Andrés Guerrero

Interviewed and translated by Tristan Platt

TP: Andrés, you have recently published a book¹ which has provoked considerable interest, and which presents the results of your reflections over several years on the history and anthropology of Ecuador. Let me start by asking you what led you to these two disciplines, and how you think the combination has led you to understand better an Andean and Latin-American society such as Ecuador?

AG: In my research, to move back and forth between history and anthropology was as male to female in carpentry. I use an Ecuadorianism that signifies the action of fitting one stave into another by means of a hole and a peg, so that they are imbricated inside, one fitting into the other. That fertile relationship was something that emerged naturally, spontaneously, so to speak, in the course of research. I carried out my first fieldwork in the mid-1970s in a hacienda of the Northern Sierra of Ecuador called Muyurcu. When I went to live there (the leaders of the Ecuadorean Federation of Indians [FEI] helped me gain entry), the hacienda itself had ceased to exist a few years before. The *huasipunguero* families had occupied it, taking advantage of the Agrarian Reform Laws of the 1960s and 1970s.² The peasants had “recovered” their lands, as the leaders put it. They had been organizing and struggling since the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, under the auspices of the Socialist, and later the Communist parties. As soon as they recovered the

hacienda, they transformed it into what they called an agrarian cooperative.

Of course, while living in one of the leaders’ houses, I realized that the words did not fit the historical reality. The cooperative was a renewed form of community, an expansion with changes (no doubt important) of the *huasipungo* community, the internal community of the hacienda, channeled through a cooperative legally regulated by the state. As I collected information on the ex-hacienda and the testimony of the *huasipungueros*, I realized that the phenomena I was observing, and the testimonies I was hearing, referred to a long duration of past processes. For example, the extended *huasipungo* families who lived in the hacienda had been created since at least the end of the sixteenth century. At the same time, I discovered that the legal forms and their language, such as that of being organized in cooperatives, created porous realities, a solid material that alternated with gaps, like volcanic lava, or a state of exception in the internal margins of this solidity. Thus, the *huasipunguero* communities in the hacienda had been the result of the confluence of long-durational processes among families who had been brought since the sixteenth century from great distances and diverse cultures. The communities, I discovered, had been a (re)invention propelled by convergent processes relating to the reproduction of the peasant economic unit: the circulation of access to land, marriage strategies, the circulation of adults

and children between families. These extended processes had given rise to the *huasipungo* communities of the Muyurcu hacienda from the end of the sixteenth and during the seventeenth centuries, and also those of other haciendas in the same and other regions in Ecuador.

The discovery of this lengthy sedimentation of past processes, and the changes occurring when I did my fieldwork, when the hacienda morphed into communities, led me to perceive a problem which, now that I think about it, grew into a network of problems that took different forms in later projects. It was an intuition that these sedimentations, both those deriving from past processes and those I observed in the everyday interactions around me, were porous. In the processes of that reality—in the labelings (*nominaciones*), the laws, the norms, the institutions—it was necessary to seek what lay in the interstices, past as well as present. Yes, that first intuition led me much later to move from fieldwork to the archives, and to reflect on that space of exception as it had formed in the past, beyond the legal forms of the social organization, and research what was implicit, taken for granted in both present and past realities.

TP: That is, a state of exception with regard to the surface, or legal normativities. So that experience between field and archive allowed you to say something new about Andean society, with an inside and an outside. But how does Andean experience differ from other historical experiences, including those of Europe?

AG: Well, my research does not try to establish a difference, that is, something like the specificity of an experience, or rather of Andean processes. Of course every historical process has its dimension of particularity. It is unique not only comparatively but also in relation to itself. That is one of its dimensions; but we must also take into account what Andean processes have in common with other historical phenomena. I emphasize “in common,” referring to what is shared, not as an abstraction or something general or universal in two or more realities, but rather in the sense of confluences at

certain points between processes. For example, the reality of the *huasipungo* community I found in Moyurcu, its modes of existence, reproduction, and transformation, that double dimensionality of reality in processes of porous sedimentation, resonated in my memory as I traveled through the Andes in Peru and Bolivia, physically or through reading the work of other researchers. Thus, I noted the existence of a hierarchy between two groups among the households, the *huasipungueros* and the new generations (*arrimados*), which have different local forms but also something in common. So I thought, look, what I am analyzing could also be applied to other realities and processes while respecting what is specific in each case. I think that, in this way, both aspects began to combine in my work, though without being planned or even consciously. I worked with other worlds at the margins of my direct vision, both those to be found in the Andes and also those in other parts of the world.

TP: The article published in this issue of *Focaal* in English translation relates to the last chapter of the book you have recently published. This book contains other themes that grew from your work in Muyurcu. Can you tell us something of the other themes, and what continuities you perceive with the work in Muyurcu?

AG: The chapters published in my last book *Administración de poblaciones, ventriloquía y transcritura* are not in fact derived (as you suggest) from my field research in Muyurcu. That fieldwork was paradoxical: a resounding failure, yet also a success. A failure because my aim on entering Muyurcu was to collect the oral memory of conflict that had arisen from unpaid wages, the violence of the patron's employees, the lack of land for the young, the lack of pastures that led to the occupation of the hacienda. And what I harvested was chaff without grain, trivial information. It did not go beyond the stereotyping mold of the discourses of representation. Those stories of experiences were lacking the implicit dynamic of the conflicts, those too familiar dimensions of experience that

remain untellable, or only pass through the most superficial levels of the cortex of memory, as that which is collected in an “open pit” mine. So when I left the field and began the meticulous work of transcribing and organizing the narratives, I realized that I had collected a magnificent “official version” of the conflicts in the most exact sense of the term: what the *huasipungo* family heads had told me, a memory forged in a narrative order that I had provoked during the interviews, were above all discourses of representation. I mean that they were versions designed to be heard by people not only from outside the community, but were also discourses such as those whose content was what the *huasipungueros* I interviewed had judged (no doubt unconsciously, and with no desire to deceive) to be the sort of narrative that a white, left-wing intellectual might want to hear.

Why did I fail? Well, I must admit to a young man's lack of experience. I had not weighed the bias that might be awakened in the memories I stirred up, by the fact that I had entered Muyurcu thanks to the leaders of the Ecuadorean Federation of Indians, a mass organism (as they called it) of the Communist Party of Ecuador. Both organizations had been working there for more than half a century when I arrived in Muyurcu, and had formed many generations of spokesmen, and by diffusion many peasants too. The stories, the taped memories of the conflicts, followed a sort of pre-established script. They weren't mistaken, much less false. They were one of the narrative formations that organized one aspect—the most obvious—of the memory of those conflicts, following the links between three terms: cause, action, and aim. Above all, they extended along temporal paths of coherence organized in terms of an idea of origins. This was a bit like, to paraphrase and invert Ranajit Guha, the notion of “counter-insurgent prose,” in that it developed from a state explanatory rationality and became an “insurgent prose” developed by the discourses of the two organizations.

That was the failure. The side of success in that fieldwork came unexpectedly. I had planned to interview all the family heads, and some other

members. In Muyurcu there were something like eighty *huasipungo* families. I had imagined that, with hard work, I might be able to do one interview each day. Of course, I ran up against reality. In a few weeks, I realized that to visit the families I had to move from one side of the community to the other, climbing up and down a mountainside of almost 1,000 meters. And although I had preannounced my visits in the meetings of the cooperative, everyone left home to work in the countryside, and even beyond the hacienda. To find them at home, I had to return several times. And finally, a single interview was not enough, chance intervened. I calculated quickly that to interview a single family would require something like a week's dedication. In short, I had to take a sample and restrict myself to a selection based on the age of the family head, the *huasipungo* title-holder, from the oldest to the youngest.

I'll cut the story short. Of course, I didn't only interview them, I also asked about the other members of the family, the number of households, the lands and the livestock, their distribution, the marriages, the inheritances, the origins of the spouses, rights of access to land, and so on. And I had a big surprise when I organized the data, for there emerged an extremely dense network of circulation of people, land, animals, production, and symbolic relationships between those *huasipungo* families which it was supposed were autonomous “peasant family units.” That was when I realized that within the hacienda there were not peasant families, but a community, which I called the *huasipungo* community, a community made up of economic, reproductive, symbolic practices.

The result of that systematization was published first in the French journal *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilizations* (Année 41, no 3, 1986), when I was teaching at the University of Paris VIII Vincennes. Later it was published in Ecuador (Quito: El Conejo, 1991) and Perú (Lima: PUCP, 2003). Now, returning to your question, the book I published at the end of last year does not derive from that fieldwork, but it does carry the mark of that discovery: the importance of which had to be assigned to an *in-*

terstitial reality in the sedimentation of historical processes. In fact, it derives from my *Semántica de la dominación* (Quito: Editorial Libri Mundi, 1991). However, it does bear the traces which that realization left in me: the importance of those processes-reality in the “in-between,”³ or “on the other side,” in the “beyond,” pulsating in the interstices of sedimentations or particularizations of reality, and above all, within the systems of power.

TP: Can you give some examples of this reality of the interstices? For example, in your last book *Administración de poblaciones, ventriloquía and transescritura*, I think those realities in the interstices, or “in-between,” are linguistic, gestural or violent, and turn on the question of power.

AG: Well, there are many examples. Keeping to my own field of interest, which is simply the formations of domination of populations in citizen systems, the very title of the book refers to some processes of this “implicit reality” of what is “in-between.” For example, what I call the administration of populations in citizen political organizations is, in itself, a reality on “the other side” of citizenship. We must recognize that the ways in which part of the legitimate population, that which historically enjoys citizen rights as a “natural historical fact,” whose discourses are immediately audible and intelligible in the political arena, can rule and dominate other unrecognized parts of the population, are rendered invisible because they are not perceived as part of that “natural historical fact,” which is the “official” version of the construction of the Nation. Those populations are an implicit historical fact for the narrative of the construction of a republic. They are not legitimate, nor lawful, in the eyes of the national economic, symbolic, or political order; but they are not outside that order. Rather, they are situated in the domain of the implicit with regard to the exercise of power, they are in the “in-betweens” of that order, even in the most consolidated and explicit cases of lack of recognition in a juridical corpus, as was apartheid in South Africa, or the “equal but separate” in the United States.

Using Lacan’s terminology, they are the “extimal” realities, the paradox of “intimate exteriorities.” They are populations that form part of a single historical process in the constitution of the nation-state, of citizenship, of the political organization, of the cultural formation, as “ordinary” African groups in South Africa, or African Americans of the United States. However, they are not considered or recognized as being part of what Fichte called the “natural culture” of the dominant national group, its language, its symbols, its habits of feeling.

Let me give another example, since you mentioned the linguistic field. In cases of the administration of populations, there occurs a surprising phenomenon of political deafness. The torrent of discourses produced by these unrecognized populations becomes almost completely unintelligible in the field of the political discourses issuing from the “natural citizens.” It is not that the “subalterns cannot speak,” but that what they say, and their way of expressing it, do not fit intelligibly within the field of the dominant political discourses, at any given moment. For them to become audible and to develop, a flip must occur in the discursive relations of power, a change in the legitimacy of the argumentation, in what until then was considered the “natural-historic,” a change in the relations of domination. That transformation in the political linguistic field, a modification achieved through the struggles of the dominated populations, unstops the ears as though by magic, the implicit populations become perceptible and what they say is taken account of, it is “heard” as argumentation.

TP: Methodologically speaking, how do you think what you call the implicit and the everyday should be studied, especially when one works on the past, in an archive?

AG: Yes, I think the theme of the implicit processes of reality is a central current that runs through the chapters of the book. All the studies collected there revolve around the relation between indigenous populations and the formation of the national state in the Sierra of

Ecuador in the nineteenth century. To carry through that research I had to face, right from the beginning, the problem of how to study the implicit processes; I refer to the work method, to the sites of documentation, and to the conceptual instruments. You asked me a moment ago to give an example of an implicit reality. In fact, taking a reflexive relation with these implicit processes, that is, with the object of my research, the very process of study itself offers an example. I had to choose an indirect approach, a way of studying them through prejudices or tangentially. Implicit processes are not “invisible” as such. On the contrary, they are social facts that enjoy an excess of visibility, they are saturated in light. That saturation of practical knowledge, that “That’s how it’s done” (a phrase I heard in answer to my question about “Why it was done?”), with scarcely any distance among consciousness, object, and action in what is done, is what transforms them into historical processes “already there” in the reality-world. What renders these processual phenomena invisible is not the shadows that shroud them but an excess of knowledge, the blinding light of the obvious envelops these practices of the immediate and everyday. It is what everyone knows and everyone does not know about a political formation. How to study them? 1. To contemplate them from, and by means of, the local level. 2. To search in non-, or almost non-archives. 3. To make a hermeneutic sweep (like a radar search) that crosses the hermeneutic glances of several disciplines.

I mention these points, which are those I have followed, but they are very schematic, very general. One can take them into account but, in the end, it seems to me that there is no single method, only a few paths or tracks opened by other researchers whom I admire. I follow their examples. I am among those who eclectically follow the methods of other authors. I imitate them. Imitation should not be confused with faithfully copying. Let me correct myself: it might be better to talk of mimicry, in Spanish *remedo*, which refers above all to gestures, expressions, manners. Mimicry introduces immediately a lack of fit, of correspondence, a

willingness to depart respectfully from the object of admiration. It opens a disjunction of disbelief, introduces an irreverence with regard to the admired object without abandoning it. So what I do when researching or writing becomes overwritten on the original, and suddenly I realize that it is as though I had been creating a palimpsest, I have been writing between the lines of other authors, writing on top of their writing. Now at a certain point, as I advance with my text, it is as though the traces I have been following slowly fade away, and I find myself lost. Yes, it is a moment of crisis, of anguish, of disorientation. I can no longer continue my mimicry, the only thing left is to let go and accept the impulse of the process that carries me along. When that propulsion does not reveal itself within me, I have to abandon what I am writing, sometimes to begin again, at other times definitively. Of course, each project requires the invention of its own channel of approach according to the topic. What seems to me essential when researching the “inbetween” processes, the pores in the sedimentations, is to forge what Foucault calls “operators,” or “grids of intelligibility.” Foucault is one of the authors whom I mimic most in order to discover a way of researching these implicit processes. But I cross sources, following the radar-sweeping procedure I mentioned earlier. I bring in Bourdieu, Bakhtin, Judith Butler. These were my four companions, my closest interlocutors while working on my last book. Of course, since my approach is eclectic, it includes many more names. You too are on my list. I also tried to imitate you and find a “pact of reciprocity” in Otavalo. Now, as you see, those “operators of intelligibility” are concepts extracted from their primary contexts. They become something like what linguists call “shifters,” words which, on their own, have no meaning, but which are essential to reconnect with other networks of meaning beyond those where they were found.

Put like this, it may seem like something very abstract, but in fact it is a perfectly pragmatic procedure that occurs, and it happens spontaneously in the process of research. When working through nineteenth-century archives

in the little town of Otavalo, I couldn't get out of my head the notion of the administration, or government of populations, used by Foucault, like a tune which, once heard, remains engraved in memory. The importance of those "operators" with respect to the implicit processes is that they formulate questions about the unquestioned and the obvious. By covering with the shadow of a doubt the implicit "reality-world," the operators filter the luminous saturation, they bring back the profile of the obvious: what was presupposed becomes visible. Thus, the notion of the administration of populations awakens a disquiet concerning what is usually accepted as part of the inclusive principle of citizenship. For me, that question was: What if the national history of the construction of citizenship had been, at the same time, a process of equalization and of exclusion of the indigenous populations? The domination of the Indians in Ecuador had been constructed in an implicit reality, the internal "crease" of an *exclusión*, an "extimía," an internal exteriority of citizenship in the second half of the nineteenth century. This is because in law and as far as the central state was concerned, the whole Ecuadorian population had become citizens, including women in their condition of "passive citizens." A tacit space of *exclusión* was created for certain citizen populations, within and without, the place of those social groups that were "not yet recognized," such as the Indian population. My point is that these questions produced in me a concern to know how the (included) citizens managed their relations with the silently excluded, how the citizens administered the non-citizen populations, that is, the Indians, resorting to de facto procedures in the "inbetween," or beyond the reach of the laws. That question opens a new field of visibility when going to the archive. Not, of course, in the "great" archives, the central ones, those most embellished with the aura of legitimacy of the nation-state, like the parliament, the higher courts of justice, the ministries. There, the implicit "reality-world" is scarcely visible between the lines of documents that reach a high degree of state narrative codi-

fication, what Bakhtin calls a "discourse of authority."

So the question about the administration of populations by citizens meant I had to go to those places where information had accumulated concerning the implicit "reality-world," in the written traces left by it. I had to "descend" to the lower instances of the state, where the to and fro of daily life had left behind chance information, where papers had accumulated and rarely achieve the hierarchy of the document that gets put away in a "great archive." Of course, I refer to my experience in Ecuador. You yourself have made the point that, in Bolivia, the sorts of information that finds its way into the lower archives may be more formalized and "documentary," or else differently conceived from what I am describing for Ecuador. One would have to address the problem of the characteristics of the narratives that each archive takes from the implicit "reality-processes" and how these link with the different social contexts that make up national history. However, I think there remains a shared methodological problem: without establishing first an "operator of intelligibility," which reduces what I have referred to as the *over-illumination* of the everyday and the obvious, rendering them distinguishable as an implicit "reality-world," it is not possible to pose a new hermeneutics of the documents, of whatever sort these may be.

TP: And for you this operator is chosen in the process of mimicking certain chosen authors. Now, returning to the concept of reverberations, which you distinguish from comparisons, I understand that this difference can also be explained in the language of mimicry. But there is the problem of anachronism, which is important with regard to your article published here, and which has temporal implications that must also be hermeneutically addressed. Can you elaborate on this?

AG: The use of anachronisms, as is well known, was rejected by the methodological parameters by which history, understood as an autonomous

field of knowledge, began constructing itself as a narrative with claims to truth, that is, as science. They were rejected so that the historical narrative would emerge from the shadows of literature, which in turn was constructing itself as a field of intellectual creation. Perhaps we are now realizing that, in that urge to establish itself as a form of narrative that should have its own points of reference, radically different from “fiction,” history lost a very fertile dimension, a stimulus to the imagination experienced in the here and now. After all, one of history’s aims is to reactivate reality-processes of the past in the present. You’ll remember that is one of the positions of Walter Benjamin. Now, with regard to what I propose here with the idea of reverberation, there is a possible convergence with that position, though semantically inverted, insofar as it is the “operators of intelligibility,” elaborated to study the past, which are now taken to serve the analysis of phenomena in the present, and which provide the illumination with which to perceive today’s implicit phenomena. It is not only that the directionality is the reverse of that proposed by Benjamin: the leap is now from the past to the present, which would be to revert to a very suspect procedure, were it not that the conceptual tools open a new field of visibilities. They filter the brilliance of the obvious in the study of the past, and render visible the implicit processes of the here and now.

In any case, for me it was these operators forged in the archives that allowed new questions to arise concerning present processes, requiring an answer. I don’t know if this procedure can be made to fit exactly inside what we understand by anachrony. There is no comparison between two processes. Nor are they simply placed in parallel with each other. But there is a semantic inversion, because nearly always, more or less consciously, the fact is that conceptual instruments forged to analyze the present were “exported” to the analysis of the past. Besides, it seems to me that operators forged in the archives have a critical dimension, because they can sometimes overturn what has become blocked in the present.

TP: Concerning the idea of reverberations, which are not the same as comparisons, can you enlarge on the difference?

AG: I suspect that, with “inbetween” phenomena, when those operators of intelligibility are manipulated, the questioning glance acquires intensity and begins to vibrate outside itself. It slips from one object of study to another, and it places them in a relation that is—how shall I say?—not so much one of proximity or parallelism, as in the case of comparison, but rather of a similar wave frequency.

The interrogating glance of the operator leaps to other social contexts of different histories. It chooses and uncovers the places of convergence: it alights on them, and this brings about reverberating connections between historical situations and processes without any apparent relation. For example, it alights on political deafness and its ventriloquist correlate,⁴ the invisibility of exclusion and, of course, on the modalities of the citizen administration of populations. The operators seem to me like waves that excite loudspeakers, provoking tensions and intensities in other social processes. It makes them stand out and associate with each other through a community of convergences, a mass of resonances. I think that’s how I can tell you what happened to me. Every day I read the Spanish press, scandalized. I watched the news with horror, I listened overwhelmed to interviews with African immigrants in Spain and Europe. Of course, for a reverberation to be established within me between social situations and processes so distant as those of nineteenth-century Ecuadorian Indians and those of twentieth- and twenty-first century African migrants in Spain, there had to be an emotive charge, a projection from within me, however small. Something in common began to palpitate and link the people with the histories of people, as I read or watched them. I have never had a remotely similar experience to the horrors suffered by those African immigrants. But I do know in the flesh what it is like to be a foreigner, with papers that have sometimes expired. It is

an experience that befalls any immigrant at some moment in his or her life, in always passing through a frontier of illegitimacy and of illegality, not only juridico-political, but also linguistic, even in ways of thinking, doing, and feeling. I tell you this because my research procedure obeys a first impulse that arises from a problem. A question disturbs me, and excites my senses and emotions. Of course, without this previous predisposition, without this impulse that sensitizes the surfaces of sense perception and intuition (which is precisely where the operators of intelligibility intervene and have their use), the excitation would not posit a relation of reverberation between phenomena that are in principle disconnected.

TP: Finally, I know that recently you participated in the movement of the *Indignados* in Spain, in the Plaza del Sol of Madrid, which has indeed “reverberated” throughout the world. I would like to ask you, what have you been stimulated to think based on your experience of that movement?

AG: Yes, indeed, you are using the notion of reverberation in exactly the way I have just proposed. Well, some decades ago Appadurai posed the question of synchronic and supranational “communities of feeling” linked to the dissemination of the world’s media in a capitalism of electronic communications. The diffusion of the phenomenon of the *Indignados* in ever-widening waves seems to obey the attraction of processes which are only beginning to manifest themselves within modern capitalism, and which converge on common points in different “reality-worlds,” especially in the Mediterranean and in the opulent North Atlantic. The Madrid movement was itself a wave of repercussion that followed the diffusion of images of the occupation of the Tahir Square in Cairo, and seems to have bounced between the two shores of modernity and post-modernity: Europe and the United States. Among those who camp out and demonstrate in the Plaza del Sol, on Wall Street, or in the City of London, there are clearly different influences at work,

but I do not think they are limited (as Appadurai suggests) only to the realm of emotivity. Further upstream from the junction of streams of feeling, there may be a community of glimpses of shared ways of living among these people. A community made up of reflections of daily life in contexts located in new states of exception, experiences of everyday life that—though very different and nuanced in each place—are recycled and compacted by the imagination that is stirred up by the images on the world’s media, in the sense of making a radar sweep across the surface of the memories of each person that detects flashes that coincide. Among all those who camp out from Madrid to London to New York or Tel Aviv, there is something common among those reflections and flares, something shared as far as their experiences of everyday life are concerned, forming a range of variations on the great processes of citizen exclusion.

As far as my own experiences are concerned with regard to the actions of the *Indignados* of Madrid during the demonstration of 15 May. In the past months, I participated in assemblies and joined work groups, sat on the ground, debated in public in the central squares, just one of thousands of Madrileños who took part over the spring and summer. Of course I couldn’t control myself, and I started to take notes, which led to somewhat of a notebook of experiences, reflections, and perceptions. Perhaps later I may be able to produce a narrative, combining and filtering those notes, I don’t know yet. You will see that what I try to express to you about the reverberation of images in the spiral of the memory was also part of my experience with 15M-Real Democracy Now!, because to see, participate in, and feel the taking of the Plaza del Sol awoke in me the memories of my experiences in the movement of May 1968 in Paris, when I studied in the Sorbonne. Now, I can tell you that that reactivation, right from the start, presented itself in the form of a great question about the differences between these two movements. From the start it seemed clear that there was an immense gap between the two historical moments, and that the discontinuities were far clearer than the continuities between

past and present. I was surprised that the referential universe of the first participants in the great demonstrations and in the popular assemblies had scarcely anything in common with May 1968 in Paris, or with the Spanish anti-Franco movements, or with any Spanish or European mass movement. When I speak of discontinuities, I refer to the behavior of the demonstrators, to their ways of speaking, and no doubt their ways of feeling, perceiving, and imagining.

I think we are coming to the end of this interview, but I will add in conclusion that my impression is that the Spanish movement is inventing new ways of doing politics. This involves a reformulation of what we understand by political practice. We are faced with a new proposal, different from what we understand by politics, a revolution from the ethics and aesthetics of immediate action, something that seems to me very unusual in the long European tradition, from the Greek polis to today's national democracies. Changes in politics, as practices, have almost passed through an ideological and theoretical elaboration, more or less closely associated with a telos. In my opinion, one of the most unsettling aspects of 15M was when I realized that, in the popular assemblies, no one posed a new interpretation of the world, to give a basis to their actions, nor a final objective that might sustain them, however far in the future. This was something very unsettling, and quite different from my experience of May 1968 in Paris, where no debate could begin without first attempting an ideological construction. Some months ago, I remember having read a slogan in the Plaza del Sol, which still makes me reflect: "Our revolution is different from those of the past: We demand what is possible!" Besides, the net that convoked the first demonstrations is called "Real Democracy Now!" The proposals of 15M are very concrete and practical. I mean the themes that are discussed in the popular assemblies, which are proposals and actions at the same time. Whereas, the gestures and rituals that accompany the debates, which are a form of immediate practical politics, are already in themselves a great proposal of how to

transform the world. And the debate does not only take place in popular assemblies, by occupying public spaces, something that revives the old Spanish and Latin American tradition of "open *cabildos*" and local sovereignty; it also extends, without any limited horizon, that immense murmur of voices that can be heard constantly in the Internet. Is this a new implicit reality-process, a sort of invisible and ubiquitous polis?

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Notes

1. *Administración de poblaciones, ventriloquía y transcritura* (Administration of populations, ventriloquism, and trans-writing) (Lima: FLACSO-IEP, 2010).
2. Translator's note: *Huasipungo*, Quichua, literally "house-door (*wasi-punku*)" thence "porter". It then came to mean an enlarged domestic unit, which received a parcel of land to occupy within the hacienda, together with pasture rights, in exchange for which the householder had to work for the *hacendado* five days per week, receiving a wage. This form of labor arrangement arose in the early years of the seventeenth century.
3. The word used here is intentionally a neologism.
4. (Focaal Editors' note:) In Guerrero's writings, "ventriloquism" refers to acts of political mediation that speak to the state on behalf of subjects or populations denied any direct channel of auto-representation in it. Guerrero argues that by putting the concerns of such populations into a logic and language intelligible to the state, their intermediaries (petty civil servants, local lawyers, etc.) in fact shape those concerns,

or at least the documentary traces of them, aping dominant modes of representing them which are seemingly confirmed by their own speech. The subject is at once present and absent in these documents, existing only in the “ideologised code” of their official figuration (Guerrero 1997: 589). More than merely translating or transcribing, the “ventriloquist performs a trans-scriptural act: he pursues a strategy of representation” (ibid. Guerrero 1997: 590).

References

- Guerrero, Andrés. 1997. The construction of a ventriloquist’s image: Liberal discourse and the “miserable Indian race” in late-nineteenth century Ecuador. *Journal of Latin American Studies* 29: 555–590.