

## ARTICLE

# Curriculum, disturbances and challenges: indigenous people in brazilian universities

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### ABSTRACT

Curricular history of Brazilian public universities has showed their commitment with conceptions and representations forged in colonial relationships, so that the forms of production, validation, application and knowledge circulation are still disputed based on a Western, Eurocentric, racialized epistemological matrix in their spaces. So, we question whether the indigenous presences in the universities, enlarged in the las decade, can constitute the possibility of producing new meaning and arrangements regarding differences. Do such presences tend to cause ruptures into curricular matrices, stressing other materializations of knowledge? Do the categories with which we have worked out the definition of this knowledge account for the indigenous demand that literally gains shape in the university? The experience in progress in some universities allowed the indigenous presence to be conceived as a possibility of curricular displacements.

### KEYWORDS

indigenous people in universities; geopolitic of knowledge; curriculum.

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## ***CURRÍCULO, RUÍDOS E CONTESTAÇÕES: OS POVOS INDÍGENAS NA UNIVERSIDADE***

### **RESUMO**

A história curricular das universidades públicas brasileiras mostra seu compromisso com concepções e representações forjadas nas relações coloniais, de modo que, em seus espaços, formas de produção, validação, aplicação e circulação de conhecimentos ainda são disputadas com base em uma matriz epistemológica ocidental, eurocentrada, racializada. Nesse sentido, questiono se as presenças indígenas nas universidades, ampliadas na última década, podem constituir-se em possibilidade de produção de novos sentidos e de novos arranjos das diferenças. Tais presenças tendem a provocar rupturas nas matrizes curriculares, tensionando outras materializações do conhecimento? As categorias com as quais temos operado a definição desses conhecimentos dão conta da demanda indígena que literalmente ganha corpo na universidade? A experiência em curso em algumas universidades permite conceber a presença indígena como possibilidade de deslocamentos curriculares.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

povos indígenas no ensino superior; geopolítica do conhecimento; currículo.

## ***CURRÍCULUM, RUIDOS Y CONTESTACIONES: LOS PUEBLOS INDÍGENAS EN LA UNIVERSIDAD BRASILEÑA***

### **RESUMEN**

La historia curricular de las universidades públicas brasileñas muestra su compromiso con concepciones y representaciones forjadas en las relaciones coloniales, de modo que, en sus espacios, formas de producción, validación, aplicación y circulación de conocimientos todavía se disputan con base en una matriz epistemológica occidental, eurocentrada, racializada. En ese sentido, cuestiono si las presencias indígenas en las universidades, ampliadas en la última década, pueden constituirse en posibilidad de producción de nuevos sentidos y de nuevos arreglos de las diferencias. Tales presencias tienden a provocar rupturas en las matrices curriculares, tensando otras materializaciones del conocimiento? Las categorías con las que hemos operado la definición de esos conocimientos dan cuenta de la demanda indígena que literalmente gana cuerpo en la universidad? La experiencia en curso en algunas universidades permitió concebir la presencia indígena como posibilidad de desplazamientos curriculares.

### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

pueblos indígenas em la universidad; geopolítica del conocimiento; currículum.

## INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS AND HIGHER EDUCATION IN BRAZIL: A BRIEF HISTORY OF RESISTANCE AND EXISTENCE

This article<sup>1</sup> approaches the curricular history of Brazilian public universities considering their compromise with conceptions and representations forged by an octal, eurocentric, epistemological matrix, based on a set of hierarchies, to discuss whether the presence of indigenous people in universities, extended in the last decade, can constitute possibilities to displace representations on the differences and, in some level, lead to epistemological disagreements and new curricular outcomes.

The history of Latin America is traversed by the effects of colonial processes that engendered the physical, cultural, linguistic and territorial erasure, displacements and social and territorial reorganization of indigenous peoples, as well as the effects of enslavement of African peoples, who also had their cultures, symbols of identities and linguistic, philosophical, religious, medical and cosmological systems deeply affected. At the same time, there is a history, albeit invisible, of struggles, subversions, negotiations, reexistences, and cultural and identity re-creations of these peoples.

Latin American indigenous societies, as a result of this process, have accumulated deep inequities that affect access to education, from basic to higher education, as well as affect health care, the right to the territory originally inhabited and other bases of material, cultural and social production, access to employment, housing and lack of recognition or deformed recognition of identities and cultures. Even today, these societies resist mega-operations, the actions of ruralists, *grileiros*, farmers, the police and the State itself, often responsible for the dismantling of hard-won rights.

Specifically in Brazil, considering the social dynamics of indigenous peoples, from any point of view, demands understanding them and taking into account their relations with non-indigenous societies and their historically established conceptions throughout the colonialist process and their socio-cultural diversity: language, identities, cultural practices, demography, social, economic and political organization, history, production of knowledge, meetings between different ethnic groups and with segments of the non-indigenous population, among other aspects. Such diversity contributes to the formation of a single, rich and complex framework of social and cultural relations constituted with these peoples, as stated by Silva (2003).

The proposal to valorize cultural differences and to recognize diversity as a right that must be guaranteed to indigenous peoples, while protected by the State

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1 Work resulting from doctoral research, under the guidance of Professor Valter Roberto Silvério (Federal University of São Carlos - UFSCar), with the support of the Higher Education Personnel Coordination Improvement Agency (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - CAPES*). This is the revised and expanded version of the text presented at the Working Group "Curriculum" (WG12), at the 38th National Meeting of the National Association of Postgraduate and Research in Education (*Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação - ANPEd*) of 2017. For this publication, we thank the precious comments of the *ad hoc* referees of the *Brazilian Journal of Education (Revista Brasileira de Educação)*.

(not the tutelage), however, is recent one in the country's history. Indigenous peoples in Brazil were initially conceived as "incapable beings" to manage their own lives, "savages", to be later conceived as beings that could be saved, through civilizing and catechizing actions and, thus, to integrate the nation's workers. In this context, it is clear that the right to land, language and culture could never be guaranteed to them (Grupioni, 2006). The colonialist expansion of indigenous peoples and their territories, due to the historical imposition of the nationalist monocultural Project of the Brazilian State, was characterized by numerous attempts to overcome its sociodiversity and ethnic identification, considered an index of national backwardness, of hindering progress and to the desired European civilization framework (Brand, Nascimento and Urquiza, 2008).

The different actions directed at indigenous peoples in Brazil have always been associated with the questioning of how they could "participate" in the formation of the national society, aiming to subsume their socio-cultural difference. Thus, Grupioni (2006, p. 40) explains that hegemonic conceptions were established indicating indigenous peoples "needed to be civilized, saved as individuals, annihilated as culturally diverse peoples".

Despite the long history of colonialist imposition and ethnic practices engendered against indigenous peoples, their cultures and sense of belonging did not really succumb, as they reworked their particular ways of being in the world, of constructing unprecedented experiences of contestation, negotiation and hybridization and established themselves as differentiated collectivities. Baniwa (2006), of the Baniwa people, points out the articulation of alliances and the emergence of new indigenous political leaders, the retraction of the State and the political-financial emptying of the National Indian Foundation (*Fundação Nacional do Índio* — FUNAI), housed in the Ministry of Justice, and, at the global level, the globalization of environmental issues as factors that demanded the strengthening of indigenous movements and highlighted the problems related to indigenous lands.

As a consequence, we are witnessing a moment of intense mobilization by indigenous peoples of different ethnic groups who claim the right to a differentiated language, identity and culture, but whose greatest challenge is still the possession of lands that represent about 13% of the national territory and 23% of the Legal Amazon area. Both from an environmental and cultural point of view, the relevance of these lands is incalculable. According to FUNAI, "indigenous lands are the support of the differentiated and irreplaceable way of life of the 300 indigenous peoples who inhabit Brazil today" (Brasil, 2017).

Baniwa (2006, p. 101-102) explains that the territory is a living condition of indigenous peoples, an essential factor of resistance.

It is the theme that unifies, articulates and mobilizes all, villages, peoples and indigenous organizations, around a common struggle that is the defense of their territories. [...] Land and territory for the Indians do not only mean physical and geographical space, but all the cosmological symbolism that carries the primordial space of the human world and the world of the gods who inhabit nature. [...] The indigenous peoples establish a close and deep bond with

the land, so that the problem inherent in it is not only solved by the use of agrarian soil, but also in the sense of territoriality. For them, the territory is the habitat where the ancestors lived and live. The territory is linked to its cultural manifestations and traditions, to family and social relations.

Associated to territorial struggle,<sup>2</sup> school education has gradually come to be perceived by indigenous peoples as a strategy of apprehending academic knowledge that would allow them to establish more autonomous relations with sectors of official indigenism and with other segments of the Brazilian society. Thus, from a process imposed in the perspective of the erasure of cultural differences and assimilationism to the national society, education becomes, at the same time, a demand of indigenous peoples (Gruponi, 2006).

An example of the reappropriation of the school, with the definition of its objectives due to the desires, the history and the memory of the indigenous community itself, is brought with sensitivity by a *Balatiponé* student of the Federal University of São Carlos (*Universidade Federal de São Carlos — UFSCar*): effect of a process of cultural, social and linguistic devastation, the *Balatiponé* people were reduced to 23 people in the 1940s. In the last decade, however, the community begins to re-experience the culture of its people, through its revival in body, memory and daily life: paintings, crafts, dances, stories, language movements, the beauty of their chants, the strength of their ceremonies.

If, in the context of claims, indigenous school education became the focus of a normalization by the Brazilian State, since 1991 (although this normalization did not mean that indigenous demands were actually met), the same was not true for the access of indigenous students to higher education (Freitas and Harder, 2011). In the perspective of Lima (2007), indigenous organizations thought little about higher education, once their struggle for territorial possession and for ways to ensure the economic, social and cultural maintenance of their collective forms of life took center stage in their concerns and in formulating their demands.

Notably on the debates about indigenous access to the university, Barroso-Hoffmann (2005) and Lima (2007) point out that they bring out the prejudices embedded in the representations that describe them as “primitive peoples”, as well as point out the stereotypes that were capable of making the diversity of more than

2 It is important to emphasize that, in our country, there is a historically violent struggle against indigenous peoples, and violence includes territorial confinement. In 2017, we had news of the attack on the indigenous people of Gamela, accompanied by mutilations carried out by farmers and gunmen in an area where the traditional territory was taken over in *Povoado das Babias*, in the municipality of Viana, Maranhão, as a consequence of the lack of effective protection mechanisms of the State, of its failure to ensure the original and constitutional right of indigenous peoples and exclusive usufruct over the lands they traditionally occupy and the length of time in the process of demarcating indigenous lands. Indigenous leaders of the Gamela people began a process of resumption of the areas occupied by farmers in the 1980s. The phases of the demarcation of traditionally occupied lands are defined by a decree of the presidency of the Republic and currently consist of *studies, delimitations, declarations, homologations, regularizations* and *interdictions*, in a process that can take decades.

305 peoples invisible, with 817,963 speakers of at least 274 different languages, as indicated by the 2010 Demographic Census data, reducing this cultural diversity in “a unique and generic entity which we all [...] supposedly know — *the Indian*”<sup>3</sup> (Lima, 2007, p. 271).

For Barroso-Hoffmann (2005), stereotypes and prejudices directed at indigenous peoples<sup>4</sup> raise the question — from their mistaken point of view — of how to “insert” them into universities without fearing that it would become an instrument of threat to indigenous identities and to the loss of students’ bounds with their native people. For the author, rather than dealing with the question of indigenous presences in the university and the production of knowledge through intercultural dialogue, it would be more fruitful to consider the relations that have already been established between these knowledges — in a rather asymmetrical perspective, indeed —, seeking to analyze how effectively they are updated and resignified.

Yet, Barroso-Hoffmann (2005) argues that in discussions about indigenous access in regular undergraduate courses, even those based in interculturalism, a certain reified approach emerges from the *indigenous knowledge* and *Western Science* categories, one as opposed to the other, which tends to obscure the long paths of the construction of *Western Science*, often because of interactions between groups and knowledges. This same approach presents *Western Science* as an internally homogenous and cohesive set, as well as “sole owner of a wealth of knowledge and property resulting from research procedures presented as having been of its exclusive creation” (Barroso-Hoffmann, 2005, p. 9).

*Indigenous authorship*, conceived by César (2011, p. 18), is absent in Brazilian universities as

the diversity of practices and social and discursive acts, carried out by individual or collective subjects, in the sense of displacing certain positions hegemonically constituted. Thus, it becomes a prerogative of authorship the possibility of producing the speech gesture, those actions or “speeches” that shake, displace positions of power instituted, inaugurating a place of its own. These gestures, by

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3 We know that the term *indigenous*, as well as *Indian*, is a colonially constructed category (Batalla, 1982), racially marked, to the extent that indistinction terms obscure very significant social, political, cultural and linguistic differences between groups and peoples, often radically different from each other. With this, it is a category that does not refer to any specific content of the groups that it intends to cover, so I use it here *under shaving*, as taught by Hall (2011).

4 It is worth noting that, although postcolonial societies in Latina America have been constituted based on the hierarchy of ethnicity and race attributes, the engineering of this stratification is not the same, says Segato (2005). This author helps us understand how the construction of the Other is, at the same time, the historically and geographically located production of a “thing”. Considering the conception of race as a sign, whose sociological value lies in its ability to confer meaning, the author discusses race as a brand. The mark of the position of bodies in history is a moving trait, which is not exactly in the body, but in the sign. According to Segato (2005, p. 3), “its meaning depends on an attribution, a socially shared reading and a historically and geographically delimited context”.

themselves, or before the possibility of being narrated, (re)read, (re)written by diverse social actors, constitute movements, constructions of authorship.

As Baniwa (2012, p. 122) analyzes, indigenous literatures and literary productions are disregarded even to complement the classic texts of reference, “serving more to trigger some reflections or to motivate interpretive possibilities, though lacking any value for the academy”. That is why Boaventura Santos (2002) proposes a *sociology of absences* as opposed to the “waste of experiences”, of knowledge, of stories, of cultures. For the author, one must seek what has been silenced, erased from the history we have learned, eliminated from the formal curricula as having no importance whatsoever.

How can the university approach the theme of the forest, for example, conceived by indigenous populations as a living being in intimate relation with the peoples who inhabit it, without the proper epistemological rupture of paradigms that conceive the forest by the prism of maintaining adequate levels of oxygen or “sustainable” extraction of the environment into the “sustainable development” of the capitalist world-economy? The very conception of “human” must be defined under another epistemology: spirit, animals, forest, plants can be “people”. This is another record, another sensitivity, another philosophy to guide the collective life that the imperial reason does not give an account of enunciating or reading, as I analyze along with the researcher Maria Paula Meneses.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, I share the thesis of Wedderburn (2005) and Rodrigues and Wawzyniak (2006) that the admission of indigenous students to the university requires a revision of the epistemologies that have stabilized in this institution, in practically all disciplines, courses and areas of specialization, and, fundamentally, also demands a revision of their world view or social function to respond to the challenge and tension of difference posed by the indigenous in this process called *democratization of access* to higher education.

In this regard, Rodrigues and Wawzyniak (2006) point out that, although the importance of the socio-cultural diversity of indigenous peoples is emphasized, what actually happens is that the cognitive and logical-symbolic systems of these peoples have been generally treated as “beliefs, habits and customs”, contributing to the denial of these specificities and generating a caricature of what would be the object of a work *with* communities of different cultures, or rather sociocultural collectivities.

Without this epistemological rupture, Baniwa’s question (2012, p. 122) remains:

How can an indigenous student of the Kaxinawá, Werekena or Kaingang people be able to discuss their indigenous philosophy, something elementary to produce literature, from their people and for their people, if the objectives of intercultural licentiate careers and those of universities are other? In the con-

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5 Researcher at the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra.



text of the situation described, how can indigenous academic and literary production be appreciated?

From a curricular arrangement thought out of the individual and a homogeneous society, the challenge is to deal with the idea of peoples, that is, of “collectivities that intend to remain culturally differentiated” (Lima, 2007a, p. 268). As Brand and Nascimento (2010) point out, they are *representatives of peoples* with differentiated social and historical knowledge and processes that now enter the spaces historically identified with the interests of the colonial elites and, therefore, anti-indigenous in their conception.

For Lima and Barroso-Hoffmann (2007, p. 25), “taking seriously” the presence of indigenous students within universities implies new epistemological and political arrangements that make it possible to form, from within, for example, the cultural right in university curricula, indigenous languages, indigenous health, “recognizing the intellectual authority of the bearers of traditional knowledge” and exempting themselves from their knowledge by means of a university degree. The risk here is that the difference is “captured” in the form of contents of knowledge, or instrumentalized to inform, emptying it of its potentiality to question or displace what is hegemonically configured as the canon of learning.

Macedo (2012) is the one to best draw attention to the entanglement of knowledge in the curriculum. For the author, what would be the critical curriculum project aimed at emancipation is, above all, a *teaching project*, “insofar as it gives centrality to knowledge as a tool of this emancipation, a knowledge that is, therefore, external to the subject and, often, strategic only” (Macedo, 2012, p. 727). The knowledge thus taken is not a practice of meaning, explains Macedo, but a *thing*, a socio-historical *product*.

In many ways, we continue to experience, in the 21st century, racism far more dangerous than the institutional racism of the past. It is a racism that is rooted in structures. It is necessary to develop a new vocabulary so that we can access the new structures of racism. [...] Academic knowledge must be in constant dialogue with the forms of struggle (Davis, 2012)

The “social process of curriculum production”, as described by Silva (2013, p.8), involves interests, rituals, symbolic and cultural conflicts, legitimacy and control needs that intersect axes of differentiation such as class, race, gender, and nation, so that “the curriculum is not constituted of valid knowledge, but of knowledge *considered socially valid*”.

Thus, the discursive production around indigenous peoples being unable to manage their own projects was effective in considering the illegitimacy of being ancestor owners of large tracts of land. Their ancestral knowledge, insofar as they were defined in the dichotomy with Western science, could be explored, dissected, and patented (not discarded). Their religious practices being asserted as *popular beliefs* and *customs* would not threaten the pillars of Catholicism. The knowledge that constitutes us and marks our ways of thinking, materialized in the curricula,



is systematically reiterated in narratives, historical clippings, images, journalistic news, audiovisual productions.

However, being the effect of a process constituted of conflicts and struggles between different traditions and social conceptions, marked geopolitically and historically, the curriculum is not a cohesive and stable whole, but a “social and historical artifact, subject to changes and fluctuations”, says Silva (2013, p. 8). For Goodson (2013), “knowledge and curriculum are not things, as the notion of ‘content’ so embedded in common educational sense leads us to believe. Knowledge and curriculum embody social relations”, so they are not disinterested at all. The conditions of production and reproduction of ideas, conceptions, perspectives of thought, are neglected in the “finishing” of the curricula, leaving the impression of an aseptic text. This disconnection from the conditions of curriculum production is a fundamental strategy to ensure the supposed universal validity of the knowledge that the curriculum aims to objectify, as well as its unquestionability, since they come from we do not know where — as fetishized merchandise. Next, Macedo (2012, p. 731, my highlights) best presents the matter:

More than this facet of universality, however, I want to emphasize the fact that the definition of curriculum as a projection of identities and the instrumental character that knowledge gains in the construction of this identity are powerful instruments of universalization. Throughout the history of curricular thinking, they have been building a sense for curriculum that seeks *to prevent the emergence of the unforeseen and the manifestation of otherness*<sup>6</sup>. Thus, not only in the National Curriculum Guidelines, but also in them, the centrality of knowledge and the reduction of education to teaching function as powerful discourses in the sense of *controlling difference*. [...] Thus, what could be a broadening of meanings for education, encompassing the subject and its subjectivation, ends up subsumed in a matrix in which the learning/teaching of *a knowledge external to the subject* guarantees the *construction of an identity according to a previous project*.

Corazza (2001, p. 10), in turn, argues that the curriculum provides “only one of the many ways to formulate the world, to interpret the world and to give it meaning”. The instigating consideration made by the author is that “curricular syntax and semantics have a *constitutive* function of what they enunciate as being ‘school’, ‘student’, ‘teacher’, ‘pedagogy’ and even ‘curriculum’”. Silva (2013, p. 10) also emphasizes the productive dimension of the curriculum when saying it should

6 Macedo (2012, p. 734-735), in reference to Biesta (2006), challenges us to consider that “to say education exists, it is necessary [...] to let the subject emerge as the one that emerges as the unexpected. In this sense, there is no way to create methods or models to guarantee the intersubjective relationship that characterizes education and allows the subject to emerge. [...] The definition of what is expected of the subject beforehand prevents one from being the subject, as the subject is understood as ‘what is not made up’ (Derrida, 1989, p. 59). The subject that everyone should be is just a project of his own, and the curriculum projecting it acts as a control technology that stifles the possibility of differences”.

not only be seen as an *expression* or *representation* of certain social interest, but also as *producing* certain social identities and subjectivities. “The curriculum not only *represents*, it *does*”. Does what? For Goodson (2013), the curriculum produces tradition and “*a kind*” of schooling, creates the “elect” ones and the disciplines that will be institutionalized in the universities. For Silva (1999), curriculum as meaning produces social identities — let us remember, however, what Macedo (2012) points out: it produces according to a previous catalog of possible subjectivities.

Next, I try to discuss displacements, more precisely epistemological ones, produced by the indigenous presences in the university. I also seek to make an analytical effort not to project indigenous experiences into a postcolonial paradigm of victimization,<sup>7</sup> imprisoning them in a past of espoliation, nor exaggerate the assertion of a monolithic, stable and authentic cultural singularity, unapprehensible through radicalization of difference, which would also freeze any experiences of culture between-places.

## CURRICULUM, NOISE AND CONTESTS

In arranging a meeting with two indigenous students on different days, in the context of the classic sessions of *individual* interview, I find myself, when I arrive at the meeting site, with *three* students from the same people on one of the days; and, in the other one, with two students from another people. This *collective* presence can disrupt our conception of the individual or lead us, as researchers, to reconsiderations about what effectively implies working with collectivities or representatives of indigenous peoples. The collective presence of the students in these meetings tends to provoke a breakdown in what seemed methodologically harmonic, tends to question us about the *authorization term for voice use*, and about the confidentiality of interviews.

As Silva (1995, p. 34) states in commenting on Michel Apple’s text, “it is students’ own experiences that can serve as a basis for discussion and the production of new knowledge”. In other words, with Macedo (2012, 2017), it is necessary to emerge the unforeseen, the unexpected.

Prior to the first interview meeting, Oponé<sup>8</sup> wants to make sure that we are really going to talk about *his* university experience and asks me what they would be. As the knowledge of the people is collective, their concern is not to speak of what is collective without first consulting the collectivity. Thus, in our first meeting, we talked about the *compromise term* I had drawn up and I questioned him about whether he agreed or not with the conditions in the document. Oponé asks me to redo it including two items. He had participated in a lecture on *ethics in research* at the university itself and wants to make sure that I will point out throughout the work that he is Balatiponé and speaks for his people. Oponé does not want his

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7 The expression is in Achile Mbembe, “African Modes of Self-Inscription”, *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos*, Rio de Janeiro, year 23, n. 1, p. 171-209, 2001. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0101-546X2001000100007>.

8 Oponé and Murí are the only fictional nominations in this work.

words to be literally generalized as *the* indigenous experience. Through a second inclusion in the term, he wants to be sure that his people's ancestral knowledge about the use of medicinal plants will not be violated, so I should not ask him about the practice of indigenous medicine among his people, wanting to know the specific use of plants, cultural healing practices and words that are sung and pronounced.

I think that the condition posed by Oponé is potentially disruptive, from a methodological point of view, by introducing a new interrogation about the conduct of the research, about the responsibility of the researcher, and the possibility of defining the instruments of research, altogether. I think that the request the student makes me is capable of interrogating the historically hegemonic discourse on how, for whom and for whom knowledge is produced and about the supposed neutrality of science. For Oponé, such questions are not only methodological, they are linked to broader issues of defense of the cultural heritage of their people.

Oponé still makes me think about our universalizing and generalizing academic language. One of the validity criteria of a knowledge, including in the human sciences, has been the ability to produce generalization. Among these indigenous students, I notice attention to their specificities, as in response to the generalizing and homogenizing efforts historically undertaken by national institutions. The presence of expressions such as “at least that’s how it is in my culture”, or “I’m talking about my ethnicity”, “with my people it’s like that” is recurrent. They seek to refer to their ethnicities and peoples with the proper specificity that makes them the difference.

Murí, an indigenous undergraduate student, is in an extension activity with other colleagues, among which a teacher of basic education who, referring to the pedagogical practices she develops, tells that on “Indian Day” she worked playing *an* indigenous instrument for the children and painting their faces. As soon as she has said it, she turns to Murí, as if reminding herself of their presence there, and apologizes. Why? Her apologies come from an initial recognition of a stereotyped, folklorized and generalizing practice of addressing the issue with children and her embarrassment in recognizing, in the presence of Murí, that she is totally unaware of the *other* whose representations she works with at school on “Indian Day”.

The supposed “nature” of the Indians was familiar. The naturalization of knowledge about the “other” symbolizes the persistence of a colonial relationship, explains Hountondji (2009). The presence of Murí, however, seems to disturb the naturalness with which the experience, the “being” and the time of the “other” have always been narrated. Their presence is capable of making our knowledge, founded on the West, something unfamiliar. The teacher, embarrassed, seems no longer so comfortable to talk about what she was supposed to know. The presence of Murí disallows the linearity of the narrative that we have recounted for centuries about the “other” — now there — Murí. The linearity of this narrative is subject, in the presence of Murí, to an interruption.

I believe that indigenous presences in these contexts may constitute the *possibility* of displacing the space-time of the signs, of displacing the contexts of signification, introducing uncertainty, ambivalence, dissonance and interrogation into what seemed coherent and orderly (Costa, 2006), since these unique presences

can create conditions for the production of new senses and new arrangements of differences that can destabilize the very institutionalization of school curricula, still forged on a universalizing basis and through the privilege of contents and categories that rank knowledge.

Displacements to the curriculum provoked by indigenous presence, particularly in the university context, however, seem to me less an intentionally produced movement, in the sense of a planned or deliberate resistance in spaces institutionally defined for a supposed rupture, and more by displacements which are happening in the interstices of relations of power. The daily performative presence of the indigenous students is capable of provoking fissures that destabilize the binarisms and the *colonial library*<sup>9</sup> itself that constitute the Eurocentric matrix of production, validation and circulation of knowledge in the academy. However, these displacements cannot occur on an individual, but collective level, as possibility of articulating other epistemological alternatives.

I initially think that one of the challenges to education is not to adapt norms, to expand the range of elective courses or practices of university extension, but to deconstruct canonized and hegemonic knowledge and its materiality — curricula — without racist and evolutionary marks. The involvement of indigenous teachers and students in a research group, around a theme that had been previously absent from the academy, for example, may be a space for forging other research drawings in which other knowledge circulates discursively and curricularly. Even so, there is no guarantee of an effective decolonization of the production of knowledge, but rather possibilities. As Apple (1996, p. 25) alerts,

in this society, as in all others, only certain meanings are considered “legitimate”, only certain forms of understanding the world become “official knowledge”. This is not something that just happens. Our society is structured in such a way that dominant meanings are more likely to circulate. These meanings, of course, will be contested, resisted, and sometimes transformed, but this does not diminish the fact that hegemonic cultures have greater power to make themselves known and accepted.

We do not yet know at what level the indigenous presences in the university have led to the problematization of what is knowledge, science and curriculum, for example, or the dialogue with indigenous peoples, their worldviews, struggles, concepts and categories, but they have allowed us to think about the possibility of disinvibilization of stories, knowledge, experiences, bodies, languages and cultures that reject the absences and distortions historically imposed to dispute voices in the university as well as to identify other voices: voices of silence, spirits, trees, rivers,

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9 Expression present in Valentin Y. Mudimbe in the book *The invention of Africa: gnosis, philosophy and the order of knowledge* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1988) and concerns the vocabulary and colonial labels made up to refer to Africa, constituting in the Imaginary “the caricature of the continent constructed by the Western epistemic fantasies”, as written by Meneses (2010, pp. 247-265).

of the ancestors' chants, of the shamans — a little of what Sheila Walker and Jesús Chucho García have called been calling *knowledge from within* (Walker, 2012).

Indigenous presences in the university, in other words, seem to surpass the abyssal line<sup>10</sup> that defined, on the one hand, knowledge, languages, experiences, bodies and legitimate cultures, respectable and present in all spaces of the nation-state, and, on the other hand, knowledge, languages, experiences, bodies and cultures rendered absent, illegitimate and abject. For this reason, I have the same conviction as Macedo (2012, p. 734) in saying that the school (in this case, the university) “should not be content to teach the language of this community, to transform the subject into a representative of that language, under penalty of making him a generic subject”.

These presences potentially question and dilute the boundaries drawn between the Manichaeisms of the colonial vocabulary, requiring the disqualification of these categories. They tend to cause the temporal caesura in the narrative of the contemporary, of which the natives did not take part, as well as provoke an interrogation in the definition of the time, since they are simultaneous presences, and not past presences of the iconography that we study in history books.

Indigenous presences in the university still affect the conditions of identification, culturally negotiating the establishment of the bond of belonging to the ethnic group of origin — and, contrary to what many feared, in some cases, strengthening it.

I think, with Bhabha (1998), that the problematization of the stereotype discourse and the processes of subjectivation can be a way for understanding and breaking the hegemonic categories. Moreover, I consider that the indigenous presence can be conceived as a strategy that carries possibilities of subversion and inquiry of the racialized imaginary, in which images, conceptions and knowledge constituted on the basis of a set of deformations can be denaturalized, displaced from their places historically constructed and contemporary, making it possible for the construction of different meanings, in a process that Hall (2010) calls *trans-codification*.

This author identifies at least three transcoding strategies: the “reversion of stereotypes”, “positive and negative images”, and the transcoding by the “eyes of representation” (Hall, 2010, p. 439-442). The first strategy refers to the attempt to reverse the value burden attributed to popular stereotypes, which does not necessarily mean subverting them, nor breaking the binary racial structure that sustains them. The second strategy seeks to question the racialized regime of representations and does so, by means of a reversal of binary opposition — by replacing depreciated and “negative” images of black life and cultures with a set of “positive” images —, establishing some balance in the representation of images. Underlying this strategy, Hall (2010, p. 442) finds the recognition and celebration of difference and diversity in the world. The problem is that by complexifying and broadening the representations of what it is to be black, it does not necessarily displace racialized representations negatively: “binarism is challenged, but are not undermined”.

10 I refer here to the discussion undertaken by Souza Santos (2007).

For the author, the third strategy is the one that confronts regimes of representation from within their complexities and ambivalences. Unlike the other two, this one “looks” at forms of representation and is not exactly engaged in introducing new content to counter meanings. It takes the body as the privileged place of representation strategies and seeks to subvert stereotypes by making them work against themselves. How? Through the subversion of the racialized “look”. If the racialized “look” produces racialized images and becomes familiarized with “looking at them” racially, it is through subversion with and in the body — crossed by the axes of race, gender and sexuality — that this “look” is confronted. That is, if the representations that continue stereotyping affect the body, it is with the body that they can be unfamiliarized.

It is not a matter of forging a new multicultural semantics inside the university, but of reinventing cultural grammar. We cannot disregard the gigantic and far-reaching effects of coloniality in our psychic and cultural landscapes, nor its hegemonic influence on information networks and the media, and on our academic institutions.

Operating at the key of difference requires much broader epistemological and political efforts. The plurality of politics, as De la Cadenā (2008) points out, will require facing one of the greatest political and social challenges of the 21st century: the redefinition of the idea of the nation-state and its projects of homogenization of cultural differences that have historically ruled over public policies to ensure the construction of national citizenship. I agree with the author when he says that pluralizing politics requires new possibilities for representing culture and knowledge, which means broadening the political platform for representing otherness, including curricularly.

## BREAKING THE LINEAR AND CONSENSUS CHAINS OF EPISTEMOLOGICAL REPETITION

Coronil (2005, p. 59) approaches the results of these efforts: “by decentralizing the epistemologies of the West and the recognition of other alternatives of life will produce not only more complex images of the world, but also types of knowledge that allow a better understanding and representation of life itself”. In this sense, for Bhabha (1998, p. 352), it is not enough to simply “change the narratives of our stories, but to transform our notion of what it means to live, what it means to be, in other times and different spaces, both human and historical”.

The dramatic change in curricula and pedagogical practices, while having an impact on the deconstruction of racialized imaginaries, is not enough, as several authors point out. This complex task requires a radical overhaul of the university structure. I am referring fundamentally to the objectives of teaching at the university and its historical association with a portion of the population that intended to represent the national society. Miskolci (2014) argues that although insurgent knowledge has penetrated the institutionalized spaces of knowledge production, they did not produce substantive changes in the circuit, especially international, of traditional knowledge production. They did, in fact, affect research subjects and methodologies, but did not modify the disciplinary structure of knowledge production, nor the



geopolitics of knowledge. In this context, it becomes even more complex to examine the possibilities of displacement that indigenous presences might provoke within and beyond universities, but they certainly challenge the conventional functioning of the gears of the racialized production process of knowledge.

In the middle of 2005, when a greater number of Brazilian universities started to implement affirmative action policies, Segato already saw the destabilizing potential of the presence of signs absent in universities, arguing that the introduction (*deliberate*, not as an exception) of the absent sign could lead to changes in the way we “look at and read the human landscape in the environments we go through” and could end up “undermining, eroding, destabilizing the [hierarchical] structure in its very slow historical reproduction” (Segato, 2005, p. 11). I believe, as the author does, that indigenous presences can provoke some fissure in the linear and consensual chains of epistemological repetition, so that we may produce other sciences, more adequate to the historical and urgent challenges posed by difference in our country.

In fact, the indigenous presence in the university can produce political-epistemological displacements that allow the constitution of new problems for science, for which the expansion and revision of the ways of thinking, of signifying and semantizing experiences will be a crucial requirement. As M'Bokolo (2014) provoked at his conference in Brazil, we need to think more, not only about old contents, concepts, categories, paradigms and curricula that need to be “decolonized”, but also about new problems, although some concepts have fallen into disuse, the weight of their ideas remain giving meaning and defining the epistemological place that Africa and its diasporas or knowledge and indigenous peoples, for example, occupy in the construction of global history.

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*Received on March 12, 2018*

*Approved on July 25, 2018*

