Instead, students must run through a qualitative selection interview and present a personal letter of their motives for pursuing studies at the UVI as well as a letter of recommendation by a traditional, civil or religious authority of their local community. Given the recent nature of this new kind of university, the first two generations of UVI Intercultural Managers for Development just graduated and are starting to work, mostly as project managers, mediators, translators, liaison officers and/or technical assistants in governmental or non-governmental projects. Others work through self-employment in local and regional development initiatives or consultancies.

To achieve a smooth transit from UVI studies to employment, the majority of students have started rather early to carry out intermediary and advisory activities and to design projects while still studying. Almost all of the UVI students are from indigenous regions and would not otherwise have been able to access higher education in urban centers. However, recently an increase in student mobility between regions is perceivable due to the fact that more students who are from other regions, including urban centers, have decided to apply to study at the UVI.

As mentioned above, the BA in Intercultural Management for Development is taught through a mixed format that combines conventional face-to-face classes in small groups with newer kinds of workshop-based classes and intensive community outreach work, which students carry out under the supervision of a lecturer-tutor and in close collaboration with communal authorities, NGOs and civil associations present in the regions. For this reason, the UVI has signed a series of agreements with local actors and regional networks, who get involved as counterparts in the extra-curricular teaching and learning process. Through such early work experiences the students have to compare, contrast and translate diverse types of knowledge: formal and informal, academic and community-based, professional and experiential, generated in both rural and urban contexts by both indigenous and non-indigenous actors.

This continuous exchange of knowledge and methodologies, of academic versus community-rooted kinds of knowledge, is generating new, rather hybrid subjects that are able to oscillate not only between different kinds of knowledge, but also between

rather diverse ways of putting knowledge into daily practice inside and outside their communities of origin. Our project has shown that these emerging, hybrid capacities not only of translating between knowledges, but of creating new cultural and identity strategies go far beyond the expected focus of official interculturalism: students and alumni do not only shift between academic and community knowledge, between non-indigenous and indigenous cultural domains, but creatively incorporate cultural innovations that transcend ethnic divisions and that stem from gender diversity, from generational, subcultural developments as well as from locally unconventional sexual orientations. Accordingly, the diversity profiles the intercultural university is dealing with are no longer reduced to often binary ethnic identities: students often organize their project work along lines of religious adscription (Catholic, Adventist, Pentecostal, etc.) or their belonging to subcultural youth styles (Gothic-styled *darketos*, pop-culture influenced *emos*, etc.), but particularly new gender roles (female students taking over traditionally male professional tasks and *vice versa*) and sexual orientations (the coming out of gay and lesbian students on campus) are prominently emerging inside academic activities and teaching and learning topics.

This diversification also affects the teaching staff. The UVI lecturers and researchers cover a wide range of humanities, social sciences and engineering disciplines and include many young, recently graduated teachers who are just starting postgraduate or PhD studies. These lecturers and tutors are not employed with regard to their ethnic origin, but following criteria of professional experience and considering, above all, their intimate knowledge of and their rootedness inside the region in which their UVI center is located. Accordingly, most UVI lecturers and tutors come from the region in which they work and thus provide their students not only with academic, but also with local and regional knowledge. Other non-academic professionals and/or local experts also participate in the teaching of certain modules or of specific courses that are directly related to their own professional practices. In total, the UVI has a teaching body of approximately 60, including full-time and part-time staff, as well as those in charge of designing and coordinating the BA orientations from the central office in Xalapa.

A substantial change that is currently underway within the UVI is associated with the relationship between teaching, research and community outreach services. Until recently, research and project implementation activities were mainly carried out by students, while lecturers concentrated on teaching and on tutoring projects carried out by their respective students. A university-wide process of 'departmentalization'¹⁰ started inside the UV in recent years in an effort to bridge the traditional gap between university teaching, organized in 'faculties', and research, channeled through 'research institutes.' By creating the new figure of 'departments', the UVI is in the process of transforming its 'orientations', offered as part of the BA program in Intercultural Management for Development, into the future departments of 'Communication', 'Sustainability', 'Languages', 'Law' and 'Health.' Each department is made up of the lecturers in charge of their respective orientation in each of the four regional centers and in the central office in Xalapa, thus forming small units that combine tasks of teaching, research and community outreach. Hence, the lecturers' outreach research activities are closely linked to community demands and to ongoing

student projects. The result is a mutually enforcing and complementary ‘loop’ of circular teaching, research and community outreach activities.

Diversity beyond Multiculturalism?

The recognition of cultural diversity, the development of culturally pertinent educational programs and interculturality as a new form of initiating relations between diverse cultural, linguistic and ethnic groups – these are the anthropological principles that shaped this new kind of university from its very beginnings. Furthermore, the team of mainly anthropologists and educators that designed this program had the explicit general purpose of:

favouring democratic coexistence in Veracruz society, as well as the processes of generating knowledge in the localities of the Intercultural Regions, through the training of professionals and intellectuals committed to the economic and cultural development of community, regional and national territories, whose activities contribute to promoting a process of revaluing and revitalising the native cultures and languages. These will be attained by privileging cultural diversity and the participation of communities under the principles of sustainability of the regions of interest, a sense of belonging in the communities to avoid out-migration and protection of the environment.

(UVI, 2008)

These objectives and their underlying proposals have developed since the program was created in 2005. Originally, the UVI was principally promoted from an anthropological–academic field, when lecturers and researchers from a predominantly European school of ‘Intercultural Studies’ (Gundara, 2001; Aguado Odina, 2003) generated new spaces for research and teaching within the UV (Ávila Pardo & Mateos Cortés, 2008). Strongly influenced by the contemporary anthropologies of ethnicity and of education, the team that promoted this pilot project opted for a European-origin majority mainstreaming strategy of interculturality, not for an ethnic minority-centered focus on multiculturalism and collective group rights (Télez, 2000; Dietz, 2009b). A special emphasis was placed on the development of new, so-called intercultural competences, understood as the students’ future key competences for mediating and translating between different linguistic and cultural traditions – such as interpreters in the Mexican justice system, mediators between traditional healers and the public health system, translators between peasant maize cultivators and agronomical engineers, and so forth – thus equipping them for future interaction in an ever more diverse and complex society.

However, this western-trained team of promoters quickly established close and fruitful relationships with indigenous activists and intellectuals for whom interculturality must be understood as a strategy of ethnic empowerment in contexts of cultural and ethnic differences and as a key tool for reacting against racist discrimination, which evidently persists in the indigenous regions of Mexico and Veracruz. This encounter between urban academics and indigenous activists has deepened and transformed their exchange of knowledge and their intercultural discourses, as has their close collaboration with NGOs stemming from social and/or

environmental movements that are rather strong inside these regions (Mateos Cortés, 2009b, 2011). While the academic participants emphasized from the beginning the need for innovating teaching and learning strategies through constructivist, student-centered pedagogical approaches and by avoiding all-too-encyclopedic teaching practices, the indigenous activists rejected these ‘too postmodern attitudes’ and their inherent methodological individualism; in their view the UVI students have to be trained as bearers of collective ethnic cultures that require group empowerment through the transfer of knowledge from academia to community actors.

The protagonists of the participating environmental NGOs, on the other hand, emphasize the need to initiate more sustainable relationships with the environment. They promote a recovery of local, rural and/or indigenous knowledge that is traditionally related to the management of natural as well as cultural resources which may support indigenous ecosystems facing the inequalities of global power structures. In their view, classroom teaching should be limited to certain core knowledge transmission processes, which then is complemented by the practical, daily learning inside community projects carried out by these NGOs.

Under the political impact of the Zapatista movement and the claimed re-definition of the relationship between the neoliberal nation-state and the country’s indigenous peoples (Dietz, 2004; Kaltmeier, 2009), these three types of actors – the academics involved in the teaching program, the indigenous activists participating in the consultative bodies and the NGOs in which the students carry out their projects – start to mutually fertilize their intercultural discourses and their respective educational proposals, such as those specified in the UVI programs: teachers and students share community development experiences through their NGO participation, indigenous organizations learn from continuous education courses and NGOs enter the university through ‘expert’ teaching and student supervision activities. As a result, more emphasis is placed on processes of negotiation, intermediation and translation of heterogeneous kinds of knowledge and of teaching and learning methods between these diverse groups participating in the UVI – the mentioned academics, professionals, development agents and ‘local experts.’ Thus, three dimensions through which interculturality is conceived emerge from this encounter of different perspectives:

- An explicitly ‘inter-cultural’ dimension, centered on complex expressions and links of cultural and educational practices such as intangible cultural heritage, community-rooted socialization and learning practices as well as locally developed organizational cultures of community self-management and inter-community relations, which respond to different cultural logics, such as the community culture of common Mesoamerican roots (Bonfil Batalla, 1989), threatened by many waves of colonization and globalization, but still in use in the indigenous regions; the organizational culture of the social movements that struggle to defend the regions’ cultural and/or biological diversity (Boege, 2009); and the western academic culture – presently in transition from a rigid, monological, industrial and Fordist paradigm of higher education to a more flexible, dialogic, post-industrial or post-Fordist one (Touraine, 1981), as illustrated in the above-mentioned flexible and modularized UVI educational model.

- An ‘inter-actor’ dimension, which values and profits from the negotiations and mutual transference between diverse forms of knowledge between UV academics participating in the different orientations, providing anthropological, educational, sociological, linguistic, historical, and agro-biological knowledge, generated in the western epistemic canons; indigenous organization activists and NGOs present in the regions, which contribute with professional, contextual and strategic knowledge (Alatorre Frenk, 2009a; Paré, 2009); and local experts and knowledgeable *sabios*, wise men and women who provide collective memoirs (Halbwachs, 1950), and local and contextual knowledge on cultural and biological diversity of the immediate environment (Díaz Tepepa *et al.*, 2004; Schroder, 2006; Iseke-Barnes & Danard, 2007; Medina Melgarejo, 2007; Macfarlane *et al.*, 2008).
- An ‘inter-lingual’ dimension, which – reflecting the great ethno-linguistic diversity that characterizes the indigenous regions of Veracruz – overcomes the conventional bilingual focus of classic *indigenismo* (Hamel *et al.*, 2004; Hornberger, 2009) and profits from non-essentialized but relational and contextual interlingual competences (Benson, 2009; Skutnabb-Kargas *et al.*, 2009) that make the translation between such diverse linguistic and cultural horizons possible, particularly the ‘intimate culture’ (Lomnitz Adler, 1995) of local subaltern, marginalized and/or historically silenced actors and exogenous, ‘inter-cultures.’ This allows for inter-lingual and inter-generational skills (Nauck, 2001) that transcend domain-specific language or languages, generating an interstitial space (Bhabha, 1994) of communication between heterogeneous actors (Muñoz Cruz, 2009). The resulting inter-lingual focus does not aim to provide the complete set of UVI educational programs in various languages, but centers on the development of key communicative and translation skills provided by the student and teacher bodies in each of the regions.

Relating these different dimensions of interculturality and their different academic–anthropological as well as ethno-regional and activist sources, the UVI presently pursues both empowerment objectives of the (future) indigenous professionals, on the one hand, and cross-cutting key competences required for professional and organizational performance, on the other.

A Dialogue of Knowledges? Concluding Comments

This threefold analysis contrasts the generation of regional inter-institutional knowledge in each of the UVI campuses. InterSaberés is thus developing not a canon of knowledges that are dialoguing, but a methodology of how to ethnographically accompany epistemic diversity and how to insert it into educational institutional projects, in such a way that diverse cognitive, linguistic and cultural sources, resources and trajectories generate ‘intersectionality’ (Leiprecht & Lutz, 2005) and genuinely different and new academic spaces.

The knowledge dialogue that is being generated in these spaces still has many limitations. This is the result not so much of the incapacity or unwillingness to dialogue on the part of the actors, but rather of structural obstacles that underpin these types of academic and educational programs. Frequently within the UVI, dialogical practices continue to be determined by what I would like to call

saberes-saberes [knowledge-knowledges]. These ‘knowledge-knowledges’ or knowledge for the sake of knowledge constitute academic and classroom knowledge that is characterized by de-contextualization. For example, often contrastive linguistic activities carried out by UVI students generate interesting taxonomies of plants, animals or other environmentally relevant concepts, but are not related to particular and practical applications. Similarly, in their structure as well as in their content, the community diagnostics elaborated by several student groups are shaped more by the academic requirements of the task given to the students than by the real priorities of the local counterparts themselves.

In contrast, inside the participating communities *saberes-haceres* [knowledge-actions] prevail; these ‘knowledge-actions’, which many UVI students already embody throughout their community projects, are not yet included in the curricular structure of the academic program. Frequently, practitioner knowledge represented by traditional healers and midwives remains outside the classroom, where academic knowledge is taught. The contextual and situational nature of healing practices or of legal counseling cannot be reproduced through the still de-contextualizing nature of the academic classroom teaching. Therefore, often the *saberes-saberes* and the *saberes-haceres* coexist simultaneously inside the student and teaching body, but do not dialogue among each other.

Finally, both types of knowledge are linked to a third kind of knowledge, the *saberes-poderes* [knowledge-powers]. This ‘knowledge-power’ dimension of political involvement and local leadership, which teachers, students and graduates acquire in their communities as the result of their mediating and negotiating capacities with non-local stakeholders, is increasingly important for the regional acceptance of the intercultural university. Community work by students and alumni is only accepted by the local counterparts as legitimate activities if it changes power relations inside the communities and with regard to external agencies. In this sense, the UVI alumni and even the lecturers are recognized as political actors through their networking and claims-making capacities. Several former students and two former lecturers have already been elected as municipal authorities, which confronts them with very expectations of developing alternative, more participatory and dialogical political practices than their often externally driven and outside dependant predecessors.

A ‘doubly reflexive ethnography’ (Dietz, 2009c) as the one sketched above reveals that these knowledges, actions and powers are already present in the professional practices of both teachers, students and alumni; however, there is a need to explicitly intertwine and link them within a nominally intercultural curricular structure (see figure 4). As an innovative pilot project, the UVI has encountered a range of bureaucratic, financial, academic and political problems that prevent it from successfully and entirely developing these diverse channels of intertwining knowledges, actions and powers among their students, teachers and alumni.

The heterogeneity of the participating academic, political and organizational actors has proved quite a challenge when institutional stances must be taken that are both efficient and legitimate for all the parties involved. After a long process of diagnosis and political negotiation on the choice of regions and communities in which to

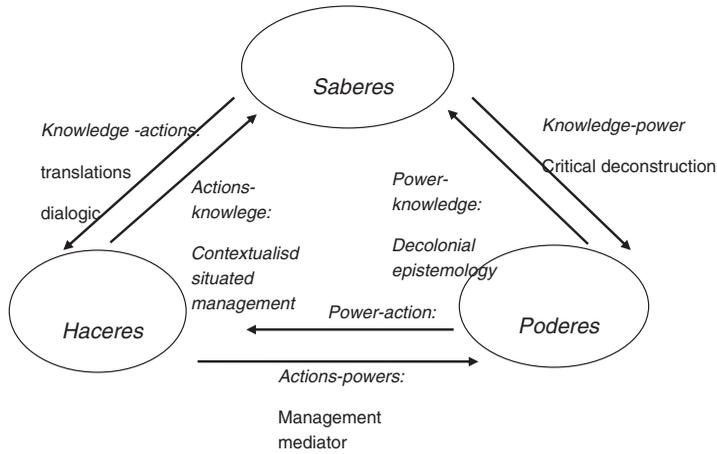


Figure 4. The intertwining of knowledge, action and power.

establish the UVI regional centers, the main political representatives have continued to support the UVI project strongly. Nevertheless, the great cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity in the indigenous regions of Veracruz still poses an important challenge for curricular development and diversification as well as for the implementation of programs relevant to the regional population.

While the UVI is widely supported by the regional societies it serves, within the public university that gave birth to the project, resistance and misunderstanding persist. Due to the heterodox notion of university, of degrees and of curriculum employed by the UVI staff, some more traditional, conventional and disciplinary sectors of academia aim to confine and limit this initiative to old-fashioned paternalist, top-down outreach activities rather than open their own teaching and research activities to such experiences. In their view, indigenous regions should be ‘helped’ by particular outreach activities, but these should not impact on conventional higher education contents or on teaching methods. Therefore, the inclusion of a diversity of actors and a broad range of regional knowledge in the very nucleus of academic degree programs challenges the universalist, rather mono-logical and mono-epistemic character of the classical western university.

The official recognition of the right to a culturally pertinent and sensitive higher education sparks an intense debate, not only on the need to create (or not) new indigenous and/or intercultural universities, but furthermore on the challenge of generating new professional profiles for the alumni of these institutions, who focus on professional activities shaped by intercultural mediation, translation and negotiation. The conventional and disciplinary profiles of professionals educated in western universities have failed to offer opportunities in fields of employment related to the needs of indigenous youngsters, but have instead explicitly or implicitly promoted their out-migration and their assimilation to urban and non-indigenous environments and professions. Hence, the new professional profiles that are just being created and tested through pilot projects such as the UVI must meet a twofold challenge that higher education institutes have not yet faced: the challenge of

developing flexible, interdisciplinary and professional degree programs of a good academic standard that are also locally and regionally relevant, useful and sustainable for both students and their wider communities. In this way, and thanks to their *in situ* implementation of work experiences and student research projects, the first generations of UVI students have gradually become the promoters and shapers of their of their own future professional practices and profiles. Their emerging role as intermediaries in their communities is already outstanding. In this way, a new generation bearing both academic training and community credentials, both indigenous and western knowledge has emerged – a generation that is starting to assume a new role as inter-cultural, inter-lingual and inter-actor brokers and translators who manage, apply and generate knowledge from diverse worlds; worlds that are often asymmetrical and antagonistically shaped, but which are necessarily ever more closely related.

Theoretically, the UVI experience contributes to the anthropological analysis of rather innovative, just-emerging regimes of diversity management in higher education. As sketched in our ethnographic case study, a gradual and uneven process of academic and cognitive decolonization has started. Both the natural sciences and the social sciences, products of a western logocentric binaryism, as well as a universalized western epistemology, have functioned to determine biological diversity and cultural diversity; firstly as a problem and obstacle to be overcome, later as an exploratory resource to be exploited, and more recently as a right, requiring recognition and respect (Muñoz Cruz, 2001). Public universities, which in Latin America have traditionally been defined as centers for the construction and dissemination of western colonial knowledge, are now faced with the challenge of assimilating this revised social, political and legal basis for recognition – they are now faced with the challenge of ‘the coloniality of knowledge’ (Lander, 1993; Quijano, 1993; Walsh, 2003) and are required to establish innovative channels for the diversification of knowledge, relating it to local, ethno-scientific subaltern and alternative ways of knowing.

The above-mentioned examples from medical pluralism, from the negotiation between customary law and national law, from environmental concept diversification as well as from the joint cultural promotion by migrant and non-migrant local community members illustrate that the diversity of diversities encountered and interrelated inside these new educational institutions will not only trigger new cultural and subcultural styles among youngsters and enable new and more complex ‘politics of difference’, but will necessarily deepen the ongoing process of intra-community and intra-regional socioeconomic differentiation; that is, of inequality. A new indigenous *intelligentsia* is starting to substitute the old ‘agents of acculturation’ that had been trained by *indigenismo* institutions closely linked to the nation-state. Now, the new brokers who leave these intercultural universities will be able to converge diverse knowledges and will enact processes of hybridization and networking that go beyond the classical post-revolutionary Mexican nation-state and which will construct diversified, interrelated and globalized ways of knowing (Mato, 2008a; Mignolo, 2003; Walsh, 2003; Escobar, 2004).

As shown throughout this paper, both anthropological core concepts such as culture, identity and interculturality and ethnographic methodology can contribute to the pioneer processes involved in this emerging 'ecology of knowledge' (De Sousa Santos, 2006) by focusing on the 'intercultural construction of knowledge' (García Canclini, 2004) and of the epistemic diversification embedded in these processes. The above-sketches conceptual results aim to develop a meta discursive analysis of these distinctive inter-cultural, inter-lingual and inter-actor networks that exchange, circulate and hybridize knowledge, by identifying underlying patterns and grammar structures of these emerging networks and institutions that enable, as developed: the cohesion and integration of the semantic dimension – the identity discourses and the epistemological ownership of academic actors, associations and community stakeholders; the pragmatic dimension – habitual practices of interaction and circulation of knowledge between these actors; and the syntactic dimension – the institutional frameworks of the UVI and the transformative impact of decentralization, departmentalization and an interdisciplinary approach (Télez *et al.*, 2006; Alatorre Frenk, 2009b; Mendoza Zuany, 2009a; UVI 2009). In my opinion, this will contribute to defining and realizing the potential embedded in mutually intertwined knowledge and ways of knowing, which are linked by new, complex and 'hyper-diverse', although also asymmetrical ways of dialoguing and translating between *saberes*, *haceres* and *poderes*.

Acknowledgements

A preliminary version of this text has been presented and discussed at the panel 'Dialogical Ethnographies in Asymmetrical Interactions: Reflexivity, Commitment and Criticism in the Anthropological Accompaniment of New Educational Actors', at the I Congreso Nacional de Antropología Social y Etnología, held at UAM, Mexico City, in September 2010. The author gratefully acknowledges translation and proofreading support by Sharon Duncan. The author also thankfully acknowledges the decisive comments, criticism and suggestions provided by four *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies* anonymous reviewers.

Notes

- [1] See Dietz (2008); the InterSaberes project is being financed by the Universidad Veracruzana (Dirección General de Investigación, Xalapa), by Programa de Mejoramiento del Profesorado (PROMEP) and by the Ciencia Básica fund of Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACyT), SEP, Mexico City.
- [2] For the case of Europe, see Favell (1998), Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) and Gogolin and Krüger-Potratz (2006); and for Latin America, see López and Küper (2000), Abram (2004), Bertely *et al.* (2008), Dietz *et al.* (2008) and Rockwell and Gomes (2009).
- [3] See Díaz Polanco (2008), Mato (2008b, 2009), Dietz (2009b), Mateos Cortés (2009a) and Mendoza Zuany (2009b) for Intercultural Studies; Stark (1991) and McCarthy (1996) for the Sociology of Knowledge; as well as Strauss and Quinn (1994), D'Andrade (1995) and Shore (1996) for Cognitive Anthropology.
- [4] See specifically for the Mexican context Kent *et al.* (2000), Álvarez Mendiola (2004), Flores Crespo (2005), Casillas Muñoz and Santini Villar (2006), Dietz and Mendoza Zuany (2008) and Schmelkes (2009).

- [5] For details, see López and Küper (2000), Abram (2004), Díaz Tepepa *et al.* (2004), Tubino (2005), Bertely *et al.* (2008), Didou Aupetit and Remedi Allione (2009), Dietz (2009a) and Pérez Ruiz (2009).
- [6] See eib.sep.gob.mx
- [7] See www.redui.org.mx/
- [8] See <http://www.uv.mx/uvi>
- [9] The names of the languages are stated as they are self-denominated and self-ascribed in their own language, whereas the terms in brackets state the language names as externally ascribed denominations by Spanish-language speakers.
- [10] In general terms, these university *departamentalization* efforts are detailed in Universidad Amazónica de Pando (2005) and Zambrano Leal (2006).

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