

DDRN Narrative Report

ACTIVITY DETAILS

The international seminar on “Transnational Forms of Cooperation and Intercultural Dialogues: Towards Alternatives to Human Development and Rights” was held in La Paz, Bolivia, between May 11 and 19, 2009.

The seminar was a joint effort between the following institutions: Vice-presidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Cuban Institute of Cultural Research, the School of Global Studies at Gothenburg University, Intercultural Studies at Roskilde University, and the Center for Research in Population and Poverty at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA), La Paz. The first three days of the seminar were held in the main hall of the Vice-presidency (between 100 and 200 participants each day), and the remaining days of the workshops were held at the UMSA (between 8 and 15 participants each day).

ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

The general objective was to consolidate a working group within the DDRN concerned with intercultural exchange, knowledge construction and development. The specific objectives were:

1. To identify a platform of understanding and conceptualization of the problems related to human development.
2. To establish basic categories and methodologies that serve the purposes of achieving a common language between the different knowledges (academic, technological, practical, political, organizational, environmental and cultural) and political practices (i.e. the practices of the state, of NGOs, of social movements and other stakeholders).
3. To engage in collective knowledge construction whose results will be written in two different papers, each regarding the two above-mentioned objectives

PRESENTATIONS

The vast majority of the presentations addressed the problems related to intercultural dialogue in its relationship to transnational cooperation and development efforts. Specifically, the asymmetries in power relations were addressed as well as the power to make the definitions of what development is and what sort of human development is needed. Many speakers – keynotes as well as audiences – expressed strong criticism towards development efforts and north-south cooperation, linking these to a continuum of colonial practices. Several keynotes presented Aymara theoretical elaborations on (aspects of) development, and highlighted the innovative character of the efforts at rebuilding Bolivian society as a multicultural and plurinacional society – including new forms of thinking the state, education, and development.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

A platform of understanding and conceptualization of the problems related to human development must necessarily pass through interculturality. Nevertheless, interculturality continues to be *negative*, i.e. embedded in highly unequal power

relations. Additionally, intercultural relationships are to a great extent determined by the capitalist world economy, which is also a determining factor regarding the possible horizons that human development projects point at. Interculturality itself must be defined as a tool towards decolonization and requires that the parts engaged in intercultural dialogue are willing to put their most dire convictions into question and are prepared to change. Indigenous peoples in Bolivia find intraculturality a first step towards interculturality. This means that a group must know itself well before it can successfully enter into dialogues with other cultures. Finally, the path towards finding common languages must necessarily be linked with ethics, and have clear and consensual answers to the questions of: common languages for whom, why, for what?

In relation to the general objectives of the event, a working group was established and given the following name: “Critical Thought and Decolonizing Practices Collective”. The Collective is working on a paper on intercultural dialogue and alternative modernities. The Collective additionally concluded that it is important to hold events like this in rural areas, and is formulating a proposal for a similar event in May 2010 in the municipality of Omasuyos in cooperation with local authorities, organizations and educational institutions.

Among the issues to be followed up upon are: non-European perspectives on interculturality and development, ethical questions concerning the limits of intercultural dialogue (dialogue with all viewpoints?), specific practical contributions to alternative development efforts stemming from current Bolivian practices.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS WITH PAPERS

- Alejandro Carvajal, Philosopher, Independent researcher, Cochabamba.
- Anders Burman, School of Global Studies, University of Gothenburg.
- Carlos Camacho Nassar. Assessor, Support Program for the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples, Bolivian Government/ Danida.
- David Quispe, Department of Development Studies, Universidad Pública El Alto (UPEA).
- Félix Patzi Paco, General Secretary of the Prefecture of La Paz.
- Fidel Rojas, Center for Research in Population and Poverty at UMSA.
- Freddy Michel. Director for the Anthropology Department at UMSA.
- Gonzalo Gosalvez, Director of the Department of Civil Participation, Vice-presidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.
- Jiovanni Samanmund, Jiovanni Samanmund. Unity of Academy and projects, Vicepresidency of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.
- José Blanes, Director, Bolivian Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, CEBEM.
- Juan Manuel Arbona, Strategic research Program in Bolivia (PIEB).
- Julia Suárez Krabbe, Intercultural Studies, Roskilde University.
- Julieta Paredes, feminist activist, Mujeres Creando.
- Lázaro Israel Rodríguez Oliva, Instituto Cubano de Investigación Cultural.
- Lia Paula Rodrigues, Cultural Encounters, Roskilde University.
- Pilar Uriarte Bálamo, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil.
- Saleh Hijazi, Al Quds Human Rights Clinic, Palestine.
- Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui. Aymara activist and sociologist.
- Torben Halmø Albertsen, History of Ideas, University of Aarhus.