Retrieving and strengthening traditional knowledge to build the future

Common challenges to Interculturality
INTRODUCTION

This text is part of the project RETRIEVING AND STRENGTHENING TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE TO BUILD THE FUTURE, developed by the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Villarrica Regional Headquarter, in conjunction with EURAC (Institute for Minority Rights of Bolzano) and funded by the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Alto Adige / Südtirol (Italy).

This international cooperation project has been developed in a predominantly rural and culturally diverse area in the province of Cautín of the Ninth Region of Araucania, Chile, between October 2008 and March 2010.

This ‘guide’, written in Spanish, Italian, English and German, not only presents the project activities and implementation modalities, but also highlights one of the modern challenges of multiculturalism in Latin America and Europe, with the aim of contributing to the debate on these important topics and providing readers from the two regions with opportunities for reflection.

We are grateful to the Autonomous Province of Bolzano, which made possible the realization of the mentioned project and this guide, which we hope will be a useful tool for disclosure, for a careful consideration of the wealth and the challenges arising from cultural diversity.
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NINTH REGION OF CHILE, ARAUCANÍA

In order to contextualize the activities undertaken under the project described hereby, we provide background information about the region where the initiative has been developed.

The Ninth Region of Araucanía, located in southern Chile, has an area of 31,858.4 km². Its population reaches 869,535 inhabitants (2002 census), of which 67.63% live in urban areas and 32.36% in rural areas, representing a gradual and sustained increase in urban population. The Region is divided into two provinces: the northern portion Malleco, and Cautín its southernmost portion, being the regional capital city of Temuco.

The main economic activity of this area is agriculture-forestry, which includes traditional crops, livestock and forestry production, which are the prominent figures in the country. Indeed, in recent years forestry has increased strongly in comparison to other economic activities, particularly due to the planting of fast-growing (non-native) exotic species like eucalyptus and pine.
The Ninth Region has a mainly temperate rainy climate, which results in diverse and abundant vegetation, including some of the world’s most unique species. This contributes to the enormous touristic potential in Araucanía, thanks to the beauty of its landscape, exemplified in several National Parks located in the Andes, volcanoes, hot springs, lakes, rivers, native woods and coastal resorts. All this, coupled with an excellent and growing infrastructure, has turned Araucanía into one of the main tourist attractions of Chile.

This region is inhabited by one of the country’s native peoples, the Mapuche, who maintain their own cultural values, language, music, dance, and crafts among other expressions.

The Mapuche people is the largest indigenous group in Chile, comprising around one million people in central and southern Chile. While a significant proportion of the Mapuche population live in large cities, in the Ninth Region small-scale agriculture is still crucial to most inhabitants, including them.
The **Retrieving and strengthening traditional knowledge to build the future** project was framed in the interest of the institutions involved to address training needs of leaders of 12 small-scale organizations, belonging to five districts of the Region of Araucanía, Chile: Curarrehue, Pucón, Villarrica, Pitrufquén, Loncoche and Freire.

This was done through the **Local Leaders in Organizational Development and Project Formulation** training course, which became the centerpiece of the program, reflecting the knowledge exchanged in various sessions through co-financed local implementation projects selected through an internal competition. The course, in turn, synchronized training with three other lines targeted at different actors, that contributed directly or indirectly to the development of the indigenous peoples of the region and the sustainability of the project.
Thus, a second line of training within the project was aimed at municipal officials of the same communes, taking place alongside the **Municipal Officials Training in Support of Rural Organizations for Local Development**. This course was used as a working strategy, with the planning of activities drawing on a program held in conjunction with leaders of local organizations. The basis of this action was the aforementioned group of projects designed by the participants and their organizations, and co-financed with the international project.

Furthermore, a third activity addressed the general public, academic experts, students and activists. On November 4, 2009 an international seminar on **Experiences of Local Entrepreneurship and Development in Intercultural Contexts** was held, with the participation of a wider public, included those attending the two courses previously described.

This meeting was developed to analyze and share experiences of European and Latin American local realities illustrated by the invited experts, as well as evaluating the methodologies used by some local organizations. The main topics discussed were how to plan the organization’s work, how to solve internal conflicts, how to overcome bureaucratic difficulties in the peculiar intercultural context of Araucanía.
The event gathered a total of 60 people, and included the contributions of Dr. Alvaro Bello (PhD in Social Anthropology, UNAM, Mexico, and Director of the School of Anthropology, Catholic University of Temuco), Dr. Elvira Domínguez-Redondo (Professor of the International Law Department, Middlesex University, London, UK), Pablo Gonzalez Jara (Head of the INDAP area of Traiguén), and representatives of local organizations “FUND Foundation” of Villarica (Chile), “Women Producers ‘Lif Somo Peuman” of Filoco (Chile), and “Tourism Network Lnaleufu” of Budi (Chile).
Finally, it is appropriate to point out another line of educational and informative activities developed in parallel with students in the province of Bolzano/Bozen, and intended to strengthen knowledge about indigenous peoples in Latin America. These activities were developed from March to November, 2009.

The meetings took place in primary and secondary schools of Alto Adige/Südtirol in order to inform and share reflections on the issues of cultural diversity and intercultural coexistence, particularly regarding indigenous peoples. Specifically, participatory workshops were conducted with interactive presentations and intercultural games in schools with Italian, German and Ladin (another linguistic minority in Alto Adige / Südtirol) as the mother tongue. Moreover, throughout 2009, there were three meetings in Italy at the European Academy (EURAC) in Bolzano, open to the general public of the province of Alto Adige/Südtirol. In those meetings about 60 people participated, dealing with current issues and challenges of indigenous peoples, particularly the Mapuche people: communication with the ‘outside’ world, organizations and indigenous social movements, conflict over land rights and territory.
The titles of the presentations and speakers were:
- “THE MAPUCHE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND THE ZAPATISTA MOVEMENT: COMMON CHALLENGES?” by Prof. Fernando Burrows, Director of the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (Villarica Regional Headquarters) and Francesco Sardella, Testimony of the Zapatista movement, EURAC (October 23rd 2009).
- “MAPUCHE INDIGENOUS ‘CONFLICT’ AND ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS: A WAY OUT?” Francisco Vera Millaquén Spokesman (Werken) of the Mapuche community Huilliche Pepiukelen of Pargua Calbuco (X Region of Chile), and representative of the Bureau of Labor for the collective rights of the Mapuche people, and Olivia Casagrande, Anthropologist, EURAC (November 30th 2009).

THEORETICAL AND EDUCATIONAL BASIS OF PROJECT

The overall purpose of the project is to train rural indigenous organizations’ and communities’ leaders in developing specific skills required to strengthen their organization, establishing bases for the design and operation of enterprises and projects. The project gave special consideration to the various socio-cultural elements in their areas of origin, and also in promoting a permanent intercultural exchange and dialogue amongst participants. Both the methodology and the content itself were based on the concept of Adult Education and Rural Education as integrated processes and system integrators.
STRUCTURE, METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

The above mentioned Local Leaders Training Course in Organizational and Project Development was directed to 24 local leaders of rural organizations, the vast majority of Mapuche origin in the province of Cautín of Araucanía Region, and engaged in economic activities for subsistence based on traditional agriculture and other emerging and informal enterprises.

This course focused on Mapuche knowledge and cosmos-vision, as well as on the rural logic inherent in the operating processes of grassroots organizations. Moreover, as the backbone and coordinators of the educational process, we discussed the background of local leaders, and how their existing skills and experience could contribute to developing applied skills in the units of the course: Diagnosis and Organizational Management, Minority Rights and International Labour Organization Convention (ILO) No.169 on indigenous peoples’ rights, Local and Cultural Identity, Rural Management, Micro and macro-economics and Project Development.

Similar topics have been addressed also in the second course Municipal Officials Training in Support of Rural Organizations for Local Development.
In terms of final results, 24 people attended the leaders’ course and 12 people attended the municipal officials’ course, with a total of 402 hours certified under the Quality Management System Training UC, based on ISO 9001:2000. The work was conducted over six intensive days in the form of an internship, with a duration of 162 contact hours plus completion of 240 hours of practical fieldwork.

THE LENS OF ADULT EDUCATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The task of developing a program of adult education as a means to contribute to the welfare of the community, presents us with interdisciplinary academic challenges.
The latter is enhanced to the extent that it seeks to provide educational resources that create an educational environment suitable for adults, developed from the simplicity of the participants’ daily life, to the complexity of the potential of reflections to generate new learning.

Thus, the guiding principles of rural development and adult education used by the project include:

1) RURAL DEVELOPMENT AS AN INTEGRATED PROCESS

Integrated rural development, seen as a process characterized by socio-economic, political and cultural traits, involves amongst other things:

- Preservation and creation of cultural values.
- Modification of the structures that encourage marginalization of rural populations, among which the indigenous ones.
- Mobilization and organization of community members.
- Use of resources within the community.
- Joint action of the various institutional sectors operating in rural areas.

2) RURAL EDUCATION AS AN ONGOING PEOPLE-CENTERED PROCESS AND AS A COMPONENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

In this perspective, education must arise from the concrete reality of the individual, set in a given social and historical context and in a multiplicity of dynamic relationships.
According to this position, education is understood and is made real to the extent that it is inserted into a comprehensive project for rural development. Otherwise, if education is isolated, lacking organic connections with other sectors of social organization and with no integrated objectives and actions, it turns out to be nothing but an expense; an activity generating false expectations, frustrations, and an attitude of distrust between individuals and communities, and the educational process.

3) The public participation and consideration of culture; basic elements in a process of sustainable development of Mapuche communities

Every person and every community are the main actors and authors of their development, therefore from this perspective development is not a commodity to be granted or transferred, but rather a inherent process within each person and each community, which can lead to the realization of their full potential.

4) The contribution to the integral development of the communities from the implementation of methodological strategies focused on the role played by the students and their communities

In order for the participants in programs of adult education and rural development to be real agents and managers of development, and to apply strategies and methods of learning they must meet the following processes:
- The person seen as a social being, protagonist of the processes of the society around him.
- The student as an active constructor of his own learning, facilitating the exploration, discovery and autonomous learning.
- Strong interaction between ‘diversified knowledge’, promoting the activation of previous local and ancestral indigenous knowledge.
- Concentration of the tasks on what is meaningful to participants.
- Recognition of different learning styles and personalities.
- Assessment of affective processes in the educational interaction.
- Centralization of cooperative activities.
“Reflections on Interculturality in Europe and Latin America”
One must distinguish between the diverse and multicultural character of societies based on the concept of ‘cultural diversity’, and the intercultural approach. Interculturality is a way of understanding the diversity and difference present in all societies and countries. At the same time it is an ethic that seeks to promote the overcoming of inequalities that arise between cultures in contact.

Unlike other approaches, interculturality establishes relations between hierarchies, and cultural and racial disparities in the society, with power relations and processes of domination. Thus interculturality is not only an attempt to prove the existence of diverse societies, but it rather seeks to explain the inequalities and injustices arising from those differences. Moreover, interculturality is connected to the specific philosophy of the recognition of ‘otherness’. Under the premise of recognition, interculturality seeks to influence the prospects for regulating social relations (legal and regulatory frameworks, political systems, economic organization, etc.). So it is emerging as an ethics of political and social action.
The intercultural approach begins its development in Latin America in the mid-seventies, with the so-called Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) and the development of popular education in social movements. Interculturality has a foundation in the formation processes of indigenous collective action grounded in social transformation processes. So, multiculturalism contributed from the outset in the reconstruction of ethnicity, the visibility of the demands for indigenous rights, and the reformulation of education in contexts of cultural diversity.

However, over time interculturality was bureaucratized. It became more technical, losing its political significance, thus ignoring its liberating and transforming nature. Interculturality thus became more instrumental, and with a low capacity to interpret reality and its necessary transformations. This depletion of interculturality was also associated with the biased use of IBE programs from the state. At the same time, the use of the concept of interculturality became a revamped version of the delegitimized concept of indigenousness. Hence, state reform processes were the great disseminators of interculturality, but a version lacking in political content.

During this period (mid-nineties until recent years) interculturality became confused, and its over-emphasis on culture at the expense of the social spheres, both economic and political, made it a concept that, like multiculturalism and pluriculturalism, failed to account for intercultural conflict and inequality.
Additionally, confusion grew around the areas that interculturality addresses. Thus, and as with multiculturalism, the discourse of the state was confused with the philosophical and political discourse of multiculturalism. At the same time there is confusion between intercultural relations, meaning the concrete practices of the subjects, and the prospects for analysis, political discourses about difference, intercultural public policies, legal analysis and regulatory schemes. Being that each one of these belongs to a specific field, that must be addressed differently.

Lately the intercultural perspective has begun to be rejected by some sectors who see it as a neo-colonialist endeavor, which is only seeking the reorganization of various societies from the interest and perspective of the hegemonic groups. This viewpoint can be summarized in the idea that interculturality is only for the indigenous, without the rest of society being capable of ‘interculturalizing’ themselves.
Nevertheless, multiculturalism has exceeded its own framework of containment and today more than an approach or methodology is, foremost, a way of looking at the reality of our countries, imbued with a structural cultural diversity. One can even say that, given the empirical evidence of the culturally diverse reality of most Latin American countries, interculturality can be understood as a perspective that may help understand, theorise, and organize our reality.
Any attempt to approach the issue of “interculturality in the European context” must start by recognizing the existence of some previous conceptual challenges, although this is not the place to deal with them: 1) on one hand, it would be necessary to delimit the concept of “Europe”, as an entity responding to a specific geographical, political, ideological or economic context; 2) on the other hand, there is no universal definition of what “interculturality” means in an abstract sense, or about what being an intercultural country means.

In any way we might define the European context, the challenges underlying the coexistence with cultural diversity in Europe are basically accompanied by two phenomena: the existence of the so-called ‘national minorities’ and immigration. Even if both imply very similar challenges, the treatment which they received on a European scale was based on very different perspectives.
European public politics dealing with cultural diversity and protection of national minorities in the context of societies held by the decisions of the majority, have a long historic trajectory and are well consolidated. This is reflected in the institutionalised cooperation activities by European regional organizations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the Council of Europe and the European Union. On the other hand, more than a European policy on immigration, there are European policies “against” immigration, mainly illegal immigration. The specific protection of immigrants lacks for a comprehensive, coherent and defined European framework, despite the fact that many of the current challenges on cultural diversity are precisely engendered by the growing migration phenomenon.

**SOME CONCRETE CHALLENGES IN THE EUROPEAN CONTEXT**

In general, the suggested theoretical models to favour harmonious coexistence in the context of cultural diversity (integration, assimilation, multiculturalism, segregation and interculturality), are connected to two opposite schools of thought:

1) The hypothesis that contact among cultures is recommendable and favours society’s and individuals’ enrichment in general. The celebration of diversity as a public and political discourse is the pillar supporting this hypothesis. ‘Interculturality’ is one of the policies implying the benefit of ‘contact’.
2) Paraphrasing the Anglo-Saxon saying: good fences make good neighbours”, the opposite hypothesis outlines the convenience of assimilationist or pro-segregation models. Using some factual data, this school argues that the contact among different cultures favours the outbreak of tensions and undesired conflicts.

The so-called ‘peace lines’ in Northern Ireland are an absurd, but real, model of policies connected to the second hypothesis described above. On one hand, while the Berlin Wall was demolished by the end of the Cold War twenty-years ago; on the other, cement structures separating the Catholic from the Protestant population in Belfast since the ‘70s have not been eliminated yet. The impact is evident. A research conducted in 2002 reached significant conclusions, for example: 68% of youngsters (between 18 and 25 years-old) never had an effective conversation with somebody not belonging to his/her own religious community; 72% of the population of any age rejected the use of health centres located in communities dominated by the other religion; and 62% claimed to have suffered from physical or verbal violence since 1994. However, there are many who still believe that this segregation actually encouraged the peaceful coexistence of the two communities.
The ideals of “equality, fraternity and liberty”, pillars of French republicanism, apparently do not produce reassuring results in reality. The egalitarian ideal works at the expenses of a de facto segregation where minorities and migrants live in economic, social and institutional marginalization, although they actually have the French nationality. After the 2005 uprising which was instigated by the accidental death of two French Muslim adolescents, the ex-minister and current president, Nicolás Sarkozy, made unfortunate declarations. They were an example of the political myopia which attempts to ignore the importance of cultural identity and of the marginalization by simply picturing the uprising as a symbol of bad citizenship.

In certain cases, legal measures contribute towards segregation, despite the best efforts of minority and migrant populations. Germany is one of those countries which, for a long time decided to grant citizenship according to the blood criterion (Ius Sanguinis), an ethnic model of naturalization based on the transmission of citizenship. According to this model, acquiring citizenship of a country becomes a biological heredity rather than a cultural inheritance. Since only those who are born of German parents could acquire German citizenship, many generations of migrants who were born and raised in this country had to live with a passport of another nationality, with which they often did not identify themselves.
Obviously, this resulted in the exclusion from full political participation of a big sector of the population, who had been otherwise integrated into the civil and social life of the country for generations. The citizenship law in Germany introduced in 2000 was a revolutionary change, because it finally recognized Germany as a country of immigration.

Great Britain adopted various policies that clearly aimed to create models which encouraged “contact” among different cultural groups. From a historic perspective, Great Britain received its first wave of migrants coming from Asia and the Caribbean in the ’50s. They mostly settled in the North and in the Northwest of the country where they worked in the steel and coal mines, even though during the following decade many were recruited in the medical sector. The increasing number of migrants and the increasing migration-related tensions were strongly present in the words of the Parliamentarian Enoch Powell in his “Rivers of blood speech” of 1968, an alarmist and inflammatory speech on the consequences of uncontrolled immigration. Similarly, during the 70s, it was common in the British streets to see rent ads, that explicitly mention the essential requirements for potential residents: “No blacks, no dogs, no Irish”.
Tensions between the authorities, particularly the police, and the migrant population culminated with the 1981 Brixton revolts, with a history and a context which strongly resemble the revolts that took place 24 years afterwards in France.

The second generation of immigrants massively penetrated the British education system and improved their social positions. Policies became officially favourable to multiculturalism. According to several surveys, curry, the favourite British food was only recently ousted by Chinese cuisine. However, British multicultural policies and the respect for the cultural identity of the migrant populations produced their own challenges. Arranged, and sometimes forced, marriages are a common practice. Moreover, it has been problematic to face the female genital mutilation issue.

There is a tendency to step backwards and reverse multicultural policies, backtracking to assimilationist and segregationist policies. This can be found throughout Europe, especially with the increasing popularity of the far right with its slogan of controlling the frontiers. In Great Britain, the advance of the BNP Party which obtained two seats in the European Parliament is a very alarming signal. Furthermore, a preoccupation with terrorism, particularly internal terrorism, has exacerbated the already existing problem of Islamophobia.

The failure of European integration or multiculturalist policies on a national level can be seen in the situation of Roma-Sinti populations. In Eastern European countries, particularly in Hungary, but also in Italy and Spain, members of the Roma-Sinti community are categorized, in the most positive judgement, as second-class citizens. With their voice unrecognized in a ‘democratic society’, their only option to overcome this condition is to give up their way of life and their identity.
CONCLUSION

Although the treatment of national minorities has a sound tradition in Europe, policies which attempt to face the challenges related to the growing immigrant population were confined, almost exclusively, to the area of national policies. We had to wait until the end of the ‘90s in order to identify an authentic regional and European debate on interculturality, and this is centred on a specific aspect; the intercultural dialogue, with the similarly specific objective of promoting contact among different cultural groups in order to reduce the existence of prejudices. In general, on a European scale, efforts were mainly directed into specifying the conditions that allowed the initiation of an “intercultural debate”. The prohibition of the veil (‘hijab’) in France and Turkey supported by the European Court on Human Rights, or the severe disturbances that followed the publication of the Danish satirical drawings of Mohammed by the daily journal Jyllands-Posten (subsequently reproduced by other European media), are just two examples of events with high media impact, illustrating the challenges faced by Europe. One of the major European limits is the absence of recognition of its own cultural patrimony connected to a specific religion and, at the same time, to the secularism which impregnates human rights, along with the fact that it tries to protect the right to freedom of religion. Europe’s alleged “neutrality” and openness are, therefore, under scrutiny.
Today we hear discussion of terms such as international cooperation, development cooperation and decentralized cooperation. Whether this occurs between geographically distant states or areas, or whether cooperation means to give a new-born or still unknown project a direction, word and meaning remain the same: to cooperate.

To cooperate derives from the Latin ‘cooperari’ of ‘cum’ (with, together) and of ‘opus’ (work, fatigue, industry) and it literally means to ‘work together’. Cooperation can therefore be found in small everyday gestures, when helping a relative, neighbor or coworker. The aspect uniting these small gestures and some larger projects is the pooling of resources, time or energy for achieving a common goal, however small or large it is.
However, the objective is not what can transform a moment or a history of cooperation into something immensely precious, but rather the way we go about working together.

Like all roads, cooperation may have little obstacles and/or major contingencies, but the ‘exchange’ you have with fellow travelers compensates for all the difficulties. A similar story has been followed through the cooperation between the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Villarrica Regional Headquarter and the Institute on Minority Rights of the European Academy Bolzano (EURAC), and therefore, between the region of Araucanía and the Province of Bolzano, Alto Adige/Südtirol.

These two lands have much in common including mountains and amazing scenery, but also the difficulties posed to inhabitants by living in remote areas, far from the respective capitals. But above all, both regions share a vast cultural richness due to the coexistence of groups with different cultures: in the Araucanía the Mapuche, and Chileans of European descent and mestizos; and groups in Bolzano/Bozen, (descent Austrian-German), Italian, and so-called ‘Ladin’, speakers of a Rhaeto-Romanic language. Both lands also share a common past and present of conflicts and injustices that people must face daily, in different ways and with different resources, but with the common challenge of multi- and intercultural coexistence. It is not always easy to face the challenges arising from coexistence between different cultures, but the rich exchange involved is worth it.
People are, therefore, the key to everything.

Perhaps not given enough attention, is the role each can play in small and large events of life, whereby everyday decisions direct us to cross one street or another, often opposed to each other. Just as in everyday life, in this project people are the ones who have made the true story of this collaborative effort, small and large at once, which aimed to provide information and training in the territory of the province of Cautín and the province of Bolzano/Bozen. The participants of the project activities (the two training courses, the final conference, workshops in schools and events open to the public) have been the real authors, and especially supporters of this cooperative endeavor.

The teams of the two organizing institutions and foundations have put the Project together just as if building a small house, and have cooperated with the common goal of providing activities that are needed, as demonstrated by the results achieved. In addition, the participants have cooperated among themselves and with the facilitators and teachers of activities, reflecting on the issues involved and communicating with different cultures, whether European or Latin American collaborators.

In summary, we can say that this is a story of cooperation, like many others. It has initiated a common path and has been walked jointly with difficulties, but it has also been fun, which should be the spur towards new initiatives of cooperation and of working together.
For this reason, I would like to thank everyone who made possible this cooperation: the Autonomous Province of Bolzano for the funds allocated for this project, to the Office of International Cooperation, and classmates always ready and available to give help and information; colleagues of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Villarrica Regional Headquarter, who have invested much energy in the project, and often have given up their free time to do so; to the colleagues of the Institute for Minority Rights of the European Academy Bolzano (EURAC), especially for the support and dedication to the project activities; to all the rapporteurs of the Conference and meetings open to the public; all participants of activities, again, the true project managers; and finally, to all the people who have been directly or indirectly involved in this project and who have therefore contributed to this story of cooperation.

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