

A necessary dialogue between cultures: the case of the Abou Bakr Alsididiq mosque in Bogotá and its surroundings. An educommunicative proposal¹

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Abstract

The investigation *Relations between the Muslim community of the Abou Bakr Alsididiq mosque of Bogotá with the non-muslim population of its surroundings* showed as a main finding that these social groups, although they respect each other, have not developed active citizenship links of interculturality, especially on account of the post-11-S situation fostering an unfavorable image of Islam. In addition, the initiative had two products: a radio documentary and an educommunicative proposal whose purpose is to develop a critical intercultural encounter between the community that congregates in the building and its non-Muslim neighbors, both in media and non-mediatic terms. This document presents this proposal, preceded by the conceptual elements of the research (citizenship, religious belief and territory), together with its results and enriched with elements collected by the author during his teaching at the Minuto de Dios University Corporation (UNIMINUTO), especially in the class *Citizenship, Communication and Coexistence*.

Key words: Islam; Educommunicative proposal; Citizenship; Religion; Territory; Communication.

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1. Introduction

In order to obtain the Master's Degree in Communication, Development and Social Change from the University of Santo Tomás de Colombia, I presented a research paper entitled *Relations of the Muslim community of the Abou Bakr AlSiddiq mosque in Bogotá with the non-Muslim population of its surroundings*. There were three basic motivations to do so: my interest in Islam as a culture, the negative dynamics that practitioners of this way of life have had to face worldwide -especially from the events of 11-S- and construction, in 2013, by *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq*, the first mosque in the Colombian capital that can be identified as such from its outside, on street 80, avenue 30. Its appearance in the Bogota urban context was not alien to the global context of rejection of the Muslim: aggressive pamphlets distributed by anonymous hands in its surroundings during its construction, breakage of construction windows shortly after the attacks on members of Charlie Hebdo magazine in January 2015 and paintballs thrown against the façade of the mosque in May of 2016, apparently with paintball projectiles, they attest. To a large extent, these acts of repudiation are related to the decontextualized, tendentious and anti-educational way that certain media have used to refer to Islam and, especially, to the terrorist acts that have been assigned to it.

These situations led me to propose a study in which I considered examining the development of relations between the Muslim community of the *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* mosque in Bogotá and the non-Muslim people who live in the sector where the building is built, in the framework of their differences of cultural order, through the elaboration of a radio documentary.

2. Methodology

The initiative was considered as an approach to a reality constructed by social subjects identified as citizens in specific territorial scenarios -the mosque and its surrounding neighborhoods: Patria, San Martín, El Polo and La Castellana- that have specific religious practices. These three elements -citizenship, religious belief, and territory- were the conceptual axes of work. The investigation was carried out with the collection and analysis of stories provided by members of the Muslim community and non-Muslim inhabitants of the place, narrations that were made known in the radio documentary *A Mosque in the neighborhood. Stories from the Abou Bakr AlSiddiq mosque and its surroundings*³.

The research had an interpretive methodological approach, a qualitative method of work and its methodology was ethnographic. The techniques used during the work process, developed between 2014 and 2016, were the field diary, the participant observation and the interview, both structured and unstructured.

3 This documentary can be find in: <https://radioteca.net/audioseries/una-mezquita-en-el-barrio/> y en <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roQcD7Q6Yj0&list=PLONI2DIitYQQH8qnisD8dyXzOdJ18T8gm>

Along with the radio documentary and the conclusions of the research, an educommu-
 nicative proposal was presented that seeks to reinforce the positive points found during
 the research and handle the negatives while being a contribution to the development of a
 critical interculturality exercise in the context studied, especially from the ideas of Catheri-
 ne Walsh (2005, 2010). In this document, I expose this proposal, preceded by the general
 elements of the findings obtained in the research and enriched with new ideas acquired
 during my teaching in UNIMINUTO-Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, during the
 years 2017 and 2018.

3. Findings

The investigative exercise was carried out around three categories of analysis: citizenship,
 religious belief and territory.

3.1 Citizenship

In the case of *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* and its surroundings, the concept of citizenship was
 understood as the exercise or putting into practice of certain civic values in terms of intercultural-
 ity, understood as a space of encounter between “[...] beings, knowledge, senses and
 different practices” (Walsh, 2005, p. 45) that takes into account “[...] the struggles, practices
 and processes that question Eurocentric, colonial and imperial legacies, and that seek to
 transform and construct radically different conditions of thinking, knowing, being and live”
 (Walsh, 2010, p. 221). These civic values, in light of the proposals of Adela Cortina (1998) and
 José Ignacio López Vigil (2015), are:

- ✓ Freedom, exercised autonomously by social subjects when participating in public matters
 that touch the context in which they are developed.
- ✓ Equality, as a conscious and active consideration of the dignity of people because they
 exist and, moreover, as assuming the rights and responsibilities that life in common
 poses.
- ✓ Active and caring respect, in the interest and commitment of each party for the projects
 and situations of the other.
- ✓ Dialogue, as an exercise of the word -especially in the public sphere-, an exercise that is
 shared within the framework of mutual knowledge for the undertaking of common social
 actions. These are intended to achieve a quality of life, a development on a human scale
 (Max-Neef, Elizalde and Hopenhayn, 2010).

In the study of the relations between the mosque community and its non-Muslim neighbors,
 the role of the Eurocentric and imperial gaze of Islam that has spread throughout the world
 was considered in a special way, especially in the way in which the parties have developed
 actions to meet and recognize each other in the context of a generalized ignorance in our
 Bogota society about what Muslim faith and culture are.

A fundamental element of the exercise of citizenship, warned both in the Muslim community of *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* and in the non-Muslim population resident in the sector where the building is located, is the respect they mutually profess. Within the framework of a public sphere, this attitude presupposes a political stance. The non-Muslim neighborhood, after the first stage of expectation not without some concern, has gradually accepted, from that respect, the presence of the Muslim community and its meeting place. However, this situation is understood as a sign of tolerance that has not transcended to a widespread active respect, because it is not perceived among non-Muslims an explicit and extended interest to know in depth the meaning and the initiatives of the community of the mosque, accompanied by a desire to get involved in them from the consideration that they can make positive contributions in the territory and in turn can inspire them in their lives. We can summarize the general position of non-Muslims against Muslims with one of the phrases included in the radio documentary: "(Muslims) are good neighbors because we have no problems because of them".

For their part, the Moslems of the mosque -for whom there is no particularity that prevents them from relating in social or individual areas with people belonging to other religions- practice respect for their non-Muslim neighbors and in general for all those who do not share their religion or religious creed. Anyone interested in knowing the Muslim faith is welcome in the mosque and its adjoining spaces to ask all kinds of questions based on the peaceful nature of Islam⁴. There is also a special motivation to clarify concepts, in the face of stereotypes and prejudices that weigh, in the West, on its practitioners. In spite of the above, the Muslim community does not reveal a position of actively participating in the projects and situations that are lived in the neighborhoods of the sector where the mosque is located. This is due to the fact that there are very few followers of Islam, since the structure is, above all, a meeting point of the community used to fulfill the precept of prayer, especially on Friday, the sacred day of Islam, at noon, taking a moment for it in the midst of their daily commitments, which must be returned once the ritual is concluded. The lack of time is also an argument offered by some non-Muslims consulted to explain the absence of deep contacts with Muslims.

The acts of solidarity carried out by the Roman Catholic community of the parish of San Jorge -near to the *Abou Bakr* mosque- in response to the rejection actions that the Muslims have had to face, materialized in the attacks on the building in which they meet, have been qualified by the leader of the Muslim community, Sheikh Ahmad Tayel, as very positive. The role of the local parish priest during the period of the investigation, Father Campo Elías Robayo, has been fundamental since he has encouraged his brothers to respect and express this support, specifically through letters of support addressed to Muslims. However, these have not been made known to the totality of the Catholic congregation under their charge or by the resident community in the sector. This is then a form of passive solidarity that, although it is not negative in itself, has not been the reason for a strong interrelation, although it should not be denied that these are valuable precedents and starting points for subsequent meeting processes in case of that they come to be.

4 *Islam*, in Arabic, not only means "submission to God", but also "peace".

Except for certain exceptions in the mosque community, the civic value of freedom, understood in terms of active participation in public affairs according to the rules of representative democracy, is apparently not of interest to Muslims or non-Muslims. Nor were organizations identified according to the model of civil society that faces the centers of political and economic power to assume community empowerment. This may be due to the fact that residents of the sector do not identify major problems in their environment that, in other contexts, would imply high impact alliances and agreements. Such a positive image of the place does not allow them to contemplate the possibility of complex situations that require their attention. As for Muslims, possibly the condition of “place of passage” of the mosque influence that they fail to perceive the difficulties of the sector and, therefore, do not act in solidarity to propose solutions to them. On the other hand, the isolated acts of violence referred to make the Muslim community fear for their safety; in an atmosphere of active respect, these situations should draw the attention of the non-Muslim community, not just a small group from the nearby parish, so that they assume their support for Muslims as an ethical duty. For Muslims and non-Muslims the situation of not having an autonomous and social “authentic personality” is perceived, both individually and collectively, to be interested in the affairs of the counterpart in the framework of an in-depth reflection and correlation exercise between rights and duties in which the other is taken into account, which is an important part of an authentic interculturality⁵.

Colombian law, reinforced by international pacts, guarantees equality between Muslims and non-Muslims. The protagonists of the investigation are aware of this. However, in the territory it is observed that the non-Muslims see in the followers of Islam traits of difference with respect to “[...] the most widespread and dominant cultural forms and categories of society and that (therefore, the followers of Islam), do not belong to the cultural (and religious) majority” (Sarrazín and Rincón, 2015, pp. 142-143). This difference is understood in terms of cultural elements or rituals -positions when praying, physical attitudes, attire- but not in doctrinal or ethical terms, which are usually unknown or, frankly, poorly understood.

What has been proposed up to now is that we have two equal communities before the law, but with cultural differences that have not managed to carry out a dialogue that makes its members, actors and social actors free, responsible and aware of the challenge of the intercultural encounter. But the word as social expression is manifested in each of them. Despite the lack of interest in a deep encounter with Islam, non-Muslims have shared their opinions about Muslims in spontaneous encounters among neighbors. They have admired the moderate beauty of the mosque and have talked about the external features and behavior of believers in public spaces; In a special way, they refer to Father Robayo’s calls for respect for Muslims. For their part, they take advantage as much as possible of moments before or after the Friday prayer at noon to talk to each other about their respective situations, among other occasions. These conversations, mostly, have been conducted in Arabic or Turkish⁶; therefore, it

5 This exercise, in fact, has been carried out by the leaders of both communities - the Sheik Tayel and Father Robayo - as a personal effort to be coherent with their beliefs and their ethical positions.

6 One of the most notable communities of Muslim migrants in the mosque corresponds to that of the Turks, who have congregated in a special way around the Colombo-Turkish Chamber of Commerce.

cannot be verified that they refer to the non-Muslim neighbors of the mosque. The registered conversations in Spanish do not refer to them. In special spaces open for Muslims and non-Muslims to come to dialogue about Islam, such as the Center for Islamic Studies attached to the mosque and the Colombo-Turkish Chamber of Commerce, no neighbors were identified from the neighborhoods close to it.

The contact between the Muslim and the non-Muslim in the studied case is identified with conditions of both multiculturalism and pluriculturalism -which may invoke Marshall's thinking as antecedent-, but not with those of interculturality in general and, particularly, with the selected proposal of Walsh. The non-Muslim population of the area identifies the community of the mosque in an attitude of tolerance based on maintaining the tranquility of the sector, "[...] courage and attitude sufficient to ensure that society works without major conflict" (Walsh, 2005, p 45). A similar attitude is also assumed by Muslims and Muslims, not only because of the easiest citizen coexistence, but also because the moral component of their faith indicates it. The multicultural in the situation may well be understood in a phrase of Pedro, one of the characters of the documentary: "Leave it (the Muslim, do not worry about him). He does not mess with us; let's not get involved with him". The pluricultural can be identified in the state attitude to the situations of the mosque, invoking cultural diversity as a right that is formally guaranteed but not as a matter that includes a commitment to complex cases of reality whose protagonists are different cultures. The multi/pluri cultural condition of the situation is fostered by the non-existence of a public word in the deep exchange between the parties. If there is any recognition among the non-Muslims of the cultural value of the Muslim presence in the sector, this does not necessarily imply a change in the mentality rooted in "[...] the predominant model" (Walsh, 2005, p. 45). I encourage you to approach it, to discuss the Eurocentric and imperial look that has spread around the world and to establish strong cultural ties.

Along with the disinterest of non-Muslims, who live around the mosque to know Islam, there is also a certain distrust of the difference motivated by the social representations generated in the media, about this lifestyle and its practitioners, especially from the events of 9/11. This distrust is based above all on two specific issues: what refers to the violence of the so-called "Islamic fundamentalist terrorist groups" and what refers to the condition of submission of Muslim women to men⁷. Now, the production of news, especially in which it is shown to the Muslim negatively, is based on the Eurocentric and imperial view, proper to our system, which does not recognize or promote what is really the religion and the Islamic culture to political and economic interests. These social representations are considered by some of the non-Muslim people consulted, and in some cases, they accept that they influence their lack of interest in being Muslim; they also recognize that their disinterest does not reach the point of producing an environment that is explicit and authentically contrary to Islam in the sector. In any case, it was not identified among the members of the non-Muslim community consulted a critical

⁷ In contrast, the media speak little or nothing of the colonialist and imperialist origins of the current conflicts in the Middle East, or of the contributions of Islamic civilization to the cultural and scientific development of humanity.

position against the actions of the media that generated the impulse to verify personally with the congregation of the mosque what is the reality of Islam.

It should be noted that the local media's interest in the mosque is occasional: when Islam-related attacks have occurred on the world's centers of power -especially the case of Charlie Hebdo-, these media have gone to the building to obtain opinions of the leaders of the community, but not the common believers, with the insistence on elements such as violence and the violation of freedom of expression on the part of terrorists, in a position that is not always impartial. It is a game of "double standards", in the words of Sheik Tayel, because the tendency to silence information about other elements of Muslim culture, especially positive ones, tends to be permanent. It is not ruled out that this fact also influences non-Muslims in the territory of the *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* mosque.

3.2. Religious belief

A religion is a system of symbols that acts to establish powerful, penetrating and lasting moods and motivations in people, by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and the confection of such conceptions, with an aura of objectivity such that The moods and motivations seem singularly realistic (Geertz, 1973, p. 90).

From this definition and in the context of research, it was proposed to consider religious belief as a basic concept as related to the moral factor of the religious - the other two are dogma and rite - since it explicitly compromises behavior on a personal and social scale. Religious belief is the way in which the profession of faith in the sacred, in a certain context, is put into practice by sentient, interacting subjects. This interaction takes place between people who may have the same beliefs, between believers who are not part of the same flock and, moreover, between believers and those who do not practice any religion or assume the existence of the Divine. This exchange produces specific meanings of collective scope and in it has a primary role the fact that participants have "will to understand" from a fundamental condition: "The renunciation of claims of absolute truth and, consequently, the monopoly of truth" (Pérez-Tapias, 2007, p. 176).

It is very important to point out that the above must be understood if one thinks that: "The relations between citizenship and religion are a structural problem in the contemporary debate about the meaning, scope and limits of globalization (in which) it is important to learn to differentiate, nuance, deliberate and discern publicly without fear of seeking the truth exercising freedom" (Domingo-Moratalla, 2011, pp. 10-11). Fear related to "global fear" raised by Eduardo Galeano (1998), increased since 9/11 and that has infiltrated, from the questions to Islam, the approach to -and between- religions, both in everyday life and in the academic⁸.

8 About the history of Islam in Colombia and its situation in the city of Bogotá, it is recommended to consult the book *Islam in Bogotá. Initial presence and diversity* (Castellanos, 2010), as well as the article. The conversion to Islam as a strategy of change and differentiation in modernity, by L. Sarrazín and L. Rincón (2015).

In the sector of the capital of Colombia where the mosque is located, there is a majority presence of Christianity in two branches: the Catholic according to the Roman rite and the Evangelical Protestant. The presence of Islam in the area is accepted and respected without further ado. At least, in the precincts of the public, and in a very formal way. Even so, for this population believing in the message of Jesus of Nazareth in practical terms and social relations does not necessarily contemplate approaching different creeds to dialogue with them. Islam is not rejected, but neither is it considered a prescription of religious practice - in evangelical terms, as an act of love - to know and learn from it. This is because the exercise of religious belief in the key of tradition, that is, as the putting into practice of certain components of form -the mass or the cult, the Bible, the rosary, etc.- plays a strong role in the spiritual identity of the people and because it is assumed that an approach to the Muslim faith and customs -to the different faith- is an underlying possibility of a conversion, of a change of beliefs that is not desirable; therefore, it is better to avoid contact. On the other hand, the fact that, for a considerable number of Christians -including some of the people interviewed- stands out, the god of the Muslims is a different god, when in reality the three main monotheistic religions of the world -Judaism, Christianity and Islam- believe in the same God because, precisely, for them there is only one God.

In these situations, the influence of the information that is presented through the mass media can be seen: the Muslim, indicated as violent and different, is therefore taxable; If a non-Muslim person approaches a Muslim, he runs the risk of being forced to change his own identity. This situation has an exception in the parish of San Jorge, directed by Father Campo Elías Robayo. However, the question arises of whether this meeting had also taken place without the mediation of a figure favorable to religious dialogue such as that of Father Robayo.

Because practically the entire congregation of *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* does not live in the mosque sector and goes there to carry out their internal religious and social practices, especially on Fridays, it does not carry out direct, extensive and frequent contacts with the non-Muslim neighborhood on their own initiative based on their religious beliefs. These, however, indicate to him that he must respect and value every person who does not share his spiritual views and that anyone is welcomed in the mosque whenever he approaches her with deference and desires to learn about Islam.

If knowledge is spoken of as the nurture of religious belief, for Muslims the effort to acquire it is highly valued. It is as important for Islam the knowledge acquired through reading and research as the knowledge built by personal initiative⁹. Hence, one of the four ways of understanding the Arabic expression Jihad has to do with the intellectual¹⁰. Without detracting in any way the experience of the faith of Christians in our context, it should be noted that

9 According to Sheikh Ahmad Tayel, a Muslim person can even read books that are against Islam or attack it directly, in order to form a more appropriate criterion for you to be a better believer. A person who wants to make the shahada or profession of faith to convert to Islam must first take enough time for study and reflection-months, mínimo- to achieve it.

10 The Jihad (masculine noun) means "effort" embodied in four dimensions summarized by Bekir Karliğa in *An Islamic Perspective - Terrorism and suicide attacks* (2008, p.50), edited by Ergün Çapan. The defense of faith

these, as a tendency, do not share with Muslims the conviction that faith is nourished with a powerful (diverse) investigative spirit. In most cases, it is enough to believe in dogmas, in what priests or preachers say, and in carrying out rites. If there is a position to read and inquire about religious issues, it tends to be limited to one's faith and not to a different faith, unless they are alternatives considered from the intellectual to relate to them in an appropriate way, that is, as options that go from the expansion of knowledge in general culture to the positive feeding of one's own beliefs.

However, converted Muslims, especially women, have sometimes faced uncomfortable situations in which strangers and even family members question their beliefs, especially in details such as the use of the hijab or related to acts of violence worldwide associated with Islam. With or without questions, for these border people, their task is to guide non-believers about Islam and especially to clarify those elements on which controversies are generated. These challenges are presented mainly in their personal areas and not in the context of the mosque's territory.

The experience of religious belief, in spite of the moral postulates that guide it, is not exempt from elements of power management-a political issue-which is a determining factor in the conflict between religions. It is noted in the case of the *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* mosque and its surroundings that, for some of the Catholic Christians or Protestants consulted, the conflict between these two aspects is so marked, that their perceptions about Islam are developed in terms of said conflict, to such an extent that they cannot be separated from it to think about an encounter with other spiritual alternatives: Islam is a cultural and religious reference so far away for these people that, for example, they cannot avoid referring to the mosque as "the church of the Muslims".

3.3. Territory

The fact of approaching a Muslim community in Bogotá located in a specific place -the *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* mosque- which, for its part, is located within a specific space of the capital of Colombia, indicates that a definition of territory should be considered as concept in the investigation.

From certain characteristics on what is territory according to Ortiz (1998), Montañez & Delgado (1998), this concept is understood as the scene in a constant movement of the public, the near and the everyday, in which society pours its symbolic constructions, in which we are actors representing multiple roles. Two terms are associated with this idea: territoriality as the "[...] degree of control of a certain geographical portion by a person, a social group, an ethnic group, a multinational company, a State or a block of states" (Montañez 1997, p. 198). And deterritorialization, which refers to "[...] processes of territorial loss derived from territorial dynamics and power conflicts between different territorial agents" (Montañez & Delgado, 1998, p. 125).

(religion). Personal self-control (psychology). The commitment to be a person who is cultivated intellectually. Community service and the fight against injustices (the social).

Those who join the dialogue based on the exercise of citizenship in terms of interculturality must consider the importance of the territory, which implies the joint assumption of democratic values “[...] as common values, and at the confluence in public space as a space of all in which the institutions of democracy take root (and where) is configured interculturality (a) ‘space built for the flourishing of diversity’” (Pérez-Tapias, 2007, pp. 163-164).

Considering that in Bogota there have been places of prayer and meeting for Muslims for years, the construction of the *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* mosque is a unique case that responded to two situations: on the one hand, the search and construction of another place adequate, beautiful and accessible to this community compared to the previous location in the center of the capital¹¹; on the other, the desire for explicit recognition of the Muslim presence in the city through the construction of a mosque that met all the architectural characteristics identified by the tradition of Islam.

For the Muslim community of *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq*, the mosque is a fundamental space that supports their faith as a visible reference site and that keeps it not only cohesive in its internal structure, but also closely linked to a large family of sisters and brothers of global scope whose main objective is to obey the divine will. On the other hand, for being the only mosque in the capital identifiable from the outside, the building is understood as a concrete cultural contribution to Colombian culture in relation to the international context. According to *Shaykh Tayel*, it is not possible to conceive that Bogotá was, before its rise, the only capital city that did not have a construction for Muslim worship and socialization that had all the characteristics indicated by the Islamic faith and tradition. In addition, the symbolic meaning of the mosque and its community extends beyond its walls in spaces such as the Center for Islamic Studies.

Regarding the relations between the Moslems of the mosque and their non-Muslim neighbors, there is a restriction of the territory in its characteristic of constant movement of the public, the near and the everyday where common symbolic constructions are poured. The two groups studied exercise, on their own, not together, territoriality as a degree of control of their respective geographical fragments (Montañez, 1997, p. 198) and as an action to “create, recreate and appropriate territory” (Montañez & Delgado, 1998, p. 123). These degrees of control are developed by non-Muslims, especially with what it means to reside there; by the Muslims, with the mosque as a symbolic center that reinforces and gives consistency to the practice of their faith. However, it cannot be said that there is complete isolation between the parties: there are social relations between them, although limited and even circumstantial, which do not cease to be constituted as expressions of territoriality.

Non-Muslims, far from considering that the construction of the mosque involved a case of deterritorialization in the area, consider that it was actually the solution to a territorial urban problem: the use and recovery of a fragment of space that for a long time had a specific purpose. We can point out here a kind of invisible deterritorialization, because the people who

11 This effort involved, within the community itself, an exercise of power and negotiations, since not all its members agreed at the time to leave the old placement in the center of Bogotá.

live outside the mosque do not have the concrete knowledge of what is happening there, even though it is in the same territorial context and there is no restriction prevent access to it, as long as they meet minimum entry standards. Muslims and non-Muslims¹² of the studied area are close to the physical territorial space, but far away in terms of active, symbolic and joint construction of the territory that both social groups share.

During the construction of the mosque, while its non-Muslim neighbors were on the lookout-from a distant view: they there, we here-certain media pointed out that the project was ignored by society in general and even rejected by some. In the post -11- 5- context, this is an example of another form of deterritorialization, of a power conflict between social subjects in a given space, based on a hegemonic anti-muslim discourse that has had a vigorous media diffuser. However, the case of invisible deterritorialization mentioned a few lines earlier, should not be considered in any way a problem that has no solution; on the contrary, it is an opportunity. Non-Muslims can discover a new meaning of the territory they share with the Muslims, loaded with symbolic depth, by encouraging themselves to visit the mosque and learn about the culture it contains. The response of the Muslim community can be an effort to become more involved with the social dynamics that take place in the vicinity of the building without forgetting the hospitable attitude that characterizes them, in such a way that their mosque becomes an authentic window to the world for two members of society that, in the end, have in common to be part of the periphery that surrounds power centers both local and global.

4. Conceptual-operational framework of the educommunicative proposal: narrative and educommunication

Once the findings of the research project are presented and given that this was developed to produce a radio documentary as a final product, it is necessary to indicate some elements about the narrative in relation to educommunication, so that the proposal made is better understood.

Professor Boaventura de Sousa Santos has pointed out that:

The privileged language of cultural exchanges is the narrative. Telling stories generates an immediate and concrete sense of copresence through which the social experiences that occur in different times, spaces and cultures become more easily accessible and intelligible, a type of copresence that is not possible to achieve through the conceptual language (whether technical, philosophical or scientific) (2014, p. 101).

12 These standards are the shoes to enter the interior of the mosque and the use of veil or hijab by women.

The “cultural exchanges” proposed by the professor Sousa-Santos are understood in the research as the reflective and practical exercise of collecting, disseminating and receiving the various stories that we find in -and, fortunately, still in spite of- the world institutionally globalized today. It is an exercise reinforced and enriched by the accessibility posed by the Portuguese thinker: a valid, valuable and courageous way of finding and applying alternatives to face the negative elements of globalization and to appropriate its positive elements in fertile processes.

However, these exchanges can also be understood as educational processes. Therefore, the concept of educommunication appears here, a process that can only be understood in a context of cultural, revolutionary, dialogical change that never ends; a dialectical, global process that acquires its full meaning in popular education, in which communicators/educators and receivers/students¹³, teach and learn at the same time, since they are alternatively transmitters and receivers. According to Martínez-Salanova (2010), educommunication also helps to focus on the main problems of the world: the participation of all people, the defense of human rights, multiculturalism, the environment, peace, freedom of expression and communication.

And as for the relationship between educommunication and narrative in the key of a reflexive and critical interculturality we could remember that (Mario) Kaplún said:

Whenever possible, let's opt for the story as a privileged form of popular communication: instead of making an exposition of the topic, let's try to turn it into a story. Communicating is, above all, telling, 'telling the story'. The storytellers have been and continue to be the great natural communicators of the popular milieu. Better to explain is to tell a story. And even better, tell it testimonially (cited in López-Vigil, 2015, p. 11).

Educommunication without assuming, in any way, as a total solution to the problem posed by globalization, as a homogenizing discourse at a political, economic and cultural level, can be understood as an alternative development for interculturality that allows one to consider the passage of vertical imposition from the top down, to an equitable, horizontal exchange of experiences, in which unifying discourses that do not admit replications or alternatives are submitted to discussion and in which options are thought more in agreement with the specific cases than the trend homogenizer ignores. This situation is an educational process that includes subjects who learn and teach at the same time, as a specific manifestation of the exercise of their right to communication: “What educommunicators want is the recognition of the strategic value of the struggle for freedom of the word, as an utopia that takes the form of effective actions in the different educational spaces” (Soares, 2009, p. 195).

13 It would be more correct to say “communicators / students” or “communicators / students”.

5. The educommunicative proposal

The intercultural encounter between the Muslim and the non-Muslim in the case studied does not seem to be able to be based on strictly religious terms -at least, with traditional ways of expressing them-, so linked to the conscience of those involved and so arduous to be subjected to discussions and reflections without pretending to ignore or minimize them, in the long run they are more a barrier to the approach than facilitators of it. A possible alternative is the opening of spaces for the exchange of expressions that belong to the cultural heritage of the parties: dances, songs, musical instruments, narrations, culinary, architectural, pictorial, documentary elements, and so on. The possibility that these demonstrations are spread through the use of media such as radio, television, the Internet, among others, especially if they arise from a community initiative, is not trivial. Be in media spaces or personal meetings of individuals or groups, the exchange of demonstrations between the two cultures would be an interesting way to exercise the right to communication through the practice of public speech, propitiating citizenship, in space common public. This would give the initiative a more relevant character for all the social subjects belonging to the territory.

Faced with this objective, on the part of the Muslim community, the role that “border” Colombians can and do, in fact, play is decisive for “[...] weaving bonds of union, dispelling misunderstandings, making reason to some, to moderate others, to pave, to reconcile [...]. Its vocation is to be links, bridges, mediators between diverse communities and diverse cultures” (Maalouf, 2002, pp. 12-13). To this effort is added to bring to light the reality that there is no culture in an immaculate state: all cultural forms, as Adela Cortina says, influence others, so we have the task of understanding under what conditions it takes out that mutual influence. Now, with the passing of time, there have been, one after the other, the acts of violence committed by radical groups identified with Islam that generate more and more questions, which sow more and more fear and distrust. In the global context to which we belong and which belongs to us, society can not consider itself alien to that situation. That is why the opening of intercultural meeting spaces between Muslims and non-Muslims, in the concrete setting of the *Abou Bakr Alsiddiq* mosque and its surroundings, is not only necessary but also urgent: it is unjustifiable that people direct to Islam only when there is an attack by Daesh in some capital of Europe; with each mournful event, the suspicions - and, therefore, the distances between the cultures-increase.

In general terms, during the development of the research (2014-2016), the intercultural meeting between the parties studied was not a priority for any of them. However, some isolated voices have had their own questions, which may be favorable to this meeting. For example, two young Muslim converts belonging to the mosque community, aware of my status as communicator and researcher, once asked me about an adequate way to make known the reality of their faith and the situation of their community, in view of the ignorance of them from the social representations elaborated by the information media. This concern is a sign that there is a desire to exercise the right to communication, although still embryonic and reduced. It would be very interesting, as a concrete development of the

knowledge elaborated from this research, to be able to carry out an initiative that responds to the restlessness of these boys, provided that it is verified that it is also an attractive issue for the Muslim community at first. In order to develop its characteristics, an Internet station will be set as an example of this initiative¹⁴.

¿How to carry out this proposal? Before teams and personnel in charge, it is necessary to think about the conceptual basis of it. It is important to define the characteristics of educommunication to find alternatives. The context studied, despite the limitations encountered, offers opportunities to develop inclusive, reflective, autonomous, dialogic and dialoguing learning processes, critical of the homogenizing system proposed by globalization, of discourses that do not recognize the value of difference, with the consideration of alternative messages and positions. The teacher Mario Kaplún (cited in Covi, 2010, p. 50), in telling and reflecting on the history of Célestin Freinet and his boys, pointed out that the process of self-learning in educommunication requires warm, human motivations; qualities that, precisely, traditional education makes problematic by not proposing them or limiting them. The proposal must be based on an incentive powerful enough to develop. In the referenced case, the fundamental pillar of this incentive consists in the participation of both Muslims and non-Muslims in the initiative: working together in their planning, development, evaluation, support, etc.; strive to exchange experiences and opinions, in negotiations based on the exercise of respect for the word and its promotion. Another element of motivation is that the initiative is an issuer and receiver of stories, stories, experiences with human color, and not a tool of proselytizing of any kind. Another incentive: to go out to the street, to the common spaces, to the stores, to the bakeries, to the florist shops, to collect those stories hidden there to bring them to light; the territory as a scenario not only of joint work, but also of learning. Therefore, it should not be a project enclosed in booths, studios or offices. The public word exerted by Muslims and non-Muslims in the studied case can start from the elaboration of questions and answers in the recommended meeting spaces on a scale beyond curiosity.

To develop the initiative, we must review those positive elements in the history of contact between the two parties. The existing groups can be strengthened, the interactions already done, the solidarity exercises (demonstrated in the research process) that, although passive, are antecedents that leave a latent seed for the interrelation. Therefore, the initiative could be a joint effort -at least initially- between the *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* mosque and the San Jorge parish. It must be reiterated that, although the religious element should not be the center of the project, it cannot be ignored either. And it is necessary to strengthen the cultural spaces available in each of the two communities, both internally and externally. Perhaps if work with these characteristics was started from the mosque and from the parish, if time and effort were dedicated with patience and coherence, little by little other inhabitants of the territory would be interested in being part of it.

14 According to Alfonso Gumucio, radio has in some way invented participatory communication. For this, and for the advantages of the environment in relation to costs, technical and human assembly, in addition to the immense attraction that still has in our collective imagination, is that it is suggested to make a media experience for interculturality in the case of the Abou mosque Bakr AlSiddiq and its surroundings going to the “technological marriage” between radio and Internet pointed out by José Ignacio López-Vigil.

The initiative would have as a valuable and specific activity the analysis of media, of the discourses transmitted through them that involve the encounter and distancing of cultures to question and propose alternatives to homogenizing messages.

The words of José Ignacio López-Vigil about the presence of religion in community radios offer a necessary tuning: “Can a radio be Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist? Of course. But as long as that faith does not exclude others. [...] that (in it) all religions are heard and that no one proselytizes. We also have to face religious fanaticism in our lives” (2015, p. 251).

Thus, the proposed initiative, in terms of educommunication, would be neither Christian nor Muslim in itself: it would be intercultural. It would cover them both, it would tell the stories of the two, but also those of other cultures because the world goes beyond the mediatic confrontation between the West and the East, a bipolar issue that does not see or allows seeing other colors of the natural rainbow that it is Humanity. A huge challenge faced by its participants is not to stifle the meeting if it is carried out in order to include other views and positions in front of life. Precisely, the great strength, the great differentiator of the initiative, would be to deal with it bilaterally in the direction of a world of multiple voices, of which diffusion is also recognized.

6. Final words: the mosque as an educommunicative laboratory

It could be pointed out as civic values considered for this research - freedom, equality, active and solidary respect, dialogue as an exercise of the public word - as the guiding concepts of the educommunicative proposal; not as mere mechanical concepts, but as elements that are applied in reality, which -as Adela Cortina says- are tasted in it through the full exercise of autonomy. It is hoped that a joint position of people will develop who, even with cultural differences between them, assume their responsibilities and their rights autonomously, aware of their own value and the decisions they make.

Considering the respect that predominates between Muslims and non-Muslims of the studied case, there is a breeze of hope to take advantage of. Perhaps here is an opportunity for Zeno de Citio’s idea: “All living beings participate equally in the -alma of the world-” find a concrete example, an incarnation based on the sharing of the divine and the human.

Finally, I point out as one of the most interesting experiences that I experienced during my teaching at the Minuto de Dios University Corporation (UNIMINUTO) to manage and carry out a visit by my group of students from the Communication, Citizenship and Coexistence class to *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* (I-2018). Because none of these young people had gone to a mosque in their entire lives; knowing the building and talking to Shaykh Ahmad Tayel about Islam was a strong experience for them, as it contrasted with the large amount of preconceived and insidious information about the faith and the Muslim culture that they have had to consume

through the media. Some of them, during the meeting in the building, told me that at that moment they were receiving messages from their homes inviting them to be careful during their stay in the mosque.

To the educommunicative proposal, product of the investigation that has been described in this document, we must add, therefore, a key element: the mosque can be a laboratory, a working space for communicators in formation in the city of Bogotá, so that they develop sensibly their abilities to encounter difference, to adequately inform about it - beginning with its closest surroundings - and to reflect on the sociopolitical and cultural context both local and global. Likewise, they can become excellent citizens who promote this initiative and other similar ones. The intercultural encounter that is proposed between the members of the community of the *Abou Bakr AlSiddiq* Mosque and its non-Muslim neighbors may have in the encouraging action of the Academy a third and important element.

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