Politics of Interculturality

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Edited by

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INTERCULTURALITY AT STAKE

ANNE LAVANCHY, ANAHY GAJARDO AND FRED DERVIN[1]

In the contemporary public sphere, a plethora of terms—multicultural, intercultural, transcultural—are put forth to describe, explain, resolve or minimise the social and political problems seen as intrinsic to contacts between people and/or groups from "different cultures". Among them, the word 'intercultural' has particularly widespread success and is often viewed as a field of study or a management tactic. Strengthened by its political discursive field, and anchored in the everyday vocabulary of several disciplines and research areas (education, communication, psychology, linguistics, philosophy, sociology, etc.), as well as in professional practice (education, health, social work, communication, business, marketing, management, etc.), it fluctuates between several meanings and levels of understanding that overlap, contradict and complement each other—and sometimes exclude one another. At the junction of knowledge and politics (Ruby, 2008: 1), the 'intercultural' is a type of "chameleon", adapting to various fields of application and conveying, at one and the same time, different and sometimes incompatible notions and practices, save for the fact that all of them invoke the notion of culture and draw attention to what happens when encounters between people take place.

Even when it is considered *a priori* positively, the 'intercultural' has long been questioned in the social sciences and humanities (Loyrette, 1984; Abdallah-Pretceille, 1985a and b, 1999, 2003; Camilleri, 1990; Rey, 1994; Sarangi, 1994). The production of critical works has increased in past years, without necessarily bringing much clarity to the term, and it seems that their influence has not spread beyond a limited circle of researchers who are already convinced of the necessity of questioning the notion (see e.g. Dasen & Perregaux, 2000; Lorcerie, 2002, 2003; Demorgon,

[1] The editors have contributed equally to the writing of this introduction and the editing of the book. This volume has a companion in French entitled "*Anthropologies de l'interculturalité*" (Paris, L'Harmattan, 2011).

2005; Blanchet & Coste, 2010; Carignan et al., 2010). The juxtaposition of the term's many manifestations, its polysemy and ambiguities as well as the vagueness of its interpretation leads us to posit that the 'intercultural' is anthropologically "*bon à penser*", just as is *culture* (Augé, 1988; Clifford, 1992), the "root" word to which it remains inextricably linked. From this perspective, analysis of the multiple discursive and social practices that invoke the 'intercultural' in different fields should reveal the fundamental and contradictory aspects of our relationship with diversity.

Without claiming to address all of the political, social and scientific fields using the word, this chapter, along with the contributions to this volume, aims to question certain practices defined as intercultural while revealing the term's boundaries, tensions and contradictions; to analyse some social processes, discursive methods and actors' practices encompassed by this common terminological field; and, finally, to propose ways to renew its signification and the ways to research it.

Our common approach here is an extension of and an encounter between the reflections we have already made in a wide, multidisciplinary range of subjects—in linguistics, didactics and sociology (Dervin, 2010, 2011; Barbot & Dervin, 2010), education, psychology and anthropology (Gajardo & Leanza, forthcoming), anthropology (Lavanchy & Gajardo, 2008; Gajardo, 2009; Lavanchy, 2011) and gender studies (Lavanchy, 2009). We want this *Politics of interculturality* to be many-sided, to transcend the boundaries separating disciplines in order to integrate different perspectives (van Leeuwen, 2005) and to take as a starting point the analysis of those multifaceted, shifting and complex processes described as intercultural. In the wake of van Leeuwen (ibid.), we consider that this common problematic makes the intercultural an object that sparks serious reflection from different points of view and from various methodological standpoints. Taking this as a starting point, our approach was to unite authors around their analyses of the 'intercultural'. Aimed at researchers from various disciplines, our work is a plea for serious analysis of the 'intercultural' as an object of reflection, for consideration of its uses, its instrumentalisations, its *a priori* meanings and the representations of the social world that it conveys. In this respect, we hope that it will also serve as a reference work for students and beginning researchers.

The Emergence and Interpretation of a Plurivocal Term

Two questions arise immediately when clarifying when and how the 'intercultural' is invoked. The first question involves the emergence of the

term: where does it come from? How, when and in what context(s) did it appear? The second question concerns its contours: how different is it from other, similar terms such as “multicultural”, “transcultural”, “pluricultural”? Is it even relevant to distinguish these terms from one another? We would like to explore these two questions not to provide a final answer, but to suggest what makes it a shifting, indeterminate element, and to pinpoint the obstacles that arise when one seeks to characterise it.

A Multifaceted Genesis

Retracing the history of the fields of research called ‘intercultural’ proves no easy task, as the term seems to have been born and reinvented on more than one occasion. The ‘intercultural’ has always been at the crossroads of political and analytical agendas, of projects both scientific and political (in both the narrow and the broad sense of the word) (Dasen, 2000). Present in the vocabulary of the social sciences, the ‘intercultural’ characterises several research currents and is addressed in fields such as “cross-cultural communication”, “intercultural education” or “cross-cultural psychology”. Several researchers have tried to describe the term by categorising related scientific approaches: Abdallah-Pretceille (1985b), Dasen (1995; 2000) and Ogay (2001) in the field of education; Berry & al. (1997), Berry, Poortinga & al. (2002), Guerraoui & Troadec (2000) in psychology; Dahl et al. (2007) in sociology and Dervin (2010), Humphrey (2007) and Piller (2011) in applied linguistics and language education.

In the field of Intercultural Communication, the term’s genesis can be traced broadly by first referring to the work of the American anthropologist Edward T. Hall, who was commissioned by the U.S. government to train diplomats after World War II. His publications *The Silent Language* (1959) and *The Hidden Dimension* (1966) defined him as the “father” of intercultural communication in the United States and elsewhere (Ogay, 2001; Rogers et al., 2002). The term was then reappropriated within the European sociopolitical context in the 1970s through the work of the Council of Europe. During that decade, it took root in the field of education, a key domain for application that remains predominant today for most of the contexts where it is used. Here, the ‘intercultural’ is closely associated with migration management, then defined in European countries both as a challenge of the modern world shaped by decolonisation and independence, and as a problematic issue. The emergence of new definitions of otherness, designated as potential vehicles of social problems, prompted measures to channel them and to neutralise the supposed danger that they embodied. This concern explains why the term intercultural finds

particularly wide application in the area of education: developing special curricula for the children of these migrants or adapting existing ones is meant to promote their integration, and, by extension, that of their parents.

But this version of the emergence of the term, like all histories, does not only consist of historical facts. Notably, it neglects previous uses of the term. Thus, in her diachronic work on the role of mobility in language teacher training in Germany, Ehrenreich (2008) shows how providing a so-called intercultural education has been a constant endeavour since the 19th century, confirming the central role that education holds as a field of application *par excellence* for all that is intercultural.

Tracing the history and emergence of the term becomes even more complex when one moves beyond Europe and the United States. During their nation building processes, all of the Latin American countries were confronted with the question of what to do with those who had long been called "Indians". This part of the history of the term 'intercultural' takes us to the 1940s, when, under the banner of nativism, Latin American nation-states launched campaigns aimed at turning all of the residents of their national territories into identical and homogeneous citizens (Favre, 1996; Hale, 1997). In this context, the identification of an *internal* otherness determined the conditions under which the term emerged and continues to shape a significant aspect of the use of the intercultural, *interculturalidad*, as a political and analytical venture.

The goal of outlining these different geneses is not to determine which might be the "true one" but to draw attention to the fact that multiple levels, both political and scientific, persist in the different uses of the term intercultural. The border between these fields and their respective agendas should be considered a space at times eminently porous, at other times impermeable. Therefore, the exercise of tidying up and systematising that we propose in this work does not aim to definitely outline these fields or to place them in conflict with one another, but to highlight the political and epistemological stakes at hand.

A Profusion of Prefixes

The second question that immediately arises when focusing on the 'intercultural' addresses its contours. As mentioned, the term shares borders with other related terms such as "multicultural" or "transcultural". Even if all of them refer to the same root notion, culture, their respective boundaries are not always clearly defined, despite researchers' efforts to delineate them.

Depending on the sociopolitical and historical context, one word or the

other has been favoured to describe encounters perceived as complex, multifaceted or problematic. And so terms have flourished: intercultural, *interculturel* or *interculturalidad* in several European and Latin American countries, the words *multikulti* / *monikulttuurisuus* in Germany and Finland and multiculturalism in some "Anglo-Saxon" countries and at times in former colonies (Schneiderman, 2009). The genesis of these prefixes illustrates a shrewd and efficient tactic based on the need to escape the reproach of culturalism, essentialism and reification, as well as to keep pace with new methodological approaches (Giordano, 2003: xiv). But instead of making the terminology clearer, the use of these many composites in research circles has resulted in confusion and turmoil, has led to communication difficulties among researchers and created the illusion that these different terms actually evoke different realities. To make it clear: we hold that these variations on the root notion of culture are the products of various ideological and political agendas, some of which converge under different terms, while others diverge. Their differences or similarities do not express facts but reflect various views on diversity and varying definitions of otherness. Therefore, all of these terms invoke perceptions of social reality, together with the ideologies and the *a priori* perceptions that underlie them, but do not constitute descriptions of the social realities themselves. Moreover, debates about the merits of one of these words to the detriment of the others tend to overshadow the fact that all of them invoke the same basic assumption, that is, that different cultures exist. Encounters between them are then immediately qualified as problematic—or unnatural at the very least—as cultures are seen as corresponding to distinct geographical spaces. The attention paid to the differences between these terms obscures the fact that they convey a similar perspective on the world, on human societies and on the way they are supposed to function.

The prefix *inter-* points to the idea that cultures are separated from one another, but available to be linked by messengers, 'intercultural' translators and facilitators such as professional mediators, for example, whose function it would be to bridge or connect separated lands. The way these messengers and their competences are represented depends not only on the comprehension of the notion of culture but also on the way the cultures, and the persons supposed to bear them, are conceived.

The multiple versions of the emergence and interpretation of the term 'intercultural' thus inform the representations of the social realities that each of them convey. Their common ground is the opposition between "them" and "us", pointing to one or several types of otherness as a given, a matter of fact, and not as the result of multifaceted othering processes.

Secondly, most of them unquestioningly presume that it is necessary to identify the political instruments that resolve those problems that supposedly arise intrinsically whenever "they" and "we" coexist in the same space. This preoccupation with "the others" places the inter*cultural* at that point where research, normativity and action intersect. Othering processes that underlie any use of the term 'intercultural' rely on complex mechanisms of social categorisation. Studying these mechanisms and clearing up the vagueness that surrounds the uses of the word is thus all the more crucial because its levels of interpretation and the multiplicity of its fields' application are shifting, fluid and shapeless.

The Politics of Otherness

For analytical purposes, it is useful to distinguish between two categories that can both be described as political.

The first category includes the different political policies presented as intercultural. What representations of an ideal society do they convey? Which social and political purposes do they aim at? When answering these questions, it is necessary to make explicit different definitions of a harmonious society and the place that notions of sameness, otherness and cohesion occupy within them.

The second category includes the politics of the 'intercultural', taking into consideration the "hidden agendas" that underlie these political intentions. Here, the focal points are the implicit representations used in order to legitimise the discourses validating these so-called intercultural policies, the way they map and trace others, the definitions of the social tensions that they claim to resolve and the way they shape social ruptures (Bacchi, 1999; Cefai, 1996).

As we have pointed out, the emergence of the 'intercultural', both as a term and a field of action, has always taken place in specific political and historical contexts. Clarifying the conditions in which the term emerged shows the importance of othering processes in intercultural policies, and also underlies the relativity of the "otherness" that they mobilise as a category. The 'intercultural' can function as an argumentative resource to point out the need to "manage migratory flows" and set up policies that aim at the *acculturation*, *assimilation* and/or *integration* of people defined as *foreign* to the national territory. Other uses refer to *internal* or native types of otherness, conveying meanings of strangeness and alien-ness (Ahmed 2000)—as in Latin America, for example. Further examples add nuances to the heuristic distinction between external and internal otherness, insofar as these two categories might coexist as recipients of

intercultural policies, as is the case in Finland, where intercultural programmes are also aimed at Saami minorities (defined as internal minorities) and at Roma people (perceived as migrants of foreign origin) at the same time.

The presence of one unique term, *intercultural*, to capture all of these different conceptualisations leads one to think that the word might be univocal, and its political stakes similar in all contexts. However, this is not the case. Integrating or assimilating migrants is not part of the same national and societal project as creating a national society that offers similar opportunities to all of its citizens. It would be interesting to see research focusing explicitly on these two types of policies in order to understand their similarities and differences—and either supporting the distinction between them or dismantling the need for one.

But the 'intercultural' also has its own hidden agenda, framing the second level of its political dimension. Whether external and/or internal, otherness stems from social constructions that inject the "intercultural model" into asymmetrical social relations (Abdallah-Pretceille, 1986; Gajardo, 2007; Holliday, 2010). This raises the question about which stakes are associated with the "power to name" and the production of knowledge (Horwitz, 1993; Poutignat & Streiff-Fenart, 1995; Briggs, 1996): who designates the actors involved in 'intercultural' encounters? According to which criteria and with which intentions? These questions lead us to examine the policies underlying so-called intercultural programmes, the depictions they both take inspiration from and duplicate—in short, the *legitimizing tools* they mobilise.

Described as an encounter with "others" (or a certain kind of other), the 'intercultural' explicitly or implicitly reduces the other to this single element—the "cultural"—while minimising or erasing characteristics of the social identities of the interlocutors, such as gender, age, personal life trajectories and other elements that can make all the difference—or their commonality. Thus, designating certain situations as 'intercultural' supposes positioning oneself as an implicit, normative agent.

This process of simplification and reduction is striking with respect to indigenousness in Latin American countries: most of their intercultural policies are aimed *at* the native or the indigenous as "others", and originate *from* the elite as symbolic, economic or political places of normalcy (Gajardo et al., 2008), giving the *interculturalidad* the function of a political tool. Such practices reflect the structures of theses societies reinforcing the distinction between, on the one hand, groups described as

"white" or "*mestizos*"[2], and, on the other hand, groups defined as descendants and heirs of the pre-Colombian populations whose presence dates back to before the arrival of Spanish and Portuguese. Generally considered as "the last bearers of an almost extinguished culture", as remains of an exotic past, "indigenous" people are put in the awkward position of having to struggle constantly against "spectres of inauthenticity" (Jolly, 1992). Their difference is indeed recognised, but in a way that embeds them in contradictory constraints, as this is a highly normed "difference" codified through legislative channels (Schulte Tenckhoff, 1997; Gajardo, 2009). Heirs to perceptions of the nation as a hegemonic space, following the revolutionary ideal of "one people, one territory, one language", intercultural policies contribute to confining natives to a different space and time that is always out of sync with those, unnamed, associated with dominant society (Lavanchy & Gajardo, 2008).

Intercultural policies implemented in the context of the *external* other, such as those in European countries, do not avoid the question of power relations or the stakes that underlie strategies of labelling and defining. Even if it is not made clear right away, not everyone of foreign nationality is labelled in a same way: there are subtle categorisations of their "degrees of difference" that define their degree of foreignness and sameness, which also reflect the perceived necessity of "integration" and the judgments that accompany this. A "well integrated" person is one who has become "like us"—and thus, implicitly, will never become *us* (for recent critical work on the concepts of integration and acculturation, cf. Bhatia, 2007). In countries such as France, Italy or Switzerland, the perceived need for and the implementation of specific policies is a function of subjective othering narratives, whatever the value accorded to the difference: a menace for national values and national security for advocates from the conservative Right and for xenophobes, a vector of "cultural" enrichment for parties on the Left.

Culturalisation as an Othering Process

In the wake of reflection on the notion of culture in the social sciences, notably in the work of Abdallah-Pretceille (1986), Baumann (1998), Bhabha (1994), Cuche (2010) and Wikan (2002), it is worth tracing the critical literature focused on the term "culture", a term to which the 'intercultural' is etymologically and epistemologically linked. Various

[2] With the exception of Bolivia, which, since the election of Evo Morales as president of the country, is a particular case in this respect.

disciplines exploring the intercultural have ended up rejecting solid and unmoving descriptions of cultures as disembodied entities, existing unaffected by any changes or the positioning of social actors. Supported by recognition of what Clifford, Marcus and Fischer called the "crisis of representation" (Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986), this rejection has been conveyed various ways, but generally rigid and essentialist views of culture (Philips, 2007) or of identity are called into question in work focusing on the 'intercultural'. And yet, the idea that cultures "exist" endures. What lies behind this statement, apparently so banal? What are the representations underlying it, their stakes and their consequences?

Affirming the *existence* of different cultures generally functions as a postulate that cultures might "naturally" form distinct entities, without regard to any cognitive or social action. This production of difference rests upon some elements that appear to be self-evident proof of the existence of different cultures, and make these "cultural" boundaries visible. These include language[3], ways of dressing, body markings, nationality and religion. Cultural territories are supposedly mutually exclusive and homogeneous, delineated by borders that make them appear as recognisable and measurable physical and geographic spaces. The defining factor of this process of territorialisation (Gupta & Ferguson, 1992) is that it is based on a perception of geographic allocation similar to the geopolitical one that dominates distinctions between national territories.

The territorialisation of cultures has two direct consequences on those individuals who are *culturalised.* Firstly, assigning a culture to a given, known and recognised territory contributes to building up the legitimacy of these social actors. As a result, the connection between territory and culture risks being instrumentalised to delegitimise those who do not occupy the space that is said "naturally" to correspond to them. As an example, the "traditional territory" of the Mapuche, a native people of Chile, is said to extend over four administrative regions south of the Bío Bío River. However, more than 60% of the people identifying as Mapuche, and officially and socially recognised as such, live around 520 km north of Bío Bío, in Santiago, the capital of Chile (Lavanchy, 2009). The fact that they do not live on "ancestral" land has consequences for the political demands and identity claims of those Mapuche qualified as urban[4], who struggle to be recognised as legitimate—an obstacle that other

[3] For a critical study of the role of the "mother tongue" and dress in othering processes, see e.g. Lavanchy, 2009.

[4] Adding a qualifier highlights the fact that these Mapuche do not quite match the ideal embodied in the ethnonym.

native peoples not living in a rural context also face (Gagné, 2009). In this context, the territorialisation of culture functions as a barometer that enables native legitimacy and strengthens claims that they make on their national societies, but it also contributes to the exclusion of those who possess potentially effective strategic and political knowledge (urban or cosmopolitan natives) from the social category of "authentic" indigenous (La Peña, 2005: 729).

Secondly, this territorialised view of culture functions as a way to evaluate the supposed distance or proximity between two cultures, or, conversely, between two persons seen as representing different cultures. It therefore keeps alive the illusion of cultures' commensurability: in general, people are defined as "remote" in relation to their nationality, which links them to a geographically more or less distant country. However, cultural distance and proximity are not always isomorphic with geographic scale: they may also be evaluated by invoking other criteria than the relative positions of the countries on the map. Thus, the criterion of religion plays a central role in differentiating people in Europe: this is expressed in the idea that Muslims, and even those that are citizens or come from geographically close countries, can be defined as "more different" than migrants from, for example, Latin America, who are assumed to be Catholic. The criteria chosen to describe proximity and distance, variable depending on the historical and sociopolitical context, create a *geography of cultural difference* that only partially overlaps with representations of distance in kilometres. These processes of linking a culture to a territory thus contribute to the idea that cultural differences are tangible and real givens that exist in absolute terms and outside of any cognitive system.

Culture and its Avatars in Research

It is easy to confuse the existence of cultures with the existence of the concrete consequences of "culturalisation" of others. This is why it is important to stay alert, to clarify the terms we use in our research and the meanings they have, and to distinguish their explicative or descriptive reach, particularly by specifying who is using the term in which context (Abdallah-Pretceille, 1985b). Avoiding resorting to the term "culture" does not guarantee anti-deterministic and anti-essentialist explanations—interpretive pitfalls for researchers in the social sciences and humanities. Like Fassin & Fassin (2009 [2006]), who show how racism can exist without "race", we can argue that culturalism, and the deterministic and essentialist representations that accompany it, exist separately from any explicit use of the notion of culture. They arise whenever a limited set of

differences are defined in context as being more meaningful and thus more effective than any others, and when they are naturalised, reified and radicalised (Fassin, 2009 [2006]: 40; cf. also Gilroy, 2001). They operate through reductionism because they favour the "cultural" explanation at the expense of other levels of analysis and note interactions in a mono-causal way. In research, such undertakings have resulted in "cultural grammars" (Abdallah-Pretceille, 1985b) whose aim is to avoid the misunderstandings arising from "bad" communication and to thus ensure smooth social interactions.

Defined in this way, culturalist tendencies can also hide behind other terms and be conveyed through other semantic fields than that of culture—the most common may be race, group and community[5] in English, and *ethnie*[6], *identité* (or "*identité collective*") and *communauté* (or "*communauté religieuse*") in French. These avatars serve as smoke screens (Affergan, 1987) conveying implicitly culturalist explanations.

Certain constructivist views, having replaced openly culturalist theories, are nonetheless as problematic as the latter when they position individuals as free of all influences and capable of choosing their identifications—this is precisely what "soft" postmodern relativism does. Others, wishing to avoid cultural determinism, assert that all individuals are multifaceted in their identities and belongings, but end up reducing this to two or three ethnic, linguistic, geographic (East/West), religious, etc. spheres (cf. Dervin, 2010). Even if these interpretations seem to have moved away from pure culturalism, they move back to it again in positing that cultures "naturally" occupy discontinuous spaces, and that belonging to one or the other of these spaces can explain behaviour. Cultural belongings continue to be understood as mutually exclusive, generating different or even incompatible behaviours.

Renewing the Field of Interculturality?

What can be made of interculturality beyond the critical picture that we have just sketched? Since we posit that the term deserves reflection, how can we renew questioning of its scope and effects? What can help us escape these dead ends? We propose to follow a twofold path to answer these questions. On the one hand, we take up an epistemological proposition that distinguishes the 'intercultural' from interculturality; on

[5] See the work of Amit & Rapport (2002) on this topic.

[6] For critical reflections about ethnicity, see, in particular, the classic work of M'Bokolo and Amselle (1999) as well as Bhabha's (1990).

the other hand, we deepen the methodological implications underlying the critical points we have raised.

From the 'Intercultural' to Interculturality

In politics as in research, the 'intercultural' and interculturality are routinely used as synonyms. Nevertheless, it is worth focusing on the relationship that connects the two terms in order to reveal not only how they overlap, but also the spaces unique to each of them.

First of all, we note that their status differs. The adjective 'intercultural' is generally used to qualify relations such as those described above, that is, based on the idea of an encounter with otherness or a meeting of different cultures, themselves considered islands or distinct entities with clearly defined borders. By contrast, inspired by Abdallah-Pretceille's suggestion concerning the use of the term *culturality* instead of *culture* (1985b), interculturality might allow us to underline the processual dimension of their encounters. We thus address encounters between multifaceted individuals in relation to historicity, intersubjectivity and interactional context.

This view of interculturality connects with what researchers focusing on the 'intercultural', such as Holliday in England, Nynäs and Illman in Finland, Jack in Australia or Abdallah-Pretceille in France have been proposing since the beginning of the 2000s. A large part of the ideas proposed here are not exclusive to research on interculturality, as they dovetail with many points raised by disciplines as diverse as social dialogical psychology (Gillespie, 2006), comprehensive sociology (Wimmer, 2005), linguistic discourse analysis (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2009) or critical race studies (Gunaratnam, 2003).

It is not a given that the framework of reflection on interculturality we propose here will resonate in political circles; after all, it does not meet their expectations. Considerations of the dynamic dimensions of identities, cultures and belonging struggle to find an audience as broad as that of other, more simplistic and reductive interpretations that give the illusion of providing an *ad hoc* user's guide to social problems. However, for research in the social sciences, it at least has the merit of providing a safeguard against the instrumentalisation of certain notions by revealing how certain social realities are interpreted as social problems (Cefai, 1996). As we understand it, research is based on the necessity to examine the premises of these supposed problems and explore ways to define them before offering answers.

Of course we are aware that despite our warnings, the two terms,

intercultural and interculturality, risk continuing to be used as synonyms. The presence of the same root notion, culture, the confusion between the widespread use of the term and the difficulty in apprehending it as a dynamic process makes clarification a challenge. Another possibility for working against the term's instrumentalisation would be to participate in dialogue and discussion between different actors involved in the intercultural field, particularly public policy representatives, NGOs, social educators and academics, communication specialists, etc. Even if the impact of such exchanges remains limited (Boswell, 2009), they are not entirely useless.

Methodological Issues

In addition to the difficulties related to bringing different actors in the intercultural field into dialogue (and the need to do so), research that aims at renewing the intercultural and proposing interculturality entails particular methodological challenges.

Even though he does not specifically address research on the 'intercultural' (he does not use the term), the anthropologist Bensa formulates a number of propositions that could be of interest to those working on interculturality (2006; 2010; cf. also Bensa & Fassin, 2008). One of the basic principles of his anthropology "on a human scale" (ibid.) is to "free oneself from the absurd idea that actors are full and complete participants in their own world without examining their confusion, their questioning, their relative distance from what they live" (see also Gunaratnam, 2003). These dynamics of identity can be conveyed through the notion of articulation dear to Clifford (2001), who uses it to show the pointlessness of critical work that pits *etic* deconstructions against *emic* perceptions constructed as certainties. Thus, the deconstruction of the 'intercultural', and, based on this, of the notion of culture that we indulge in, does not correspond solely to a purely analytical, scholarly vision; rather, it should be a reflection on its social uses, which are circumstantial, contextualised and historicised.

These thoughts lead us to consider more closely the type of questions we need to formulate in order to study interculturality. They underline the importance of drawing our attention not to rules, structures or explanations but to exceptions, instabilities and misappropriations (Abdallah-Pretceille, 1986). By integrating the processes and strategies of stabilisation, as well as their consequences in terms of flaws (e.g. of identity), instances of cultural, religious or ethnic solidification and "closure" take on another dimension. Far from forming (and informing about) a hypothetical,

exclusive and absolute truth, they begin to reveal what makes up the basis of social and interpersonal interactions: movement, change, unstable co-construction, renewed again and again, with their modifications and articulations.

Processes thus become the focal point of research, which in turn immediately allows for integration of the idea that it is impossible to exhaust results and interpretations. Related to this, Bensa (2010: 63) examines the way questions are asked, arguing that it is not the same thing to enquire about the rules of marriage as to ask a father about how *he* married *his* daughter last year. With the second question there arise "a large number of circumstantial considerations that summon a number of actors and factors to the social scene (political or religious authorities, attractiveness of the potential spouses, clan histories, etc.) so that 'parental logic' alone inevitably gets sidelined". The multiple ways individuals construct social relations and meanings cannot reduce them to mere "representatives" of a given culture. The interlocutors in the spotlight in our research are full-fledged agents who may make conscious and considered choices, and not culturalised objects supposedly controlled by their cultural identities. This, however, does not prevent us from noting the presence and the force of unequal social relations: we do not assert that they are completely free in making these choices, but rather that margins for manoeuvre exist and that they are utilised both in everyday life and when special events take place (rites of passage, death…).

Putting the methodological focus on processes, instabilities, contextual dynamics allows us to comprehend social life in all its density and complexity while integrating differentiated uses of discursive, economic, political, social and other types of resources, tensions and discrepancies, but also different forms of discourse such as irony, humour, scorn, playfulness, as well as silences and misunderstandings (Glukman, 1963; Gunaratnam, 2003). The goal is not to search for or even to find "the" truth about these elements, but to examine the modalities of their constructions, of our co-constructions (the "how") and to which ends they exist (the "why"). A number of arguments that arise here have already been highlighted by Abdallah-Pretceille (2003) in the field of intercultural education or Piller (2011) in applied linguistics.

One of the major challenges for research on interculturality is concentrating on the concept of discourse. As a concept, discourse responds to various situations of intersubjective communication, where language is put into action without ever being a 'finite state' of knowledge or opinion (Vignaux, 1988: 144), showing the variety of meanings that its expressions have (Vignaux & Fall, 1997: 305). Our questioning highlights

perceptions of a social world through discourse, in contrast to a common vision looking to track the "truth" in what people say. The aim is to adopt an opposite approach which examines contradictions and shifts in discourse (Fassin 2009 [2006]): 33). By nature unstable, dynamic and reflexive (Ribeiro, 2006: 50), discourse represents a space where actions or social practices are produced (Chilton, 2005: 22). For those working on interculturality, this means staying alert and questioning the instabilities of presented discourses and actions (Gillespie & Cornish, 2009: 3). Methods from linguistics are certainly useful for enriching research on interculturality and orienting it in this direction (Dervin, 2011; Dervin & Paveau, forthcoming; Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2001; Linell, 2009; Marnette, 2006; Paveau, 2009). The example of so-called *represented discourse* (also known as direct or indirect speech, e.g. "he said: "I love you" or "I told her to go away") is telling as it can allow researchers to identify strategic use of language and the manipulation of "voices" to construct a reality.

The attention paid to the concept of discourse as defined above should not overshadow the importance of observation, its empirical dimension and how complementary it can be in relation to language practices. This is one of the contributions of anthropology, which allows connecting what can be observed, what is said about it, and by whom. Taking what is said (and how it is said) and what is done seriously echoes Baumann's (1998) research on types of belonging in a "multicultural" neighbourhood in London: mobilising explanations that reference culture is one response (*contesting culture*) suited to a given context, but not the expression of a fixed, absolute and definitive identity or reality. Once again, observations and their relation to, or their tensions with, discourses and acts of language do not aim to reveal a hypothetical truth by cross-reference, but to take into consideration different means of expressing belonging and what separates and/or bridges them.

These methodological considerations bring us back to the importance of carrying out analytical work, essential for clarifying the circumstances of the research in question. Every stage of research, all work focusing on the other is political and expresses power relationships. The influence of researchers themselves on their "data" is too rarely addressed in intercultural research—like elsewhere in many domains that focus on humans as social beings. Thus, in most of the studies said to centre on the 'intercultural', analysis focuses solely on the people being questioned, exoticising them and excluding them from co-authorship, without clarifying the positions and the attitude of the researchers during both data collection, analysis and interpretation of the results. "Data collection",

often imagined as a kind of picking similar to the picking of mushrooms in a forest (Bensa, 2010: 39), should instead be viewed as a process of co-construction and negotiation between social actors and should always reveal their respective positioning.

Finally, one of the essential aspects of interculturality consists in accepting that not everything can be explained or demonstrated and that research brings up more questions and hypotheses than it delivers concrete and definitive answers. Accepting this premise allows researchers to escape shaky analyses where research subjects are presented as "robots" or subjects lacking (inter-)subjectivity: "it is not simply the social aspect dominated by rationalism, expressed through politics and economics, but another way of being together, where the imaginary, the dreamlike, the playful occupy an essential space" (Maffesoli, 2009: 23).

Overview and Final Comments

The work of the authors published in this volume reveals the uses and practices of the 'intercultural' in different fields. Originating in distinct disciplinary horizons, working in diverse fields of research, the authors all answered a call for papers seeking to renew the critical approaches surrounding the idea of interculturality. The large number of submissions received (more than 100) reflects the term's resonance among researchers in the social sciences and humanities; and the fact that only a few articles met the specific expectations defined by the editors shows the difficulty of maintaining both a critical and a prospective viewpoint on the issue.

This volume is composed of eight separately authored chapters arranged in three sections.

The first section discusses the interplay of interculturality, politics and power. *Interculture as a Political Battlefield: the Case of "Intermundia" in Rome* by **Giusy Muzzopappa** and **Pierluigi Taffon** examines the political use of the 'intercultural' in the Italian context. Starting from an event called *Intermundia*, which aims at fostering interculturality in schools, in the heart of a so-called multicultural district of Rome, the paper demonstrates how local administrators stand off on issues of immigration and multicultural Italy during the event, thus instrumentalizing the theme to celebrate or denigrate the "other".

The second chapter looks at the standardization and promotion of literacy in the indigenous language of Kichwa in Ecuador. **Michael Wroblewski** argues that the promotion of interculturality through bilingual education is based on a national model that clearly "folklorizes" Kichwa language and Kichwa speakers. Focusing on lowland regions,

Wroblewski points to the social divisions and linguistic transformations that are hidden beneath such politics of interculturality.

The second part of the volume deals with identity and othering processes. It opens with a chapter by **Maria Kromidas**, *Troubling Tolerance and Essentialism: The Critical Cosmopolitanism of New York City Schoolchildren.* The author is interested in the reproduction and transformation of cultural difference by children in diverse neighbourhoods of New York City (USA). Based on ethnographic material, the study examines formal and informal multicultural interaction in this context. Discourses around the highly essentializing Multicultural Fair are analysed alongside more informal contexts in which children played with multicultural language in creative ways, well beyond cultural determinism and reductionism.

In the next chapter discourses of interculturality are explored in Mexico, where intercultural bilingual education is a central policy in relation to indigenous people. **Rocío Fuentes** and **Rafael Nieto** delve into its official definition in this context and compare it to educational actors' discourses (indigenous teachers and leaders, policy brokers and academics). The authors also demonstrate how a specific form of interculturality reinforces cultural and linguistic boundaries in Mexico instead of bridging the groups that compose the Mexican social fabric.

The last chapter of this second part emphasises the importance of interculturality in analysing international doctoral supervision in the UK. Written by **Leah Davcheva**, **Michael Byram** and **Richard Fay**, this exploratory narrative presents an understanding of interculturality based on the idea of an emergent space of meaning-making. During data collection, two supervisors were asked to talk about their experiences of supervising international students. The authors found recurring topics in the interviewees' narratives, amongst others: stepping over borders, dividing lines, and thresholds; addressing difference; transforming identities.

The third part of the book, Beyond the Nation-State, concludes the volume. In *Discourses of Globalisation in Approaches to Intercultural Business Communication*, **Katrin Zotzman** proposes a discourse analysis of articles in the field of Intercultural Business Communication. The author assesses the nature of "globalisation" in articles published in Germany. Her conclusions show that the scholars include popular neoliberal perspectives of international economic processes in their work, disregarding sociological and political debates about globalization and thus limiting the scope of interculturality.

In a similar vein, **Catherine Doherty** and **Li Mu** contribute a chapter on the International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD), a school curriculum designed to produce "glocal" citizens. Taking a critical stance towards the programme, the chapter examines how it is implemented in Australian schools by comparing official publications produced by the IBD administration and enacted curricula. The authors signal a discrepancy between discourse and practice that reveals processes of recontextualisation at work in operationalising the IBD goals of "international-mindedness".

The last chapter contains an in-depth discussion of language-in-education in three different countries (Italy, Japan and Columbia). **Anthony J. Liddicoat** argues that language-in-education policies are articulations of particular discourses which frame the 'intercultural' in specific contexts. The data consist of documents related to English language education in Japan, language education for immigrants in Italy and indigenous language education in Colombia. Liddicoat finds that language-in-education policies in each context construct the intercultural within different frameworks.

The title of our introduction, *Interculturality at stake*, as well as each chapter that composes this volume, allow us to reveal the diversity of the fields of application, conceptions and practices contained in the term 'intercultural'. They reveal the importance of questioning, clarifying and analysing the plurivocity and success of its uses as an anthropological object of reflection and of shedding light on our different conceptions of what it means to "live together", of our discourses and practices aimed at managing the encounter between those we consider as belonging to "us" and those we label as "others". Definitions of what it means to live together harmoniously are never more than ideals that fluctuate depending on policies, thought patterns, contexts and time periods, not to mention subjectivities; they are rarely universals and in no case absolutes.

Even if critical work on the 'intercultural' is not a new phenomenon, it is striking to note that criticism of the term is not as widespread as the word itself and does not hamper its success, particularly in the fields of public policy and socio-educative action. The most plausible explanation for this is that epistemological and political agendas can never really coincide: where research begins to reveal indiscrepancies, cracks, breaks—in short, to sketch and analyse social experiences in their complexity—politics often expects simplified and reductive descriptions, capable of producing user's manuals, road maps and toolkits for managing the encounters between "cultures" which give the illusion that otherness can be deciphered.

However, as we have noted, academic uses of the idea of the 'intercultural' also cannot escape certain pitfalls, methodological ones in particular. Thus, despite asserted anti-culturalist perspectives, we witness a "return of the repressed" in which culture is presented implicitly or not as a "solid" heritage, as a fact existing independently of social interactions and with objectified characteristics. In order for the 'intercultural' to be a part of the hybrid, the segmentary and the heterogeneous (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2010: 15), it must necessarily be understood as process-based, dynamic—become that which we call intercultural*ity*—as to account for the complexity of social worlds that interest us as researchers. In any event, the doubly political nature of the intercultural field, its stakes in terms of power relations, of othering processes and representation of sameness always constitute discourse about oneself and about an ideal society.

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