



**Life reflections about (postgraduate) education with four  
Mexican indigenous women  
Dialogues and Remembrances**

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This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.

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## List of Acronyms

UN	United Nations Development Programme
UN-MDG	United Nations Millennium Development Goals
UN-SDG	United Nations Sustainable Development Goals
CELALI	State Centre for Indigenous Languages, Art and Literatures
CGEIB	Office of Bilingual Intercultural Education
CIESAS	Centre for Research and Higher Education in Social Anthropology
CMPIO	Coalition of Indigenous Teachers and Promoters of Oaxaca
CONACYT	National Council for Science and Technology
DGEI	General Direction of Indigenous Education
EZLN	Zapatista Army of National Liberation
ENBIO	Bilingual and Intercultural Normal School Of Oaxaca
IFP	Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program
IU	Intercultural Universities
MIW	Mexican Indigenous Women
PND	National Development Plan
PROBEPI	Postgraduate Fellowships Program for Indigenous People
SEP	Ministry of Public Education (Mexico)
UNAM	National Autonomous University of Mexico
UJAT	Autonomous University Juarez of Tabasco

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## **Abstract**

This research is a dialogue with four Mexican Indigenous women in relation to the barriers and opportunities they faced to achieve postgraduate degrees, and how they are appropriating the knowledge acquired through a conventional education in order to re-signify and re-position otherwise practices. It argues that the colonial structures embedded in social relations and institutional practices have limited their options, but also that the shifts derived from the crisis of modernity and the development project are opening some spaces. This is a journey for which dialogues and remembrances are the source of reflections about gender, race, class and education. The situated experiences and particular standpoint of the *dialogantes* helps to vanish the monolithic imaginary of the indigenous women by exposing their different stories, academic trajectories and professional interest.

## **Relevance to Development Studies**

This research contributes to expose otherwise forms, knowledges and practices that need to be included and heard by development thinkers and policy designers. The discomfort and current crisis we are experiencing required all our senses to be open in order to accept diversity as point of departure

## **Keywords**

Indigenous women, indigenous postgraduate education, social policy, situated knowledges, descoloniality, otherwise forms

# Chapter 1 The journey

This research paper is a dialogue, a journey through life-reflections of four Mexican indigenous women's (MIW) with postgraduate degrees, who have shared their thoughts, achievements, sorrows and the encounters faced to build their present and envision their future. It is about how educational policies have shaped some of their personal and professional options and how they have appropriated the knowledge offered by the conventional education systems to re-signify and re-position local practices and *saberes* (knowledges).

Two objectives guide the research. The first one is to expose the encounters –encouraging and discouraging– the *dialogantes*<sup>1</sup> faced in their school trajectory because of being indigenous, being women and because the lack of economic resources. How policies for access, quality and relevant education for indigenous peoples have changed from their childhoods to nowadays. The stories and reflections about those encounters expose the challenges and opportunities faced within their families/communities and in the conventional education system. A second objective is to present the way in which they are acknowledging that academic training in order to generate otherwise forms to think and make use of schooling/education.<sup>2</sup>

Together with these objectives, I hope to provide elements that question the “single story”<sup>3</sup> (Chimamada, 2009) of Mexican indigenous women and to give some elements to undo the ‘package picture of cultures’ (Narayan, 2000). Although the *dialogantes* share things for being part of the historically marginalized and oppressed groups in Mexico, they also represent the diversity of the indigenous cultures and diversity as women. They recognize themselves as indigenous because that is the language commonly used and accepted in Mexico,<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I use this term to refer to the four women I reflected with. Its definition in Spanish is “a person open to dialogue, to understanding.” I did not find a synonym of it in English. The closest concepts I found were *conversadora* or talkative, chatty; *discussant* “a person who takes part in a discussion, especially a prearranged one”; and *participant*, “a person who takes part in something” (RAE). These definitions imply a different (power) relationship between the persons engaged in a dialogue.

<sup>2</sup> I separated the notion of schooling from education aware of the difficulty to be consistent along the text, especially because in Mexico “schooling” is barely use. Schooling is understand as the formal process in which children and youth attend schools, following the official academic curricula, whereas education is link to a extend process that considers broader life experiences.

<sup>3</sup> About the danger that represent one-sided narrative with only one perspective, which produces stereotypes.

<sup>4</sup> The term “indigenous” refers to the inhabitants -and their descendants- of Mesoamerica before the Spanish Conquest. The concept is controversial because it is related to a historical classification which has had derogative and racist connotations for its Colonial origin. However, in the past decades it has been used by broad sectors within original peoples as a political claim and for social re-signification: from anti-establishment groups like Zapatistas and indigenous scholars, to the hundreds of people I know from my professional experience. It is also the term use by

but they grew up in very different environments and with different stories: is not the same to have born in the rainy mountains of Chiapas than in the arid sierra of Chihuahua; you do not have the same skin, the same face, the same body if you eat *chapulines*, drink pozol and sweats because the heat, or if you eat *membrillo*, drink *tesvino* and freezes during winter. Is not the same if you are a teacher, an agronomist or a poet. The “single story”, the “package picture of the Mexican indigenous women” do not take into consideration the 62 “ethnic groups” that represent 21.5% of the country’s population.<sup>5</sup>

This journey was initially triggered by a personal concern about the meaning of pursuing postgraduate studies. In a country like Mexico, where to hold an academic degree is not necessarily translated into the improvement of the peoples wellbeing -overpopulation and underemployment does not guarantee decent and well-paid jobs<sup>6</sup>- I wondered why and how higher education and all pre-supposed sacrifices worthwhile. Indigenous people in particular, have to juggle an aggressive and exclusionary system in which children may have to go to boarding schools away from their families; they have to dribble an environment in which middle and higher education could be considered a waste of time and money, especially for women; and where to pursue postgraduate studies is extremely difficult because of lack of infrastructure and effective inclusive policies.

Although my personal initial concern was about the effects of the postgraduate education in the *dialogantes* personal and professional lives, our conversations took us to another direction, in which the reflections about the educational process become more engaging and provocative. Hence, the questions that prompted afterwards were:

*What have been the barriers MIW have had to overcome and the opportunities they have encountered to pursue postgraduate studies?*

*How MIW with postgraduate studies are appropriating the knowledge acquired through their education?*

## The starting point

For over a decade, I worked for the implementation and operation of the first two programs in Mexico aimed to increase access of Mexican indigenous people to postgraduate education: IFP and Probepi, both administered by a Mexican public institution, CIESAS.<sup>7</sup>

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Mexican governmental institutions aim to attend ethnic groups’ affairs. Therefore I use it for practical reasons.

<sup>5</sup> INEGI, 2015

<sup>6</sup> In 2015, 63% of persons with bachelor’s studies had an employment equivalent to their academic proficiency (INEGI, 2015: 91). Moreover, little over half of the population between 18-24 years (27.7% women-28.1% men) attended higher education (Olvera, 2013: 80).

<sup>7</sup> For more information about these programs see Appendix 1



This professional experience gave me the opportunity to get to know the students granted because of the activities and support, the programs offered to fellows (pre academic course, application processes to universities, academic monitoring, post fellowship activities, etc.). Back then, we initiated without noticing, a long-term relationship: me, as an employee in charge of some tasks to make the programs functioning, and the students as candidates, fellows, alumni and professionals. From our very diverse realities, with different intentions, approaches, goals, skills, dreams and backgrounds, we met at a certain point. That encounter and the multiple interactions triggered were the starting point of this dialogue.

IFP and Probepi alumni and staff together with other collaborators (some professors, students' supervisors, postgraduate coordinators, selection committees' members, etc.) represent an informal social and professional network. Our communications started before this research and the stories that connect us after the fellowships programs are separate, they have been knitted in various moments, spaces, and for multiple reasons. We have had soft and sporadic encounters, small talks and e-mails exchanges that have been enough to build up trustful and kind relations.

My interest in dialoguing specifically with women is because they have had to contest with an historical marginalization in terms, at least, of their female being (gender), the lack of economic resource (class) and their indigenous identities (race/ethnicity) product of Mexico's Colonial past. I wanted to talk with them because I had the sense that the postgraduate degree represented another layer of rejection: in their communities as alienated and "overweening", and in the academia or other institutions as "space invaders" (Puwar, 2004). But also because I have seen them grow, blossom; I have witnessed how through time they have transformed themselves and remain the same. I wondered about that immutable and permanent condition, and until what extent (higher) education has been the link that fuses all these elements.

I wanted to talk with some of them because they have transformed me. I finished my bachelor's degree about 20 years ago and I never believed that a postgraduate degree can represent a significant difference to have a better job or social recognition. I grew up in a Mexican middle-class family with parents lean to "socialist-left wing" perception of life. To study at university was "compulsory" in order to do something we were interested in but it was not the path towards having a good job –nor about an economic position- but a decent one in which we can socially contribute. I see now that such understanding comes from a "schooled" family that believes in education as a path for a better life. I did not have to fight against all odds to study, as the *dialogantes* did. For me was almost obvious, mandatory to go to UNAM, the best public university in Mexico –and in Latin America- which was relatively close to my house and were my parents and many relatives worked. I had the certainty of my education. For the

*dialogantes* instead, to attend middle and higher education was a continue encounter with personal decisions and with structural obstacles and opportunities, either within their families or in relation to the educational system, or both. Indeed, they saw in a postgraduate degree a better job, a better life, but not from an individual and developmentalist idea in which the objective of our actions are towards becoming more develop, or modern, or wealthier.

On the contrary, one of our political and ideological encounters –in general with the indigenous students I worked for- that triggered this research is that we are moved in life by actions and aspirations different than an economic Western model that dominates the world. It is about having a decent job, a ceiling and food in the table, but as part of a broader community for what we have to collaborate. I try to do my part as a professional with the elements and the “privileges” I have, and they do the same. The battles the *dialogantes* and myself want to fight are similar but from different trenchers. They want to re-signify and reposition their ethnicity and role as women separately and together, and both inside and outside their communities. I want the same but my battlefields are others: middle-urban spaces, policy and institutional arenas. We five, want to disclose imaginaries and expose the racist, patriarchal system that excludes women in general and indigenous women in particular and make evident the constrains faced to participate in education.

I recognise myself as a master student more than a researcher, I am full of academic deficiencies and personal inconsistencies. I interpret the *dialogantes* voices through my lenses and I am afraid to alter significantly their meaning; I have their trust even for that, which makes the responsibility heavier: “don’t worry, write what you think. We want the same”, Lucía said. How do I know if I am drawing our stories, our narratives enough? How do I pull a depth and meaningful understanding of this research? How to recognize the ethics of the co-construction, acknowledging that I am another yet different *dialogante*?

This document is not about universal truths but about examples. I agree with Rose that “we cannot know everything, nor can we survey power as if we can fully understand, control or redistribute it. What we may be able to do is something rather more modest but, perhaps, rather more radical: to inscribe into our research practices some absences and fallibilities while recognizing that the significance of this does not rest entirely in our own hands” (Rose,1997: 319).

## Indigenous research

I like the idea of “research back” as a recovery and renewal (Tuhiwai Sith, 2012) in order to create new paradigms in which social and cultural diversity can take place, but also for questioning the power relation of the research process to

trigger other ways to produce knowledge. The conventional and positivist approach has proved not enough to understand many human relations and actions, denying space for otherwise voices and practices.

Therefore, this is an attempt to do a research as resistance (Brown and Strega, 2005), co-producing knowledges with –not about- indigenous peoples (Tuhiwai Sith,2012), challenging a top-down approach and seeking to “counter the epistemic privilege of scientific paradigm” by centring a qualitative instead of a quantitative approach (Kovach,2005: 21). The methodological proposal is to show that the form is also the content, that words and stories have deep meanings and that encounters and remembrances are valuable forms to understand and perceive who we are and who we are not.

Dialogues –written and spoken- are what nourish this RP. Conversations that became life reflections. Remembrances that shaped the *dialogantes* stories but that allowed me to track the educational policies that have excluded and included indigenous peoples in the last 30 years. Their reflections and stories expose the struggles and achievements from their own voices, and I pulled some common strings to present my own reflections. Our five voices are present. Our positions are asymmetrical not hierarchical.

The dialogues started with a personal reflection I shared with them by e-mail about what drove me to do an MA and asking a similar exercise by themselves.<sup>8</sup> I confessed that I couldn't sleep because I was tired of having the same job for so long; because I was intimidated by the drive of hundreds of students to whom I worked for; because I needed some time to reflect about the effects of IFP and Probepi in Mexico's policy agenda; because I wanted to show my two children a different world. The four participants accepted to collaborate in the exercise: “thank you for opening your heart to me and for the trust we are generating”; “thank you for sharing your reflections, made me know you as a human being ... and thank you because you have made me reflect about why to do postgraduate studies”; “it is an interesting topic that is hidden because it has not been spread”.

From there on, remembrances, poems, *saberes* and stories were knowledge motors. Along two months –even until recently- we have communicated by facebook, whatsapp, e-mail and Skype exchanging ideas and anecdotes. I selected the fragments and quotes I considered more relevant to expose the intertwined struggles and encouraging opportunities they constantly addressed. I also paid attention in the language used (tones, emphasis, redundancies) as an important element in the oral transmission of knowledge (Marcos,2010: 7) personal translation).

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<sup>8</sup> The text in Spanish is in Appendix 2

Some words and phrases are in Spanish to respect and listen the *dialogantes* own expressions, especially when the translation shorten or divert the meaning.<sup>9</sup> Deliberately, I did not use in-text citation. Mikeas' poems frame some of the ideas discussed. They took me beyond the 'rational' interpretation of reality, bringing other senses, other translations and other meanings as part of the knowledge transmission and production.

Therefore, this is a critical approach that "trouble the connections between how knowledge is created, what knowledge is produced, and who is entitled to engage in these processes" (Brown and Strega, 2005: 7). The challenge has been epistemological and methodological: the former because by dialoguing, through remembrances and encounters, we approached a different way of knowledge production attentive to memory and intuition; and the latter because the means to produce those dialogues have been initially guided conversation through social and alternative media as Facebook, Skype, Whatsap and E-mails, that reduce distances but can also limit the engagement.

In order to listen various points of views and to contrast commonalities and differences, an intersectional approach was considered to invite participants: ethnicity, age, civil status, state of origin, academic discipline, university of studies, years after graduation of master's degree and professional trajectory. In addition, it was important to take into account their willingness and availability to reflect and share their thoughts, stories and feelings. The participants who accepted this challenge are:

### The *Dialogantes*

**Florinda** is a 38 years old Ayuuk (Mixe) primary teacher who was born in Tamazulapam ("toad place"), Oaxaca, a small town of 7,300 inhabitants. After pursuing an MA in Intercultural Bilingual Education at the Universidad Mayor de San Simon in Bolivia, she worked for the DGEI researching and designing specific and relevant curricula for indigenous primary education. She quit her job to do a PhD in Pedagogy at UNAM.

**Mikeas** is a 36 years-old O'depüt (zoque) bilingual poet and language promoter from Chapultenango, Chiapas, a municipality with 7,300 inhabitants. She studied an MA in Language and Literature Teaching at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, period when Matsa, her daughter was born. Back in Mexico, she was the director of an official radio station where she promoted and broadcast programs in Zoque and regional languages. Some of her poems have been translated into various languages. In August she was hire as professor of

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<sup>9</sup> Following Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* (1987). For a list with translations/explanation see Appendix 3

the IU (Intercultural University) of Tabasco. Some of her presentations can be watch in YouTube<sup>10</sup>

**Lucía** is a 30-years old Raramuri (Tarahumara) primary school teacher who belongs to one of the most marginalized ethnic groups of Mexico. She was born in the Northern state of Chihuahua, in a village of 20 people, called Simuchichi (hummingbird place); her family moved long time ago to Norogachi a town of 1,000 inhabitants. “My mom says that I was born in cold time, after the Candelaria,<sup>11</sup> but she does not known exactly if I was born that day”. She finished master’s studies in 2012 in Educational Innovation Skills at Universidad Iberoamericana, in the state of Guanajuato, Mexico. After graduating she worked with Raramuri teachers and now she is doing a PhD. She will be the first Raramuri women with a PhD.

**Tania** is a 29 years-old Ayuuk (Mixe) from Tamazulapam who studied Agronomy. She finished an MA at Arizona University in Agricultural and Environmental Engineering and is currently studying a PhD at Wageningen University. “We are from a small town located in the North of Oaxaca. My grandmother, for some reason, remembered that to reach our town from Wageningen would take many hours, about 14 from The Netherlands to Mexico City, 7 more to Oaxaca and three more to Tama”. She re-learnt Mixe at the age of 9, when after completing four years of primary school in Mexico City, she went back to live with her granny, who never learnt to speak Spanish. She was recently conferred with the National Youth Award for her academic achievement.<sup>12</sup>

## Content and structure

This RP has 6 chapters. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework which I used to translate the knowledge co-created into an academic language that allowed me to grasp, see and try to unravel the complexity of the barriers and opportunities the *dialogantes* found in relation to their education. Chapter 3 introduces the recent historical context of the educational policy in Mexico as part of the developmentalist project flagged by the liberal national-state. It helps to understand the intricacy of an “inclusive” yet exclusionary system full of contradictions that have affected indigenous peoples. Chapter 4 presents the *dialogantes*’ reflections about their schooling, from primary to postgraduate education in which aspects of race, gender, class, etc. are commented. Chapter 5 is about the way the *dialogantes* are appropriating the knowledge acquired along their education for their professional practices. Paradoxes and questions are in chapter 6.

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<sup>10</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r2nzruAN7QQ>/<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iHiomALBPWQ>

<sup>11</sup> Celebration that takes place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1A7HZM70vc>, last access, Oct 19, 2016

## Chapter 2 The complexity of diversity

Feminist theories have been key to analyse how societies are formed considering that women have played a role of subordination. They have challenged the hegemonic, men-centred, positivist understanding of the world exposing the relationships of domination and inequality and proposing alternative perspectives and concepts to see human relations with other eyes.

In order to analyse how the *dialogantes* faced and overcome the systemic barriers to achieve postgraduate degrees and become professional in their fields of specialization, I used some of the theoretical contributions of the Two Thirds of the world<sup>13</sup> feminist that questioned the Eurocentric and universal understandings of social relations, particularly some aspects of the standpoint theory and the intersectional perspective. I also used the reflections and the work of some Mexican feminists that are addressing indigenous (women) affairs in a more active, collaborative and engaging way.

An approach to social/educational policy, particularly link to the policies regarding the “inclusion” of indigenous peoples in Mexico, is also presented.

### Standpoint and Intersectionality

The standpoint theory approach questions the single, universal, homogenizing and Eurocentric stereotype of women, which was raised by “white/western” feminists some decades ago in order to flag women’s oppression. Hartsock initial proposal value “female experiences at a particular time and place, located with a particular set of social relations” (Hartsock, 1983: 303); that is to say that “knowledge is situated and perspectival”, and there are multiple standpoints to produce and interpret reality (Hekman, 1999: 30).

This research is based on the particular points of view of four women whose remembrances, stories and reflections are partial and contextual, as it is my own interpretation -also considered- about the barriers and opportunities they have faced to achieve postgraduate studies. These are voices that are often silenced and have not found, until recently, space in the conventional production of knowledge. Therefore, the raw material that mould this work, our dialogues and the value they represents, is part of the standpoint principle that challenged the fixed category of women.

The second aspect I considered from the standpoint perspective, is related to the discussion brought up by Haraway, who proposes a partial and multiple understandings of reality constructed from different standpoints instead of try-

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<sup>13</sup> For a brief explanation about the different connotation among the concepts of “Third World”, “Southern” “Two Thirds of the world”, see Mohanty, 2003: 506-507.

ing to define a universal perception (Haraway, 1988). For Hackman, on the contrary considers that “unless we provide a systematic understanding to the world, we will be unable to change it (Hekman,2004: 39). Mohanty also argues that particular knowledges can be universally significant and, therefore, the differences are never such, because they exemplify and are always connected to the universal. Therefore, particularities help to “theorize universal concerns more fully” (Mohanty,2003: 505).

However, Haraway’s *situated knowledges* proposal is about “embodied objectivity” (Haraway,1988: 581) or “transparent reflectivity” (Rose, 1997: 311); is about looking, reflecting and naming from the “multiple, interweaving and intersecting ways in which our various positionalities and identities are revealed, negotiated and managed” (Hopkins, 2007: 388). In the eyes of this way to understand and construct human relations and meanings “only partial perspectives promises objective vision” (Haraway, 1988: 583).

This discussion about objectivity and universality in knowledge production is relevant for this RP because I have tried to frame the grounded, perspectival and contextual experiences of the *dialogantes* to broader analysis of the MIW experience along their education. The reflections presented are particular, contextual and subjective but are also examples that reveal commonalities in the analysis about gender, race, class, education, discrimination, etc. That is to say, how the micropolitics of everyday life are linked to global processes (Mohanty, 2003: 509). I think this is the richness and the contribution of our dialogues and the stories behind, they are not casual and separate; they are meaningful reflections because they expose commonalities.

Another feature of the standpoint approach considered here is that is also a “method to name the oppression of women based on the truth of women’s lives” (Hekman, 1999: 47). Hartsock proposal is based on the Marxist historic materialism, for whom women represent the oppressed sector of the society. They are the owners of the “real knowledge” because they know the real life: the life that is not from the false bourgeoisie. However, Hartsock’s initial theory considers that the women’s experience is one and the same: we all are equally subjugated for being women. She does not recognise what the “feminist of colour” will flag as their main contribution: women are diverse, we have many axes and we experience different layers of oppression, because is not the same to be white, indigenous or a black woman. The way these axes of discrimination relate to each other is what Crenshaw called Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989).

Crenshaw and other feminists of colour claimed that the racial element was absent from the discussions about women’s discrimination, whereby was necessary to consider the various intersections of non-white women to understand the different layers of oppression black, indigenous, mestizas, etc. experience. The term has triggered various debates about its multiple interpretations and possibilities: from understanding the dozens of axes we contain as individuals,

to the diverse power relations or the interconnectedness among diverse layers of discrimination.<sup>14</sup>

The way I approached intersectionality is threefold. First, in order to understand the ways “in which subject positions and relations are produce and negotiated in particular environment, each with unique configurations of power” (Paulson, 2106: 409). That is to be sensitive about the *dialogantes* diversity in terms of trajectories, points of views, the social, economic, political and geographical contexts in which they grew up and currently live. It has been key to identify different factors that shaped their stories, convictions, dreams and sorrows depending on the context and the time. Second, the diversity of their profiles has helped me to see commonalities and differences in the way they experienced the struggles and opportunities, how and where some axes coincide or diverge and from where I built my own reflections. Third, to identify the various forms of discrimination they have experienced as indigenous women: how gender, race and class are “mutually constitutive categories of social difference” (Yuval-Davis, 2016: 369).

For Yuval-Davis the layers of oppression are inseparable and co-constitutive, but I have the sense, derived from the conversations with the *dialogantes*, that those layers have not the same intensities, that discrimination is experience differently depending the context, the time in history, etc. For instance, to go to primary school for the *dialogantes* (80's-90's) was not a constrain –as might have been for their mothers and grandmothers. Schools were somehow close and they were supported by their families. However, they were discriminated for being indigenous because the schools did not consider an intercultural, relevant and bilingual curricula –as happens today. Hence, they were discriminated because of being indigenous, not because of being women. My interpretation is that, although the differences are interconnected and are inseparable, the way the *dialogantes* experience discrimination varies from place and time and from context to context.

## Descoloniality and *Desde abajo y a la izquierda*

The Decolonial perspective (with “s”) by a group of Mexican feminists, questions and exposes the articulation between gender and race in close link with racism, imperialism and patriarchal practices and ideologies (Hernández and Suárez, 2008: 11). It is a reaction to the legacy of an imposed Eurocentric system that impacted our ways to see, understand and represent the world. Decolonial activists want to be detached from Decolonial thinkers because they recognise themselves as activists whose exercises and approaches raises from local concerns, problems and practices, while Decoloniality is seen as a product of a “self-absorbed and monological academia” (Millán, 2014: 10). A decolonial approach

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<sup>14</sup> For the debates see Bilge (2013), Collins Hills (2000)



“is more a living process than a close theory or a school of thought” (Millán, 2014: 11). Activists and scholars are working from the field, from the ground –not only from academia- to address diverse matters: with indigenous women prisoners, with students and social movements, or are addressing reproductive health issues in marginalized areas; organizing symposiums, conferences and diverse fora to discuss relevant topics raised from the bottom: from marginalized women, indigenous peoples, minorities groups, etc. They are characterized by their actions and not just for academic contributions.<sup>15</sup>

The analysis and approaches from this group that can also be linked to a broader movement identify as *Desde abajo y a la izquierda* (“From the bottom to the left”), are relevant for this research because they are the result of activities that are already taking place in Mexico among certain institutions, individuals, civil associations, scholars, activists, etc. with indigenous communities and vice versa. It is about collaborative, participatory, engaging work towards balancing unequal relations that are looking for the visibility, defense, recognition and inclusion of marginalized groups. They are taking theory into practice to re-signify otherwise forms to inhabit this world.

By descolonizing in this RP I understand an active proceeding engaged in a collaborative work. The *dialogantes* personal reflections and professional activities lean on that side, because they are questioning practices and imaginaries inside their families/communities and in the institutions or spaces where they are working or studying. This research is an attempt to operationalize the theory in an active, embodied way, because “theory is spoken, lived, felt, smelled, danced, touched” (Marcos, 2010: 22-23). To share our ideas and reflections to a broad audience is a way to expose the systemic barriers MIW face to be schooled.

I used Sousa Santos’ ideas about the “ecology of knowledges”, as another way to address plurality and intercultural thinking from a practical and epistemological perspectives. His proposal is to promote “non-relativistic dialogues among knowledges, granting “equality of opportunities” to the different kinds of knowledges [...] to build a more democratic and just society and at decolonizing knowledge and power” (Santos, *et al.*, 2007: xix)

I also used Puwar (2004) idea of “space invaders” as those bodies that are not meant to occupy certain spaces because the colonial/modern system died them their access. But now they are taking, invade them, like indigenous peoples in higher education institutions.

From our own trenchers and with our personal and collective tools we are calling for inclusion of indigenous peoples, particularly for MIW, into the education system. Inclusion in its broadest translation: not just considering individuals who access to colonial institutions -like the conventional universities- as

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<sup>15</sup> To know more about the actions they are doing and making, see Millán (2014).

“space invaders,” occupying places that were initially not meant for them (Puar, 2004), but also to consider otherwise knowledges production, methodologies and philosophies.

The aspects expose in this section, the standpoint and intersectionality theories, the Mexican feminism *Desde abajo y a la izquierda* will be useful to identify and frame the reflections of the *dialogantes* in terms of the systemic opportunities and barriers faced to pursue postgraduate degrees and perform as professionals in their areas of expertise.

## Education and social policies. Doble-side swords

Social policy as an academic field of enquiry,<sup>16</sup> has become the way to correct “the pathologies of economic development,” which means to reduce poverty, provide equal opportunities, improve economic growth and expand social rights to absorb the policy failures (Mkandawire, 2001: 3). Education has been a major field within those policies based on the Western idea in which progress would be reachable through (scientific) knowledge.

Western societies stimulated an Eurocentric education based on the notion of “universal reason and history; teleological, logocentric, dialectical, and anthropocentric thinking; and the objectification and commodification of ‘nature’” (de Oliveira, 2015: 23). For “Southern” countries, education has been one of the ways to achieve that civilized-modern-develop model, and one of its costs has been to deny and homogenize the cultural diversity throughout a “systemic violence on other” (de Oliveira, 2015: 23; Sousa, 2010).

In the last 30 years, constitutional reforms and international agreements have included minority groups’ rights as a way to address some of the pathologies produced by the developmentalist project. In terms of education, the international agendas has been an umbrella to implement national policies. The UN-MDG for 2015 promoted universal access for all children, and the UN-SDG for 2030 objective is to ensure an inclusive, equitable and relevant education. In Mexico, a “massification” strategy (universal access) for higher education started in 2010 and will be followed by an “universalisation” stage to ensure quality and relevant knowledge in 2017. In order to promote access and permanence of marginalized students, the government has implemented some programs and quadruplicated the number of scholarships (Tuirán, 2012).

However, quotas and grants are not enough to reduce the gap nor to generate an intercultural, inclusive system (Mato, 2015; de Oliveira, 2015), they only reproduce social disparities because they do not “repair the effects of aggress-

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<sup>16</sup> Understood as the “collective interventions directly affecting transformation in social welfare, social institutions and social relations” (Mkandawire, 2001: 1)

sions, and centuries of racism and ignorance” (Mato, 2015: 20, personal translation). Furthermore, equity and quality policies are officially considered but not yet implemented. Access to a diverse and inclusive education are the main goals in the governments’ discourses but the budget assign to education has decrease in the last 50 years, whereas in 1964 represented 25.5% of the national expenditure, in 2012 was almost half of it: 13.7% (Olvera, 2013: 76).

### ***Conceptualizing Education***

For the matter of this RP, education is conceptualized as a double-edged sword that has been broadly analysed from different perspectives and schools of thought.

Thinkers, philosophers, pedagogues alike (Sen, Freire, Piaget, Freinet, etc.) have seen the power of education as the way to enrich people’s lives, to promote the sense of social belonging and to obtain solid tools to take better decisions. Education, from this perspective, open possibilities to decide about our own lives, either as individuals or as communities’ members, therefore is the best way to address inequalities, discrimination and injustice (Majumdar, 2011).

On the other hand, authors like Illich and Bourdieu consider schooling and everyday classroom practices, including the use of textbooks and teaching-learning materials, as the basement to reproduce social inequalities as for gender, race, class, etc. This approach see in the pedagogic practices and curricula content the reinforcement of social hierarchies and in the educational policies the rope to tight cultural and ideological domination. In that sense, schools reproduce an unequal social order that prepare children and youths for the hierarchical labour workforce (Majumdar, 2011: 4). De Oliveira adds another element in the neoliberal contexts, where education is “driven by the desires of educational consumers to feel good, to look good and to be affirmed as ‘doing good’” (de Oliveira, 2015: 24). Lucía reflects about it:

... some of the youth who study outside their communities stop listening music of our culture; they do not want to attend the celebrations, come back *cholos* and do not respect their elders. That part of education alienate them

My sense about these two perspectives is that both are part of the education process but they correspond to different arenas. One is about the power of learning, of being critical and sensitive, which is not necessarily related with the schooling; the other, is about the overall social policy and how the education systems are design to impose their ways to lead a society. For the matter of this research is relevant to consider both as they are interwoven in the *dialogantes* remembrances and reflections. For the *dialogantes*, schooling has represented the way to have a better social and economic situation, they have seen and heard

other realities, compared and become aware of the inequalities indigenous peoples experience; but they also have been excluded by, from and within the system.

## Chapter 3 Contradictions of the Mexican Education System

The following context helps to understand the broader picture of the educational policy in Mexico, basically framed by a colonial and developmentalist project. Indigenous demands have been partially considered and some of the initiatives, as presented, are not enough or are not having the expected effects. Policies also reflect the international agendas: the universalisation and massification stages are extending coverage all over the country, but exclusion and marginalization of indigenous peoples are still present because of their absence: both in the structure (lack of inclusive policies in conventional schools) and in curricula (monoculture/Western transmission and production of knowledge). The road to achieve a more plural system, close to the Ecology of knowledges proposed by Sousa (2010) is still away.

### Some tragic numbers

More than half of Mexico's population live in poverty, and one in five in extreme poverty. Indigenous peoples have historically been the most affected: over 40% live in extreme poverty. They experience racism (Moreno Figueroa and Salívar, 2015) and the lowest levels of well-being as for health, food, housing and education.

In terms of education, although the system considers free and universal access from pre-school to higher education,<sup>17</sup> marginalization, inequality and discrimination to indigenous peoples is manifested by the illiteracy rates that are over 15% compared to the 6% for the rest of the population. Indigenous and rural basic education are 35% behind private's (PND 2013-2018: 61); only 53% of indigenous students between 12 and 14 years completed primary and 37% between 15 and 17 completed lower secondary (PND. Logros, 2014: 7). Many children drop basic school for the lack of cultural relevance and linguistic barriers; telesecondaries<sup>18</sup> and upper secondary schools in rural areas have academic deficiencies and higher education institutions are far away from indigenous settlement (Schmelkes, 2009: 6). Additionally, most indigenous children and youngsters have to collaborate in their households while studying. Lucía had to “fed the dogs and then take care of the *chivas*, we had to run after the animals, especially in harvest seasons when they run into others *milpas*. Take care for the *chivas* was heavy.”

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<sup>17</sup> For an overview of the Mexican education structure see Appendix 4.

<sup>18</sup> An education project that transmit the official lessons through TV. The students complete a guide based on the lesson watched and a teacher monitors student's work. Is still a teaching method in rural and remote areas.

These are already indicators of the social exclusion reproduced by the system, since access and quality are fundamental to promote social justice and equality (Majumdar and Mooij, 2011: 6). With this structural imbalance the indigenous students with possibilities -considering family/community commitments and economic conditions- to continue towards university have to pass admission exams and compete for contested spaces, scholarships and grants that other students fulfil easier (Schmelkes, 2009: 6).

Therefore, indigenous participation in higher education is extremely low and the precise number of those who have studied at the graduate level has been in the shadow, although 1-3% is estimated (Schmelkes, 2009: 6). The 2010 population census indicates that only 0.25% of the national indigenous population has reached this educational level, compared to 0.83% of the rest of the population.<sup>19</sup> Other studies also show that indigenous with university degrees would earn 30% less than other Mexicans (Moreno Figueroa and Saldívar, 2015: 2). Furthermore, the average schooling for indigenous women is of 5.1 years, which means that most of them do not finish the compulsory six years of primary education (INEGI, 2015: 67-68). Those who achieve higher levels of education are literally exceptional.

## Brief historical background

### *The liberal national project*

The education system in Mexico is the product of a long ideological struggle that started after the country Independence in 1810, but settle its principles in the Political Constitution of 1917. Along the 20<sup>th</sup> C., the State assumed the responsibility to delivered free and compulsory basic education in order to insert the country into the path of progress (Zorrilla and Barba, 2008: 3). The liberal thinkers that shaped Mexico's political structure envisioned that was necessary to homogenize the social diversity resulted from the Pre-Hispanic and Colonial periods (Schmelkes, 2009: 6) to foster Mexican nationalism and to become a modern society.

The Mexican State promoted the stereotype of the *mestizo*<sup>20</sup> as the 'real Mexican', vanishing the diversity of the indigenous peoples from the national scope. The centralized education system promoted a trickle-down education model (Schmelkes, 2009: 6) that was extended and reproduced at the systemic level through the design of a singular and universal curricula for all the schools, without considering the social diversity nor different academic needs. Specific learning books and materials for elementary and secondary schools were mandatory:

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<sup>19</sup> IFP (Mexico) Report, 2013 (shared by CIESAS). Moreover, only 30 out of 1 million Mexicans (.00003%) have a doctorate degree (PND2013-2018: 63)

<sup>20</sup> The mix of Spaniards and indigenous peoples

the *mestizo* was the only identity to be proud of and Spanish the only official teaching language; Mikeas reflects:

We were schooled in Spanish and we were taught to read and write from Spanish, with a grammar that is very different from our native language, so we do not know the grammar of our own language. Those like me, who are dedicated to write in our languages have to do an extra effort because we learn them empirically, by imitation, by trial and error, it has more difficulty.

Florinda stills struggles because “Spanish is a second language for me, is not my first language, I am not bilingual, *no soy bilingüe de cuna*. I learnt Spanish along my academic life, *transitando otros ambientes*. The academic matters *se resiente* by not be fluent in Spanish, makes it very difficult to digest the readings. Deficiencies will always be dragged.”

### ***Mexican indigenous people at the spotlight***

Since the late 80's, Mexico experienced a process of political and social re-organization that flagged education as the way to include individuals and “Southern” into the global modern system. Mexico's economic reconfiguration represented the framework to transform the educational system (Zorrilla and Barba, 2008: 6). Since then, “education for nation building has been replaced by education for a globalized market” (Majumdar, 2011: 7).

Neoliberal and democratic calls for liberalisation, privatisation, decentralisation, and compensatory programs for the poor [became] part of a worldwide trend in education. These supranational policy ideals stimulated national movements which forced governments around the world to reorganize the responsibilities of the state, teachers and administrators” (Ornelas, 2004: 398)

One of those movements was the EZLN that in 1994 claimed voice, recognition and inclusion of indigenous people in all national affairs (Enlace Zapatista, 2016). The country's multicultural character came to debate and the extensive social, economic, legal, and political inequalities were spotlighted. The impact was at a systemic level: institutions, individuals and society at large, recognized the Mexican plural composition. “The EZLN ideology was a relevant influence in my sense of social commitment [it was at] CELALI, an organization created by the revolutionary movement [...] where I took different classes that made me think of my Zoque identity”, Mikeas explains.

The Educational Development Program for the period 1994-2000, considered “education as a strategy for development, in order to assume higher standards of life and to get advantage of the opportunities opened by science, technology and culture” (PND, 1994-2000).

Special attention for indigenous and vulnerable groups were taken into consideration. In the first decade of 2000, intercultural and relevant education policies were implemented trying to address indigenous people's demands (Alcántara, 2008): the CGEIB was established to promote intercultural and bilingual

education at all levels, from primary to higher schooling. The IU (Intercultural Universities) were built in remote regions to increase access of marginalized youth and to incorporate culturally relevant content in the curricula.<sup>21</sup> The IFP was also an initiative settled in this environment.

However, most of the policies and reforms designed and implemented have been unidirectional, without considering local needs and the diversity of contexts (del Castillo-Aleman, 2012: 649). The curricula, pedagogical materials, official text books, etc., are still produce and distribute from the centralized education system (Alcántara, 2008).

### “Inclusive” efforts and initiatives

As claim and propose by diverse authors, indigenous peoples worldviews, an intercultural curricula or the use of other methodologies for knowledge production/interpretation should be part of the whole knowledge production and education system, from primary to higher education and within conventional and otherwise institutions (Sousa, 2010; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2005).

Efforts and actions in this regard are already taking place. At the theoretical level, de Oliveira discusses the historical and systemic patterns that reproduce the violence of modernity in higher education from a decolonize perspective. Her proposal is a tentative cartography that considers four categories of “discourses” in relation to higher education. These categories are helpful for the analysis of the educational policies in Mexico because they allow to identify some of the actions that are taking place to include indigenous peoples in higher education as responses to a westernized-modern model (de Oliveira, 2015: 22).

The first category is called “Everything is Awesome”, where the system works perfectly and education is the “happy pill” to address any social problems. The second is the Soft-Reform Space that recognises individual’s differences and ethnocentric practices; strategies for redistribution, affirmative action programs, are considered but the system does not changed. The third one is the Radical-Reform space, where rigid aspects of the system are identified and should be modified (racism, capitalism, colonialism) in order to generate inclusive spaces. The Beyond-Reform recognises ontological dominance by connecting different

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<sup>21</sup> The IU’s fulfil three basic indigenous people’s demands about education: access to bilingual and relevant education; promotion of their cultures and knowledges at national level; and autonomy to decide about their own educational system. The educational programs were defined on specific needs and characteristics of each region, but in relation to five clustered areas: Language and Culture; Intercultural Management; Intercultural Communication; Sustainable Development, and Ecotourism (Schmelckes, 2009).



dimensions of oppression, therefore, otherwise forms and practices should be considered.

At practical level, I linked de Oliveira's categories to the initiatives that are taking place in Mexico regarding the inclusion of indigenous peoples in higher education. For that, I used the groups of initiatives that are taking place in Latin-America identified by Mato (2015)<sup>22</sup> and which are the following:

a) The inclusion of indigenous individuals in conventional universities through special actions or initiatives (soft-reform-space). These programs have been criticized because, beyond being insufficient in relation to the demands, are considered opportunities for westernization of students, or brain drains programs that generate family breakups. However, the professionals formed with these initiatives are working directly with their peoples and communities, attending local needs and improving regional life conditions.

b) Training program and bachelors' degrees implemented by conventional institutions in which indigenous professionals –some of them individuals formed in conventional universities- participate as professors and scholars. In the de Oliveira scheme, these actions correspond to the “radical-reform-space”.

c) Teaching, research and social networking projects that consider the transmission and sharing of indigenous peoples experiences (Radical-Reform-Space). They are courses or activities organised by and for indigenous peoples in order to enhance and promote local practices, languages, methodologies or technologies; but can be also intercultural and collaborative researches to systematize them. Here are considered social or community service activities or *tequio*.

d) Higher Education Intercultural Institutions that incorporate in the conventional system, indigenous *saberes*, teaching and learning methodologies, etc. They have been created to attend local demands and proposals. The set of IU are an example of a governmental policy in this regard, although other projects designed from the bottom of indigenous organizations are also relevant. They might fit in the “beyond-reform” category, but they have not yet signified any structural change in the education system because they are particular efforts.

The different trends in the educative system in Mexico were briefly presented to understand the excluding system that has denied relevance and quality since its initial design and implementation. The current soft and radical reforms (de Oliveira, 2015) that are taking place such as the IU, individual programs, specific institutional efforts, etc., are attempts with uneven effects. The project of the IU, in Mikeas voice for example, is not necessarily having the results expected. As a current professor in Tabasco she perceives that:

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<sup>22</sup> A table with my personal interpretation of how Matos's and de Oliveira's categories can be linked is presented in appendix 4.

Young students are not finding jobs. They go to the IU to improve their lives, to move to another place or to stay but with possibilities to do something else, but they have not seen that change. They are disappointed

I think that all universities, especially the conventional ones, should be inclusive and intercultural, not only those design for indigenous peoples –which, on the other hand, have been criticized for reproducing and deeping inequalities. If the system remains the same, -between “everything is awesome” and soft-reforms”- the exclusion and racism will also remain, and difference will continue to be something to tackle instead of a rich reality that complement us as societies. An *ecology of knowledges* (Sousa, 2010) as social policy could be a good beginning to implement.

## Chapter 4 Juggling adversities

In this chapter the *dialogantes* share reflections about their schooling process from which is possible to frame the changes in the educational policies for indigenous peoples. Although each story is different, they shared commonalities, particularly in terms of the layers of oppression (Yuval-Davis, 2016) experienced and the opportunities they grab along the way. They walked through different labyrinths and, despite the obstacles and critiques the balance seems positive. The paradoxes and contradictions are constant.

### The beginning. Included yet excluded

My dad shepherded the goats on the *monte* and he did not go to school because nobody bothered to take him; my mom neither went to school because she had to take care of her two younger brothers as my grandmother suffered from arthritis, and her hands did not let her do the domestic activities

Lucía tells.

As Mikea's and Florinda's parents, they do not know to read nor write. Tania's parents' stories are others, thus compelling: her mom migrated to Mexico City as domestic worker when she was 9 years-old, she worked during the day and went to school at night; her dad ran away from home to another city because his father preferred his children to work rather than study. Both managed to pursue a bachelor's degree

One of the constructive results of the liberal education project has been the expansion of primary schools all over the country. At the time the *dialogantes* were children, public primary rural schools were available almost in every state, especially in deprived ones like Oaxaca and Chiapas. Access to education was not the constrain that signified for previous generations. Lucía is the only of the four, who lived in a remote community; indigenous peoples from Chihuahua were completely erased from the public agenda until recently, as a result, religious associations settled some schools to attend Raramuris' children. For Lucía to go to a catholic boarding school was the only option. She was 6 when she moved.

Although schools were available, other constrains that affected –and still affect– the academic development of indigenous children are the multi-grade schools, not enough teachers, teachers with deficient professional formation, etc. represent one of the layers that prevent educational quality. Another level is related to the lack of economic resource in marginalised regions, where children have to collaborate either at the field or at home, sometimes in demanding tasks.

Mikea's says that "in the field, kids have to collaborate in the household *autoconsumo*, participating in harvesting or planting. My dad did not allow us to work so we would go to school, we helped only on weekends or holidays."

Lack of job opportunities generate that persons have to look for jobs outside resulting in absent parents -especially fathers- or migration. Tania lived with her granny since she was 9 because her parents had to move to various communities as teachers; and Lucía's father, a constructor worker, lived mainly in the city, 10 hours away from the *pueblo*. Alcoholism and interfamily violence is not surprising in many communities, which were some of the reasons for the *dialogantes* to continue studying as they will narrate further.

In terms of the *mestizo* homogenization strategy of the liberal educational policy, indigenous children have a difficult academic beginning. The basic education system did not consider children who did not speak Spanish, nor an intercultural curricula that included other forms to perceive and interpret the reality. A systemic aggression they have had to deal with. Mikeas learned Spanish at 7, "with the official reading books and the support of my older sisters who knew the city and could read. I never was the bravest, on the opposite, I was somewhat shy and did not talk much because of my precarious Spanish. However, and as my Spanish improved, my school grades increased and I became more confident and sociable."

Lucía recognizes that she "finished primary with little understanding. At 6<sup>th</sup> grade I said only one phrase because I did not dare to speak more, I did not have much vocabulary as my schoolmates".

The imposition of Spanish as the only official language is one barrier, but the lack of pedagogical techniques to teach it as a second language is another. In addition, a lot of indigenous languages lack of formal description or grammar to be formally taught. Hence, the *dialogantes* struggle with both, Spanish and their mother tongues:

When I won a poetry contest in original languages in 2004, the 'Pat O'tan', they doubted that I was Zoque. The first thing they said was 'she is not Zoque, she writes different, she does not write as a Zoque' ... my poetry has another form, perhaps another structure, I do not know. Maybe because I have learn a lot with Western literature -I like reading since I was six years old- so I know the Spanish structure and I started writing in Spanish and gradually I improved my translations to Zoque, and now I can write from the Zoque. But 10 years have passed for me to do that

The *dialogantes* studied in local schools where most children were Ayuuks, Rarámuris, Zoques or of other ethnic groups from the regions, so they did not experienced direct discrimination. However, Tania recognizes that when she started the school in Mexico City the kids laughed at her because of her accent. She confessed that she came to think:

Why on earth do I speak Mixe if people discriminate me', but my father always said that I should not let them make me feel bad, saying 'you can do as many things as they do' [...] I was also *morenita*, indigenous girl who spoke bad Spanish, which was very studios. I was not doing very well

In terms of the family support, for the *dialogantes* primary education did not represent any barrier, on the contrary. Mikeas remembers,

My father always strived himself so all of his 10 children could go to school. My parents gave us freedom, they never pressured us, it was our choice to go to school. I studied because I wanted to learn. Besides, my parents were illiterate, they were little concerned about reviewing homework's, they did not understand much that part.

For Florinda, her mom "influenced me a lot to go to school, she did not wanted me to be like her. She always challenged me with her words". Although Lucía's grandparents disagree that she went to school, her dad "told my mom to take me because he was working in the city, so she did. My dad advised me *que le echara ganas*, he wanted to see her daughter to improve herself so I would not suffer like him. He wanted to see me with a career, a full professional able to search for work to improve the living conditions".

Education is perceived as a way to overcome economic scarcity, but also to avoid to work in the field or in the construction, or as domestic workers, which in Mexico are activities related to the bottom of the economic and social structure. Paradoxically, three of the *dialogantes* had to work as domestic workers to continue studying as will be presented.

## Mid-education. Self-improvement, a refuge

Bigger challenges started towards secondary education, both at institutional and at family-community level. For the *dialogantes* was the beginning of a conscious path of self-improvement, socialization and also as refuge from an aggressive environment inside home and in their communities. Alcoholism, sexism and racism leak the social relations within most indigenous communities, particularly affecting women. Tania reflects about it:

Europeans have a romantic idea about our indigenous peoples, but I think they do not recognize ... the philosophy is very nice, but in practice there are very sick things, including that if you let the husband is because you were a bad woman, if the husband hits you is because you're a bad woman, if you leave him because he beats you, you are also a bad woman. Then, finally, the whole social weight always falls on women

Hernández<sup>23</sup> contextualizes Tania's words by arguing that "in the searching for other ways of imagining the world and thinking about other possible futures,

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<sup>23</sup> Professor and Researcher from CIESAS, member of the *Red de Feminismos Descoloniales* and PhD supervisor of Emma Chirix.

the temptation to idealize indigenous cultures has been very present... an ahistorical view of indigenous peoples sometimes have been presented, denying internal contradictions, power relations within the communities, and the impact of colonialism in its contemporary cultural practices” (Hernández, 2014: 184. Personal translation).

Tania’s words will be braced further with other *dialogantes* experiences, whom coincide that to look for a better life through education is not only about have better jobs or work opportunities, is also about looking for ways to modify and fit in everyday life activities. To be respected and value within their communities as women, and outside as indigenous women; is about, I would say, changing “single stories.”

In terms of what the education system offered at that time, lower secondary schools were available in some rural areas, like in Tamazulapam, where Tania and Florinda studied. Even though the academic level in most public schools was (is) deficient, Mikeas recognises that she attended a telesecundaria “where I had exceptional teachers who motivated me to continue my studies.” A structural limitation that she perceives as an opportunity.

The lack of relevance and the linguistics barriers for indigenous children and youth was still part of the curricula, “I was very quiet and still did not speak Spanish fluently... but I was motivated to remain because of my friends” Lucía said. She continued in the catholic boarding system that hosted her for primary until bachelor’s degree; but the facilities were 10 hours away from her community, reason why she visited her family every 15 days at the most. She worked cleaning houses during the Summer and Winter vacations to pay some of expenses. She says,

That experiences made me realize that I had to study further in order to get a better job. While I was in the city with other *compañeras*, we talked that we should not be working at houses because it is a hard work. That kind of experiences led me reach this level. I did not like those activities, but I knew there were not other jobs, or maybe there were, but it would be more or less the same earnings.

The MIW stereotype linked to the domestic work is embedded in the society as mentioned in the context. It is rooted in the social norms, that women like Lucía or Florinda, who already had higher studies at the time they were looking for employment, considered that “there were no other jobs” for them.

To pursue upper secondary, the four *dialogantes* moved away from their homes and had to work to pay transports, materials, housing and meals -except Tania who received a full scholarship from a federal public institution. They were around 14 years old. Lucía remembers that was a very difficult and stressful decision, because

I cared and was worried about my culture, because I was not living with the same characteristics as my family, but then I reflected that I had to get away from that context to learn and have a better life, maybe not better but a decent space

Florinda had the option to study in a local high school, but she rather went to Tlacolula, the closest city, where she had to work also as house cleaner and caretaker. She was motivated to look for a healthier space than in home and where she could do sports. “Sport were the maximum for me, I was a fanatic.” Mikeas lived with one of her sisters for a year, but after traveling long distances she moved closer to the school. She worked in a pharmacy four hours a day -the legal time for a minor. The owner was “one of those persons that I have encounter in life who have supported me”. He gave her job, food and shelter.

Mikeas reflects about the gender barriers MIW experience in their communities since early age, supporting Tania’s comments from a different perspective: “Despite the traditional expectations regarding women and education in my *pueblo*, my parents gave me permission to travel and study in Tabasco. I was 14 when I left home. It was 1994, the very year that witnessed the armed uprising of the EZLN.” Discussing later this quote with her, she said:

I told my mom that I wanted to continue studying and she told me that they could not supported me (economically); but she said that if I wanted to try and work on my own, I could do it. That was important because sometimes in the communities it is very difficult, it is not just that they do not let you work, but they do not even let you try. I thank my parents they did not close me the doors, because there are a lot of girls that want to go out to work or to study and their parents do not give them permission.

About the drive from the EZLN, she reflected that “2004 was a year in which I met many Zapatista sympathizers, most of them activists in their communities, *me contagiaron* with his rebellious and combative spirit.” As mentioned in before, the EZNL movement signified the recognition and the beginning of a long way to reposition the indigenous affairs in the national agenda, but also within the indigenous peoples themselves. Self-recognition of the ethnic identity has been an encounter of many indigenous youths and adults with their own ethnic identity, whose sense of belonging was denied since they were born and now, for the first time in hundreds years, are finding space for appreciation.

For Mikeas, her first six sisters did not study further primary because the discrimination and the opportunities were different:

My sisters got married, they decided not to study. It was much complicated because those were different times, there was more discrimination, I think, and it took them much more to adapt to the city, it was somewhat complex for them... when I left my community, there was no education that included indigenous. I adapted myself, I had that facility to adapt myself to the city

Florinda and Tania, on the contrary from Mikeas and Lucía, had to confront the “patriarchal figures” to continue study. “My older brothers tried to *desvincularme* but I did not let them, I wanted to study and I ignored them”, Florinda said. “My dad said that if we wanted to do something, the secondary would be enough to look for something by ourselves”, Tania confesses, even though her parents were teachers. Lucía was 16 when she told her parents “I am leaving, I am going to the school in Creel.” She travelled 12 hours with a friend, and when the nun at the school services asked who would registered her, Lucía answered “I am by myself and *yo solita me voy a hacer responsable*.” This stage was key because realised that she did not want to be like the other *muchachas* that get married at 15-16 years. “High school was a complicated stage because here was when I had to decide what I wanted to be in life, *si traer a los hijos en fila* or if I wanted to have a slightly more dignified life.”

At the end of upper secondary school, bachelor’s studies were at their sight despite the choices they seemed to have. The embedded patriarchal and colonial social norms that are even rooted in the indigenous groups, seemed to limit the *dialogantes* options between getting married and having children or the opposite, to be single and socially rejected from their communities.

*Pero no tuve miedo  
 algo de Piogbachuwe’ habitaba mi carne  
 como habita la lechuga y la comadreja en el bosque  
 Y nunca salí del costado de Adán  
 ni fui estatua de sal  
 ni Magdalena  
 y aunque una enorme cruz se encajó entre mis ingles  
 y las sagradas escrituras abanderaban mi vientre  
 guardé intactos mi olor y mi nombre*  
 Sánchez (2012), *Mediación del nacimiento*

## Higher education. Availability rather than a deliberated decision

After the battles encountered to achieve upper secondary, my sense is that the path to go to university was more paved, not easier though. Many barriers were in front. To start with, they had to rely in their social and family networks to have shelter and food while studying. Therefore, the options were limited in terms of the institutions and the academic disciplines they offer. Although public and free universities exist in every state, lack of information about other possibilities was another constrain. Besides, higher education institutions are increasingly demanded and admission requirements are becoming stricter.

The educational structure is not prepare/design to accept and pay the price for the exclusion it has created. Exclusion in relation to the “academic deficien-



cies” indigenous peoples dragged since primary school -indispensable to compete for spaces- but also in terms of the lack of relevance and the disvalue of the forms to perceive, understand and interpret the world. They have to adapt their concerns, local knowledges and practices to the conventional curricula.

“If life had allowed me, I would have liked to study philosophy or literature, that was my frustrated dream for many years,” Mikeas declares; in retrospect Lucía would have liked to study Social Work or an Engineering rather than Education. Tania on the contrary, would studied something related to the field anyhow. Although she presented the admission exam at Chapingo University<sup>24</sup> by chance –accompanying a friend- she realizes that “everything that moves me, at the end, has to do with the field.” Tania studied at a singular federal institution in Mexico, which offers housing, food and small scholarships for “good” students from scarce economic resources. She studied upper secondary and college there: “it was a refuge, it represented the stability I was looking for.”

In order to study, Mikeas took care of an elder man in Tabasco, who in exchange gave her shelter and food, “it was not hard work, I did not see it like that, and it allowed me to go to college.” Florinda lent money from a sister who migrated to the US; she paid her back when she was hired as a teacher.

Together with the difficulties to access to higher education, Lucía and Florinda faced –and still do- problems to fluently read and write academic texts. At the university “was complicated to digest the readings. Deficiencies will always be dragged”, Florinda said. While Lucía wrote in her life history that “in the first semester of undergraduate I had to make a report and I struggled a lot to write it”. Mikeas was very disappointed with the courses, so “I started to do other things, like study literature on Saturdays.”

While studying at university, Mikeas and Tania begun to reflect about their indigenous identities. Tania told me:

When I went to Chapingo I started to have many clashes, I started to realised that I was living in a rural environment. There were students who said that such a world did not exist, but I told them that it existed indeed. I found astonishing that people thought that the rural world did not exist and that believed that all communities and all people had a standard level of development, the expected one

Mikeas wrote:

In a way I inherited my ancestors’ spiritual richness: my grandparents were traditional medicine people, dancers, musicians, midwives, prayers and pulse takers. They were important to their communities. Thus ever since I became aware of my identity, at the age of 23, I’ve relentlessly devoted my work to the strengthening of

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<sup>24</sup> It offers careers related to the field, like Agronomy, Agricultural Engineering, Rural Development, etc.

Zoque language and culture. The EZLN ideology was a relevant influence in my sense of social commitment

It was around the time they were at the university, when many initiatives and policies to include indigenous peoples in the education system started to take place, recognising the relevance of Mexico's cultural diversity. The EZLN shout STOP!, *YA BASTA!* and many other claims around the world to consider diversity and marginalized groups in national and international agendas, started to open small windows. Lucía was accepted at the Teachers College "for being indigenous and because *reflejaba las ganas de estudiar*". Florinda studied at ENBIO, the first intercultural and bilingual Teachers College of Oaxaca. The project of the UI was developed and IFP-Probepi was the opportunity Mikeas, Lucía and Florinda found to study a postgraduate degree. Tania was the first Mexican indigenous Fulbright fellow.

## Postgraduate studies. Asserting their drive

Access to postgraduate studies is even more difficult for the same reasons as for bachelor's studies (lack of information, limited spaces, insufficient and exclusive scholarships programs, etc.) but considering in addition that spaces are lesser. The requirements and application processes are more problematic and expensive, thus indigenous peoples depend on scholarships and specific inclusive policies to pursue postgraduate degrees rather than open and equal or balanced opportunities. Besides, they also faced the systemic exclusion in terms of what is considered a relevant topic, or adequate methodologies and theories. The *dialogantes*, especially Lucía and Florinda have struggled to follow academic languages and structures. Their appreciations and contributions were respected and value, although Florinda faced an initial resistance about her thesis topic. It was about *conocimientos rituales mixtes* as a community backbone. "I had to convince my supervisor that those practices are not only about *chamanes* but should be considered part of the *interconocimiento* and the *dialogo de saberes*?"

Before doing a master's degree, the *dialogantes* had an employment related to their professional interests. Florinda became part of the CMPIO, a civil association that is part of the Oaxaca State Ministry of Education and that created a pedagogical movement to promote intercultural education at indigenous schools. Mikeas organized literary workshops in Spanish and Zoque for children from Chiapas and Tabasco. Lucía worked as a multi-grade teacher (preschool and primary) with children of migrant labourers in Chihuahua. Ironically, despite being one of the few Raramuri (women) teachers, she could not join the State Primary Indigenous Education system because her bachelor's degree was not in Indigenous Education but in Primary. Tania started master's studies almost immediately after college, but she had some months to work coordinating some activities for a drinking water project in her community.

However, to study further was an opportunity to have a better economic and labour conditions, a space to vindicate part of their academic aspirations, and also an excuse to travel and discover other realities. Florinda and Tania had the “dream” to do postgraduate studies since they were at the university, it was a matter of time to find the way; for Mikeas on the contrary, the IFP call was an unexpected opportunity that she did not let go:

... in one of the CELALI walls, I came across with a CIESAS poster: a call for indigenous peoples to study postgraduate degrees. I remember that I just thought that it could only happen in San Cristobal, a city that was vindicating *su ser indio*. I did not hesitate to participate, after all I was always a model student, studying was something I had done very well, and I did not know what to do with my life and.

For Lucía to hold a master’s degree would mean the possibility to find a job as a teacher away from the national education system that rejected her and that stiff teachers and professional practices:

I did not want to be like the other teachers tied to government regulations; for not to be on the same rope, I had to bring my own reflections, start walking my own path. I wanted to prepare myself better and then go into the labour world with more confidence. Economically *batallé* a lot, but then I realized that when you want to study you can, you just have to wait for the opportunities along the learning process ... my interest was to continue studying, preparing myself so one day I could *ganar patrimonio* with my efforts

She was pregnant when she decided to apply for a scholarship. Although her family supported and encouraged her to study, it was not an easy decision. She contested, once again, the culturally and socially rooted idea of have to choose between being a mother or a professional as if they were two separate worlds. She gave birth to Itzel before starting studies, her husband accompanied her and took care of the baby.

Mikeas story was a different one. “I was motivated to help my parents financially, and I was convinced that I would have a better job with a master’s degree, which I had, but at the expense of scarifying many personal things, including my daughter”. When she went to Barcelona to study, she was pregnant, “it was a very difficult decision, because my partner disagreed. It was about cultural differences: culturally, a man cannot accept a separation like something natural; if a woman leaves, even if is in good terms, *el hombre se queda en verguenza*, however, if the man is who must leave, the woman is obliged to wait, even if he never goes back.”

Florinda perceived the different contributions the conventional higher education have implied for her professional practices: “in the Teachers College I received the necessary elements to be with children in the classroom; during the master’s degree that practice was complemented with a more theoretical perspective, *como que das un brinco*.” She also values the trips she did. “Those journeys

allowed me to know other organizations, other cultures, *cosmovisiones*, ways to see the life and the world. They have round out my formation.”

In terms of what academically the studies represented Lucía says:

For me was difficult to join the masters group, I had to break the paradigm I had and construct a new one, and start expressing my ideas, I wanted to listen to my class mates and to be valued

After some months she found out that her opinions were important and that to speak an “irregular Spanish” was not an impediment to share her thoughts. She gain confidence and started to give her opinion.

Florinda reflects positively about the effects of the postgraduates studies in relation to her role as women and as indigenous, and how education has been key to position herself:

There is an advantage in the sense that you grow as a woman, professionally... you can perceive the social and cultural policies in different areas. I think is also about indigenous women socially occupy an important place. I think that the studies have allowed me to take on more challenges, to meet, to participate in different events, forums, conferences –national and international- to work at SEP. I think that, in a certain way, I have gained peoples’ confidence. That is the space I have conquered *de a poquito*

Tania says that “with the master’s degree I wanted to take away from me the title of 'agronomist' and do something I liked.” But then she realized that is proud to work in relevant areas for the Ayuuk people. Although the academia is a world in which she has found respect and recognition, she has also constantly have to combat another stereotype within scholars: indigenous peoples, especially women, should be studying social sciences, Anthropology or any discipline that analyses indigenous social structures.

There is nothing wrong with those areas, on the contrary, it seems really cool to talk about our culture, *pero como que te catalogan* and you should stay there, like if the rest would be for others. For me it has been a search for space and not to stay there

The effects of the postgraduate studies are diverse in each of them although they share some commonalities: they have struggle a continue studying, but one achieved a higher degree they have had better jobs, they have gained personal and professional recognition and respect –within their communities and families, and in professional spaces- and they are working with, for, towards and in benefit of their communities. However, Mikeas reflects:

Graduate studies helped me professionally to have a job. It's not the same to say that I did the master's at UJAT where I did my BA than to say that I studied at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. The prestige is another. In Mexico there is a huge *malinchismo*, people value much more what is done outside. Hence served as a reference for having me work well as a plus. But within my writing, I do not know how much that supported me.

Despite some resistance and questioning about pursuing further studies in their communities or at home, my sense is that the *dialogantes* have gain respect and recognition because they have demonstrate care and linkages with their peoples; their studies have given them other elements to be part of the complex, paradox world in which we are living. However, they are breaking stereotypes: inside the community as professional, and outside in the academia as “space invaders”. They have had to “adapt” in both spheres, and fight battles in both fronts but Tania considers that is a good moment for her:

I do not know if I would have had the same opportunities in life if I were not and indigenous person. I am *my morena*, small, my physical characteristic easily betray me. Sometimes they can be an obstacle, we must be aware that racism is very strong, not only in Mexico but also worldwide. However, there are also people who see you with different eyes and within their romance, sometimes end *echándote la mano* too much. Now for me has been a good thing that I am *morenita*, black-haired, *chaparrita* and from Oaxaca, because I have an automatic letter of presentation. I tell my mother that she had me at the right time, because many things would have not been the same in other time.

Her reflection is situated in a specific moment in which many axes are converging positively for her as a PhD student at an international institution, surrounded by scholars and in academic environment. She knows the way is still long to eradicate disadvantages and differences, but the *dialogantes* believe that education is a way to reduce that gap. Mikeas finally reflects

I'm part of a group of professionals committed ourselves to return to communities in Mexico and contribute to the eradication of the conditions of inequality and poverty. I firmly believe that education is the best hope to combat the lag our peoples have lived for centuries.

## General thoughts

The *dialogantes* processes to access and conclude postgraduate studies have been related to opportunities and barriers, from both family-social and institutional spheres. Diverse intersections have coincide for each of them to continue studying: sometimes were the fathers, others the mothers, the grandparents the siblings, friends; professors, scholarships, a universal and public education, the shifts in the national and international policies. The contexts from which they took the opportunities encountered are very diverse. They also overcome barriers in terms of the roles assigned as women, the exclusion for being indigenous and for the lack of economic resources (Yuval-Davis, 2016).

National and foreign initiatives that currently support indigenous peoples claims, are small but important responses to the struggles driven from minority groups. They have reached the international agendas because of its relevance and because of the social, cultural, epistemic and political crisis the world is facing (Escobar, 1995; Sousa, 2010). They are far away to solve structural problems of

exclusion and inequalities, but are attempts from which to learn some successes and failures (Mato, 2015: 19-20).

## Chapter 5 Appropriating knowledges

I have already address the systemic oppression the *dialogantes* experienced through the exclusionary mechanisms product of a colonial/modern system (Hernández and Suárez, 2008; Millán, 2010), followed with their reflections about the opportunities and barriers encountered along their schooling trajectories. Their narratives expose their own diversities in terms of multiple differences (Paulson, 2016; Hopkins, 2007), and their partial perspectives (Harstock,1983; Haraway,1988). I identified certain aspects of their everyday life that can be link to broader or “universal” processes (Mohanty, 2003). In the previous chapters were exposed some *dialogantes* commonalities: discriminations as for gender, race and class (Yuval-Davis, 2016); commitment towards their communities; and the value of education to find other ways to address the social and economic problems they face.

In this section I refer to their current professional experiences to see the ways in which they are generating otherwise activities, practices and knowledges. That is to say, the way in which they are appropriating the knowledge acquired through their schooling, to re-signify indigenous practices and epistemologies.

This section is about my personal questions, triggered from our conversations. It is also about trying to expose the contradictions of a messy and paradoxical reality; and as part of a critical research (Brown and Strega, 2005) that is not looking for coherent findings or articulated results. Is an attempt to try to understand where the *dialogantes* strength come from and where it goes. It is a reflection about hope and diversity.

### More stories

A poet, an intercultural education promoter, an agronomist and an indigenous teacher. Their current professional experiences expose a plurality in academic fields but also in the way they have appropriated the knowledge acquired in the conventional system towards the recognition and reposition of indigenous peoples (Mato, 2015; Sousa, 2010). The academic formation together with a critical thinking -which for me is not product of the schooling, but the result of broader experiences- have given them elements to be situated, aware, name and confront the discrimination.

I think that the away they are using the “westernized” knowledge is another form of resisting, of acknowledging the interconnections of their situated experiences (Haraway, 1988; Harstock, 1983), as part of a complex and paradoxical reality. From their own perspectives they are “practicing the theory”, they are generating otherwise-active forms to engage with local needs and practices (Millán, 2014).

### ***Promoting intercultural education***

Florinda is promoting intercultural education in the Mixe region. Her Phd thesis deals with the recognition and inclusion of linguistic and cultural knowledge of the Ayuuk people on the official-regionalized curricula. She works with Ayuuk teachers to re-signify linguistic and local/regional practices from an intercultural approach. She wants to promote the inter-knowledge in order to strengthen a cross-cultural education. She is taking theory into practice (Millán, 2014), contributing for an “ecology of knowledges” (Sousa, 2010).

When I hear or read Florinda’s present and future plans, I see her dialoguing with Sousa Santos and working in one of the Mexican institutions that are promoting intercultural education. One of those that de Oliveira (2015) consider radical or beyond reform. Her concerns have space to be develop, national and internationally; as an individual and as a member of a community. How can she not have hope? Even if the institutions are hierarchical and patriarchal, with colonial structures, there are spaces in which she can try to make a difference, where her voice finds echo.

The inequalities and the violence she lived as a child, are the reasons why she wants to generate inclusive programs to work with families and the communities in general. She told me that the main problems are outside the schools, so it is important to consider those conditions in an intercultural curricula, and in other community activities.

She just got married to an Argentinian teacher and they do not have kids yet. When I asked her what does her family think about it, she said that they “surrendered”, *tiraron la toalla* long time ago, they do not expect her to “fit in the mould.” She is challenging the gender role assigned to women in her community. Her brothers’ respect her because she took care of her two little brothers when her mother died 10 years ago, and because she is doing things for her community. “I am the one who carries the baton of the family, I believe that in a certain way my brothers have given me that leadership.” The same brothers who years ago, criticize her for doing secondary school. How can she not have hope?

### ***Poetry as resistance***

*Where I sleep it no longer rains  
Not even drops of water  
nor silica, nor sand  
only the noises of cars  
signs & neon lights  
Where I sleep  
my grandfather no longer  
opens his naked eyes  
at two in the morning.*

Sánchez (2015), ‘The soul returns to the shout of silence’



Mikeas worked for seven years in an official radio station in her region of origin. Despite being an indigenous station, programs were in Spanish with Western contents. She worked hard to raise awareness among the staffs and looked for ways to make a more creative space from and for indigenous languages. She said she had to do double efforts to be respected because of her youth and for being women, “is not easy among indigenous to accept that a woman is the “boss”, there is too much envy, especially among women.”

Mikeas quit the radio station because the downsizing. For her, the current government is dismantling a lot of actions that have been done to include indigenous peoples. She is disappointed. PRI, the political party that ruled Mexico for over 70 years is back. Many policies (between radical and beyond reforms) are withdrawn –not officially but are receiving less financial support- and some of the few implemented policies, can be ignore or disappeared. But she has her pen to continue fighting. Her poetry is a way to resist, to re-signify, to re-position otherwise knowledges.

*My grandmother never learned Spanish  
was afraid of forgetting her gods  
was afraid of waking up in the morning  
without the prodigals of her offspring in her memory  
My grandmother believed that you could only  
talk to the wind in Zoque  
but she kneeled before the saints  
and prayed with more fervor than anyone  
Jesus never heard her  
my grandmother's tongue  
smelled like rose apples  
and her eyes lit up when she sang  
with the brightness of a star  
Saint Michael Archangel never heard her  
my grandmother's prayers were sometimes blasphemies  
jukis'tyt she said and the pain stopped  
patsoke she yelled and time paused beneath her bed  
In that same bed she birthed her seven sons*

Sánchez (2015), 'Jesus never understood my grandmother's prayers'

Her poetry claims the Zoque cosmogony, the values taught by her grandparents as a shield against the homogenization of ideas and forms imposed by the West (Sousa, 2010); her texts call for respect and human coexistence. She sings her poetry as her grandparent Simón sang to cure people; she is rebellious and resistant as her grandmother, who used to walk topless and died with more than 100 years. Her texts expose the paradoxes, inequalities and pains of life, which she perceived and claim from her own borderlands. While studied abroad she mirrored her story in other *cimarrones* (bighorns)<sup>25</sup> like her. Her words are also what Walsh calls *pensamiento cimarrón* or “maroon thinking”, they awaken the

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<sup>25</sup> See Sánchez, 2012

sense of collective belonging, they question, call for resistance, for reconstruction, and liberation (Walsh, 2012).

Mikeas recognises that in order to be whom she is, she adapted and has had to push herself further:

Being a woman, being indigenous or being poor were never holdbacks, but rather life challenges. I'm now Matsa's mother. I was the head of a radio station, I write poetry and scholarly essays, I produced radio programs and am constantly on the road. I won't let my essence wither though. I refuse to witness the death of my ancestors' language, my own language. So the radio, literature and academy have become the personal battlegrounds where I fight for the future generations to explore new courses for the social use of language. We've got a long way to go, but I'm doing my part..."

She has taken and built as much opportunities as possible. She also has hope.

### ***Teaching to teach***

Lucía has been working with teachers promoting indigenous education in Chihuahua, fighting against the acculturation and trying to reposition Rarámuris practices in the classrooms. In her PhD thesis she is planning to describe the experiences and life stories of other Rarámuri teachers like her. Her objective is to identify, record and evidence the contradictions between the official curricula of indigenous primary schools in her region, and the practices on the ground the teachers perform. She is concern because

The indigenous teachers say that "Good Living," *el buen vivir*, is to work in the fields, in the lands, and if there is no work, then it is not "Good Living". But then they have earnings as teachers and buy the maize and forget to work the land. They obtain the maize with the money that they win, and do not work the lands anymore ... the teachers themselves leave our practices

Besides her academic concerns and interest, I think she is a conscious "space invader" (Puwar, 2004). She studies in a private elite university located in a conservative state. She made her traditional dresses herself and wear them all the time, except when the heat is too high because they are meant to be for cold weather, like in the Chihuahua Sierra. For her, clothes are an important identity element. She promotes its use among Rarámuri teachers, but she told me that she does not have much success because "those things are getting lost".

When I asked Lucía a few days ago, about the pain and sacrifices she and her family done so she could continue studying she said,

I lacked from my mom's care as child, but school helped me to understand that indigenous women do not have to be submissive to a man. As I grew up I look it as a positive experience, because if I had stayed, I had gone to the city and I even got married in adolescence. To be away from my family was a good experience because I had the freedom to make decisions about my life."

She has fight against all odds, but the barriers faced were also the main opportunities. She was raised by an oppressive catholic education in which they cut

her hair and limited her time and personal space, but were she also found a group of friend with whom she continued studying until higher education. They were her drive. The nuns taught them to be critical about their lives. She continued studying and started a family when she decided to. Her husband has been by her side along her decisions. How can she not have hope?

### ***The field, the land***

Tania is the only of the four *dialogantes* who studied an engineering. She is an Agronomist. Although she has been studying and has little professional experience, in her PhD (Agrarian Development) she is addressing three themes that cross with a project in which she worked back in Oaxaca: information technologies, conservation agriculture and participatory improvement (*mejoramiento participativo*). She is concern about the lack or the deficient public policies on rural and agricultural aspects, so she sees herself working towards do some changes in this regard. But she told me that she also "wants to be free" from governmental and agencies interests and requirements, and for that "I would like to look for an international category as a consultant, to make my salary attractive."

She has another perspective and approach to contribute to her community. She wants to do it as a researcher, designing and evaluating relevant programs. Since she was 14 and left home, she told me she has struggled with the difficulties of going back and continue flying: following the impulse of her curiosity, which is what has always push her further.

When I asked her about the process of her education and the costs of it, she told me that she might studied a "men" discipline because her father raised her, as his first child, as if she was a boy. The sexism and gender discrimination in Tamazulapan asphyxiated her. She did not want to fit in, so she has always looked for more opportunities to fulfil a curiosity that is constrain in her community. However, she told me that her "little belly bottom," her *ombliguito* was buried in her community when she was born. For the Ayuuk people, you have to die in the place where you *ombliguito* was buried, so she knows she will go back some day.

She told me that through education she found a way to reconstitute herself and said that: "today I enjoy myself and I feel happy, but it was not always so." Although she is proud of overcoming dozens of holdbacks, she is also angry because of the structural violence against indigenous women. Her granny Eulalia, her main pillar, and who was respectful, caring and supportive, considered her (and her sister) the "useless granddaughter" because she was reading all day. She never called her so, but Tania says she thought that. If some of the four *dialogantes* has to juggle with her multiple differences (Paulson, 2016; Hopkins, 2007) in order to "jump" the life obstacles, that is Tania. She has had the ability to "adapt", but even to transform herself in various ways in order to "fit" the

different spaces in which she has developed. She has challenged the imaginaries of an indigenous women as being an Ayuuk Engineering who has live away and abroad since very young. Her relation with her community is distant but respectful, she has demonstrate that she can make tortillas, so “I can be in the kitchen with other women and I do not fight them anymore, I do not care and they respect me”. She has found the way to name her borderland and play with her intersections. She is also challenging the gender and racial roles within her community and in the field, the academia and the institutions that she works for, she is a “space invader.”

She received the youth award from the President’s hands, knowing that his government have damaged the indigenous education. In her speech she position herself as “an example of the public education,” hoping that her voice could find some eco. She is a disappointed, but she has hope. “Is better than do nothing”, she said.

## General questions

From their experiences, from our conversation and while writing this chapter, some general, painful questions came to my mind. I do not necessarily have answers, but I feel the need to share them here:

**Is it that gender inequalities are tougher to modify than race discrimination? Is it possible that the inseparable layers of oppression can be detached or have diverse intensities? Why MIW have to “adapt”? To what? Why are we proud of overcoming obstacles that should not exist? Why are we not angry instead of proud? How can we revert the damage of history, of centuries? Where the hope comes from? What else can we do?**

## Chapter 6 Paradoxes and more questions

This research went through a complex historical and contextual road to try to unravel some of the paradoxes that MIW face and have to deal with in order to achieve postgraduate education. It also exposed the way they have appropriate the knowledge acquired for the benefit of the indigenous peoples and to promote intercultural practices. In the first sections, the reasons behind this research were exposed together with the methodology: another difficult road I walked because of the diverse forms the qualitative and collaborative approach can take. The technical difficulties and the recognition of the power relations were addressed. The standpoint, intersectional and descolonize perspectives were useful to frame our reflections as persons situated in specific contexts, with particular characteristics and worldviews, but whom are living in a modern/colonial system that is exclusionary and violent, particularly against indigenous women. A system that rejects diversity.

The road the *dialogantes* have walked is not straight forward and unilineal, is not a path with one entry and one exist; rather it is a complex labyrinth in which opportunities appear and have to be grab to jump the barriers; in which hope blows to push forward and becomes a shield to resist. A labyrinth where their multiple differences are continually changing in order to juggle an oppressive structure, to which they have “adapted”. A system, a history that has denied, included, homologated, valued and hided Mexico’s cultural diversity. The possibilities exist but the harm is done and is deep.

From Lucía, Florinda, Tania and Mikeas voices we heard that education is a passage to improve life conditions, not just economically but as a way to raise awareness, critical thinking, respect and inclusion, a way to work with and for collective interests. I mean education as a whole: to read and write, to know mathematics, history, geography, music, to do sports; but also to pay attention to our surroundings: to have open ears and eyes to nature, to human behaviours, to others thinking, to our own senses, to meaningful things. Education as a way to encounter diversity and embrace it.

I confess I had an assumption. I thought that the postgraduate degrees added another layer of discrimination for the *dialogantes*: within their communities because the westernization-alienation it represents and in other-western institutions where they work or studied because of being “space invaders”. I was wrong. I think that, with all its paradoxes and contradictions, the reconfiguration of the world (Escobar, 1995 and Sousa, 2007), is opening windows to plurality and where indigenous women professional have a place. It is not just a matter of the places they are taking and claiming, but also about a world that needs them to continue with its (urgent) reconfiguration.

This RP has simple contributions. It is a research base on experiences, on situated knowledges. It considers the voices of those whose voices are hardly taken into consideration. It exposes the oppression, the pain, the struggles of Mexican indigenous women. The *dialogantes* opinions and reflections contribute to perceive and sense other tessituras of discrimination. It shows that poetry is a powerful tool to fight, to expose, to have hope. It demonstrate that the form is also content. It presents other faces of indigenous women to dissolve imaginaries, but also to claim the opportunities and spaces that are still denied. It shows the paradoxes of sexism and gender inequalities.

The journey is not over, on the contrary, I have more questions than before. I have encountered many other paths, hollows, contradictions that push my curiosity further. What other paths have to be un-walked to understand and value diversity? What has to be done so that plurality, instead of being respected, is assumed? Is it possible to have a world in which diversity is not to be discussed but embraced?

I cannot avoid to feel hope. I think is contagious.

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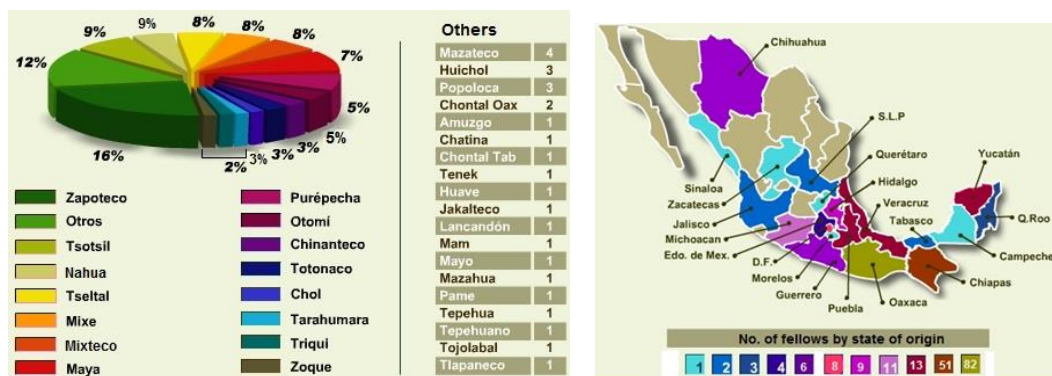
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## Appendix 1. IFP and PROBEPI

IFP was launched as an educational model designed to promote access and equity in higher education by supporting individuals from marginalized social groups and to encouraging them to work toward positive social change in their home communities and countries. It was design to operate for 10 years in 22 countries from Latin America, Asia, Middle East, Africa and Russia where enabled 4,305 fellows to study at universities in their countries and abroad. In Latin America, 80% of the fellows (over 1,000 in total, coming from Brazil, Chile, Peru, Guatemala and Mexico) were indigenous or afro-descendant.

The Program in Mexico was directed to indigenous people; it was the only country in which a specific population was targeted. Along nine cohorts, 231 fellows were selected: 90 women and 141 men (39% and 61% respectively); over half of them (62%) were students between 20 and 29 years of age, but another considerable percentage, 38% were adults above 30 years. Within this universe, 34 of the 62 officially recognized ethnic groups in Mexico were represented (Figure 1), and by candidates' place of origin, 20 of the 31 states (Figure 2); 193 fellows pursued master's studies and 38 PhD's. Among the broad activities that Mexican female alumni have carried out, are the promotion of poetry in mother tongues, the development of friendly environmental projects, the production of educational bilingual materials, nutrition campaigns in underserved communities, etc.

**Figures 1 & 2. IFP Fellows by indigenous group and states of birth**



Source: *International Fellowships Program. Mexico Final Report, 2013*

When the IFP ended, Mexico was also the only country in which the initiative continued with governmental support. In 2012, CDI and CONACYT,<sup>26</sup> earmarked resources to develop and operate the current Probepi. Probepi maintain the same objectives and similar structure as IFP based on its relevance, positive results<sup>27</sup> and the continued demand of indigenous peoples to pursue further

<sup>26</sup> Both are decentralized public agencies. CDI is in charge of indigenous peoples affairs and CONACYT of granting scholarships for postgraduate studies among other responsibilities.

<sup>27</sup> "Positive results" are presented here in terms of what is validated or acceptable by the conventional education system like the grades, completion rates, etc.: 82% of IFP alumni have

studies.<sup>28</sup> Until 2015, when the third Probepi cohort was selected, 95 fellowships had been granted: 44 to women (46%) and 51 to men (54%); 61% to young between 20 and 29 years of age and 39% to people over their 30's; 24 ethnic groups and 18 states are represented; 84 fellows were selected to pursue master's studies and 11 PhD's (in 2015 only MA scholarships were granted because of budgetary constrains).

The combined results of IFP and Probepi until last year, consider 12 selection rounds in which 2,099 applications were received, almost half of them, 49% are women's; 326 fellowships have been granted, from which 41% belongs to women; 55% of the ethnic groups are represented (34 out of 62); and 20 out of 32 states.

One of the characteristics of both IFP and Probepi that is worthy to mention is fellows' social commitment as prioritized selection criteria. It means that they have had carried out activities to support and encourage the enhancement of indigenous people on a long-term history of systematic work, either in their communities/regions of origin, or at national and international level. Thus, most fellows used the postgraduate studies as a platform to consolidate their previous actions towards social change, rather to exclusively boost individual interests. For that reason, the range of disciplines to study is open to the connections they make between the academic area and the social impact of their studies, rather than be limited to a specific list of prioritized fields.

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successfully graduated as for April 2016 (70% of PhD and 91% of MA); 35% obtained a distinction; 90% scored a GPA over 80% and 57% over 90%. Information obtained from a document shared by Blanca Ceballos, former IFP monitoring official who follows IFP alumni graduation and is currently in charge of Probepi students placement and monitoring.

<sup>28</sup> In the nine promotion rounds of IFP from 2001 to 2010, more than 1,300 applications were received from which only 17.7% obtained a scholarship. Information provided by CIESAS.

## Appendix 2. Invitation letter (in Spanish)

Decidí estudiar un posgrado porque no podía dormir. Llevaba varios años de noches inquietas, despertando a veces a las dos, a las tres o, más regularmente, a eso de las cuatro de la mañana. Estaba inquieta porque había algo en mi subconsciente que me pedía moverme de la rutina, hacer algo más, algo distinto.

Después de casi 15 años de trabajar en el CIESAS, mi cuerpo y mi mente pedían a gritos un cambio. Esos años se fueron como agua. Trabajar en el IFP y después en el Probepi significó un aprendizaje profundo y un crecimiento invaluable en que los días se resbalaron de los años. Nunca olvidaré una plática que tuve con David Navarrete (Coordinador del IFP, amigo, jefe y mentor profesional) después de un par de años de iniciado el Programa, en el que los dos nos burlábamos con un poco de menosprecio de las personas que trabajan en un mismo proyecto, empresa o institución por mucho tiempo. Cuando miramos para atrás después de cinco, seis, ocho, doce años de dedicarnos en cuerpo y alma al IFP, nos comíamos nuestras propias palabras. Todo el equipo (David, Blanca, Trini, Linda y yo) nos quedamos desde que, en distintos momentos, nos incorporamos al Programa y hasta su conclusión en 2013. Era un trabajo humano, con gente comprometida, responsable, interesada en poner un granito de arena para que este mundo sea más justo. Y ahora sucede lo mismo en el Probepi. Toña, Blanca y Michel no pueden bajarse del barco con todo y las complicaciones que ha significado transferir el IFP a la administración pública mexicana (no hacen falta explicaciones). A mi me tomó varias noches, más de 365, dar el siguiente paso.

El IFP y el Probepi han sido proyectos incluyentes, con un sentido de justicia social y respeto que también se ha vivido en los equipos de trabajo. El CIESAS es una institución cálida, relativamente pequeña, en la que la comunidad académica, estudiantil y administrativa convive regularmente, generando un ambiente amable y flexible. A ello, en lo personal me resultaba mágico -viviendo en la Ciudad de México- que la oficina quedara a 20 minutos de mi casa, a 10 de la de mi mamá, a 12 de la de mi hermano y a 7 de la escuela de mi hijos. Sin embargo me puse a buscar trabajo en busca de un cambio. Sabía que no sería fácil encontrar algo siquiera similar. Las pocas opciones que identifiqué me requerirían más tiempo y energía de la que tenía.

No me interesaba, ni me interesa, conseguir un trabajo que me saque de mi casa a las seis o siete de la mañana y me regrese a las siete u ocho de la noche, sobre todo porque una de mis mayores prioridades es mi familia. Mis dos hijos aún están pequeños, tienen 11 y 8 años y disfruto mucho estar con ellos. Mi casa está casi a las afueras de la Ciudad de México, en la salida a Cuernavaca, así que cualquier trabajo que no esté en Tlalpan me requeriría, por lo menos, una hora de traslado de ida y otra de regreso. Eso, sumado a mi resistencia por estar en un empleo burocrático, de horarios inamovibles y probablemente con la obligación de “chechar tarjeta”... No. Definitivamente no quería eso. Como tampoco quería dejar a un lado todo lo que había aprendido en el IFP-Probepi; por el

contrario, tenía ganas de tomarme un tiempo y reflexionar sobre todo lo que había sucedido en esos años.

Por otro lado, mi marido también estaba cansado de su trabajo. Es arquitecto, y había tenido un año de perros. Siempre habíamos soñado con vivir fuera de la Ciudad. Incluso llegamos a pensar en ahorrar lo suficiente y tomarnos un año sabático con los niños, cuando Alex terminara secundaria y Carmen primaria. Sería un año de aventura, ya fuera recorrer Sudamérica en camiones o irnos a Canadá para que los niños aprendieran inglés... el sueño estaba abierto.

Mis noches de desvelo le daban vueltas a todas estas inquietudes. Cambio, permanencia, aventura, hijos, reflexión, aprendizaje giraban irregularmente por mis sueños, moldeando inconscientemente ideas maquiavélicas. Uno de esos desvelos me despertó con mariposas en la barriga. Era hora de volver a la escuela. La idea de estudiar también había girado por mi cabeza muchas veces, sobre todo por haber estado trabajando para personas a quienes nada los había detenido para continuar los estudios: el empuje y determinación de los postulantes y becarios me intimidaban. Además de estar en una institución de educación superior como el CIESAS y ver de cerca cómo se produce conocimiento académico. Había –hay- tanto que reflexionar en torno a las iniciativas del IFP-Probepi (desde los efectos en cada individuo a nivel personal y comunitario hasta las consecuencias como política social, o incluso sobre el proceso de transformación de ser un proyecto de una instancia privada con la Fundación Ford a un programa del gobierno mexicano a través de Conacyt), que un poco de espacio reflexivo me serviría mucho.

Una vez que sentí mariposas en la barriga, todo estaba dicho. Eso era lo que tenía que hacer. Siempre me he guiado por ese instinto. Generalmente con buenos resultados. Lo ideal sería estudiar fuera de México para unir varias de las inquietudes que giraban alrededor de mi familia; pero también me pareció buena idea hacerlo en México. Mejor que un trabajo burocrático. Seguro.

Y de ahí todo fue rápido: conocer cuáles eran los programas e instituciones más adecuados para abordar y enfilear algunos de los temas que tenía en mente; redactar mis motivos; pedir cartas de recomendación, armar expedientes, solicitar becas, etc. Tantos años dedicada a ello debían servir de algo. Sin embargo “rápido” no significó “fácil”, sobre todo porque tuve que negociar conmigo misma una decisión que sonaba fuera de contexto: hacer una maestría a los 40 años, tocar puertas con mis profesores de la licenciatura -que probablemente ni se acordaban de mi- cruzar dedos para obtener apoyos financieros, quitar casa, girar la vida de mi hijos, de mi pareja, de mi madre (que prácticamente ha estado dedicada a ayudarme con mis hijos), etc. No me detuve a pensar mucho, nomás hacía lo necesario para lograr el objetivo final. Paso a paso. Las estrellas se alinearon y todo sucedió en un abrir y cerrar de ojos, en seis meses.

Llevo un año en La Haya, Holanda. Estoy haciendo una maestría en Políticas Sociales para el Desarrollo en el Instituto de Ciencias Sociales perteneciente a la Universidad Erasmus de Rotterdam. Ya terminé materias, algunas con buenos resultados y otras no tanto. No vengo por calificaciones sino por aprendizaje, aunque tengo que mantener el promedio de ocho que pide Conacyt para

la beca. No es tan complicado pero sin duda es una presión que está latente detrás de cada lectura, de cada ensayo, de cada examen.

Mi trabajo de investigación final es en torno a diálogos contruidos a distancia con cuatro mujeres indígenas que ya estudiaron un posgrado. Me interesa presentar sus voces en una reflexión conjunta sobre los efectos de sus estudios tiempo después de haber hecho sus maestrías: por qué apostarle a la educación; qué las motivó entonces y qué las motiva ahora; qué ha cambiado y qué permanece; qué les dio el posgrado y qué les quitó; qué las mantiene alerta; qué sueñan y qué las inquieta. Las respuestas que busco no son necesariamente teóricas ni formales en el sentido de que el posgrado les ha dado “herramientas teóricas para...” o “conocimientos con los cuales...”, sino desde la voz más interna y visceral (que también puede incluir las anteriores): porque no tenía trabajo, porque estaba aburrida, porque quería conocer otros países, porque me gusta estudiar, porque quería huir de mi entorno, porque quería demostrarle a mi familia que sí se puede, porque...

Yo aún no sé en qué va a resultar mi historia. No tengo un proyecto laboral futuro. Confieso que mi objetivo era el que cuento en estas líneas y nada más. ¿Qué me depara? No sé ¿Qué espero? Seguir aportando, colaborando, aprendiendo, viajando ¿Cómo? No estoy segura, ya se abrirán oportunidades. Siempre he confiando en que las mariposas aparecen y me indican el camino.

#### RETO AL QUE TE INVITO A SUMARTE:

¿Me ayudas a construir tu historia haciendo una pequeña reflexión como la que hago aquí, sobre lo que te motivó a hacer un posgrado? No necesita ser muy extensa, una o dos cuartillas. Si la pluma y el corazón se extienden, son más que bienvenidos. Si son más reservados, también. No importa la forma ni que cumpla con una estructura específica. No se trata de que te quite mucho tiempo. Con que narres lo que te llegue a la mente y al corazón es suficiente. Sé que podrían haber muchos detalles. Si tienes ganas de compartirlos, adelante, si prefieres mencionarlos nada más, ya luego los conversamos o que se queden nomás así. Como te sientas cómoda.

En términos de confidencialidad, toda la información que me compartas será tratada en los términos que tú decidas. Si prefieres anonimato y discreción, cuenta con ello, aunque la idea es que mujeres como tú, rarámuris, mixes, nahuas, popolucas, mayas, zoques, tsotsiles, etc., tengan la voz y la visibilidad que se les ha negado por tantos años, sobre todo en la academia.

Este trabajo busca eso: presentar nuestro diálogo como una forma de generar conocimiento desde una trinchera distinta, que a su vez muestre otras visiones, otras luchas, otras realidades que son otras pero que también pueden ser las mismas, quizá como mujeres, como hijas, quizá como profesionistas, como madres, como rebeldes... No sé, puras ideas. Además de generar esa forma distinta de conocimiento, se trata de romper con los estereotipos que nos persiguen, a todas como mujeres (encerradas en lo privado, en la casa, en “lo que debe ser”), a ustedes, además como pertenecientes a un pueblo originario, detenidas en el tiempo, en roles aún más conservadores. ¿Te interesa? ¿Le entras?

### Appendix 3. Translation of Spanish words

- Abuelita* (granny)  
*Autoconsumo* (self-production)  
*Buen vivir* (Good living)  
*Candil de la calle obscuridad de tu casa* (saying that refers about someone who lightens the street but obscure or darken his/her own home)  
*Chapulines* (grasshoppers)  
*Chivas* (goats)  
*Cholos* (idle, member of a gang)  
*Saberes* (wisdom)  
*Desde abajo y a la izquierda* (from the bottom and to the left)  
*Desvincularme* (disassociated myself)  
*Monte*: (hill, small mountain)  
*Me contagiaron* (transmit me)  
*Membrillo* (quince)  
*Milpas* (corn fields)  
*Morenita*: little brunette  
*Muchachas* (young girls)  
*Mujeriego* (womanizer)  
*Nieta inútil* (useless granddaughter)  
*Formas muy otras* (otherwise forms)  
*Pueblo* (small town or village)  
*Que le echara ganas* (that will cast forward)  
*Reflejaba las ganas de estudiar* (reflected the desire to study)  
*Saberes* (knowledges)  
*Saberes ancestrales* (ancestral knowledges)  
*Si traer a los hijos en fila* (if to bring children in a row)  
*Tequio* (the *faena* or collective work in benefit of the community. It is a pre-Hispanic custom that remains rooted in several indigenous regions)  
*Van dejando* (leave behind)  
*Y la arropo* (and covered, embraced)  
*YA BASTA. Nunca más un Mexico sin nosotros!* (Stop. Never again a Mexico without us)  
*Yo solita me voy a hacer responsable* (I, by myself, will be responsible)

Appendix 4. Mexican Education System. Structure and numbers 2011-2012

MEXICAN EDUCATION SYSTEM									
				2011-2012					
LEVEL	PERIOD	TYPE	STUDENTS	%	TEACHERS	%	SCHOOLS	%	
BASIC (compulsory)	Pre-school	3 Years	General	4,705,545	13.5%	224.146	12.1%	91.253	35.7%
		Community							
		Indigenous							
	Primary	6 Years	General	14,909,419	42.7%	573.849	30.9%	99.378	38.9%
			Community courses						
			Indigenous						
Lower secondary	3 Years	General TV-Secondary	6,167,424	17.7%	388.769	20.9%	36.563	14.3%	
High school	Upper secondary (compulsory)	3 Years	General	4,333,589	12.4%	285.974	15.4%	15.424	6%
	Technical/Vocational		Technical						
Higher Education	Undergraduate	4 -5 Years	Teachers colleges (Normales)	3,161,195	9.1%	342.269	18.4%	6.878	2.7%
			General Universities						
			Technical Institutes						
			Intercultural Universities						
	Graduate	1-4 Years	Diploma						
			Master						
Doctorate									
Other (Training for work)			1,614,327	4.6%	41.222	2.2%	5.999	2.3%	
<b>Total</b>			<b>34,891,499</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1,856,229</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>255.498</b>	<b>100%</b>	

For the cycle 2011-12, source Olvera, (2013) and Ornelas, C. (2006)



**Appendix 5. De Oliveira and Mato categories (higher education institutions)**

APPENDIX 5		
De Oliveira "Social cartography" and Mato "Categories of educative policies and initiatives"		
De Oliveira, Vanessa. "Social cartography". Spaces of enunciation in response to modernity's shadow in higher education	Mato, Daniel. Categories of higher education initiatives for indigenous peoples in Latin America	Examples in Mexico
<b>Soft Reform Space</b>	<b>Inclusion of individuals in conventional universities</b>	<b>IFP &amp; Probepi</b>
Recognises individual's differences and ethnocentric practices; strategies for redistribution, affirmative action programs, etc., take place, but the system does not change	Professionals whose activities have social impact (positive). Westernization of students, brain drains, family breakups; students experience racism in conventional universities; lack of relevant curricula for the indigenous peoples (main critiques).	Consider indigenous peoples academic and community interests and needs. Limited programs (operatively; in budgets and quotes). Fellows granted study in conventional institutions. They do not generate structural changes
<b>Radical Reform Space</b>	<b>Training program &amp; bachelors' degrees implemented by conventional institutions</b>	<b>National Pedagogic University (UPN), CIESAS</b>
Rigid aspects of the system are identified and should be modified (nationalism, racism, capitalism, colonialism, heteropatriarchy) in order to generate inclusive spaces.	Indigenous professionals –some of them beneficiaries of the "inclusion of individual in conventional universities," participate as professors and scholars in higher education institutions, either conventional or not.	The UPN and CIESAS have various bachelor's degree to form indigenous teachers and to incorporate indigenous <i>saberes</i> . Lucía and Florinda have work in some of the UPN units
	<b>Teaching, research &amp; social networking projects</b>	<b>Community activities / Tequio</b>
	Courses or activities organised by and for indigenous peoples to enhance and promote local practices, languages, methodologies or technologies; but can be also intercultural and collaborative researches to systematize them.	Social or community service activities or <i>tequio</i> . Mikeas literature workshops or Tania's field consultancies are good examples.
<b>Beyond Reform Space</b>	<b>Higher Education Intercultural Institutions</b>	<b>UI, Unisur-Gro</b>
Recognises ontological dominance, connecting different dimensions of oppression, and for what otherwise forms, <i>saberes</i> and practices should be considered	Incorporation of <i>saberes</i> , indigenous teaching and learning methodologies, etc. with the conventional systems. They have been created to attend local demands and proposals.	The set of IU in Mexico are an example of a governmental policy; Unisur in the State of Guerrero, design from the bottom of indigenous organizations. They might fit in the "beyond-reform" category, but they have not yet signified any structural change in the education system. Mikeas teaches in the UI of Tabasco

Sources: Mato, Daniel (2015), De Oliveira (2015)