

# CADERNOS DE INCLUSÃO

## 20

Meeting of Knowledges: A model to decolonize the  
Eurocentric curriculum of universities in Latin America.

(First Draft)

**José Jorge de Carvalho**

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Brasília  
2023

Meeting of Knowledges: A model to decolonize the Eurocentric curriculum of universities in Latin America.

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## I. Notes on Decolonization and the Meeting of Knowledges

In the Transculturality Lecture Series of 2016 at the University of Music and Performing Arts – Viena (MDW), I presented the basic elements of the Meeting of Knowledges, a movement dedicated to the inclusion of masters of traditional knowledges (Indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, etc.) as teachers in our universities, regardless of the fact that they don't have formal education. Two years later, my lecture was published in the book *Transkulturelle Erkundungen*, edited by Ursula Hemetek and her colleagues at MDW. In that text, I elaborated on the description and on the transcultural background of the project. My presentation now will expand the ideas behind it and sum up some of its more recent developments.<sup>1</sup>

There are at least three intermingling topics to be addressed in the present Symposium: a) discussing decolonization of knowledges – in my case, from the standpoint of someone positioned inside Brazilian academy, with all the historical singularities as regards other academic traditions, such as the Hispanic American ones; b) actualizing the Meeting of Knowledges as a theory and as a practice by commenting on some of its dimensions which were not mentioned in 2016; c) exploring the possibility that it can be implemented, with the necessary adaptations, to Art Universities outside Latin America, such

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revised version of the lecture I delivered in the Symposium “Decolonising of Knowledges”, at MDW in May, 2019.

as in Europe<sup>2</sup>.

Since academic knowledge is always created and reproduced within an institutional framework, the issue of decolonization of knowledges cannot be reduced to theoretical discussions only, but it demands a concrete action, or intervention in the organization and functioning of the institutions that were designed precisely to widespread colonization of knowledge. This transformation demands a complementary and symmetrical effort both on the part of the institutions that have played the role of colonizers and of the institutions that have been colonized by them.

Like all academic projects of engagement and intervention, the Meeting of Knowledges forms part of a specific political movement and can only be properly and thoroughly understood if the overall context, inside and outside Brazilian (and Latin American) academia, is made explicit and the connections with other movements are established. The proposal of bringing traditional non-Western musicians and performers to act as lectures in institutions of higher education, which is the central goal of the project, was developed together with anti-racist struggles, decolonization of the academy and the general promotion of both non-Western musical traditions and of the masters of those traditions<sup>3</sup>.

Universities in Brazil (and, to a certain extent, in other Latin American countries) were created in the colonial and Republican periods as replicas of the model of the modern European universities, following the hierarchy of knowledge and legitimation of truth defined by the Napoleonic and Humboldtian reforms around the 1800's. All the rich traditions of knowledges of the original Indigenous peoples and of African peoples who were brought as slaves and of their descendants were either repressed, censored, silenced, or disqualified as unscientific or aesthetically poor or irrelevant.

In a parallel move, the dominant Western universities (German, French, British, Dutch, Spanish) that colonized our model of academic institutions have projected a monoepistemic worldview worldwide and at the same time practiced the exclusion and

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<sup>2</sup> Since the year 2020, a course on Meeting of Knowledges forms part of the curriculum of the M.A in Ethnomusicology at MDW.

<sup>3</sup> The Meeting of Knowledge is a movement that include masters of all areas of knowledge: sciences, technologies, arts and spiritual traditions. I am here concentrating on music and performing arts.

negation of the knowledges of the minorities of their own countries. This symmetrical condition makes it possible the realization of a meaningful and collaborative exercise of decolonization such as the one intended in this Lecture Series.

Since we are using here the signifier ‘to decolonize’, it is worth considering that the idea of decolonization changes from one social and historical context to another. Initially, decolonization was used to refer to the formation of the new independent states in Africa: to build new State institutions it was necessary to decolonize the school system, the judicial system, the political system, the concept of diversity (ethnic, racial, etc.), the definition of national languages, etc. That moment of decolonization was intense after 1945 up to 1975. Africa has been a reference with Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Amílcar Cabral, together with Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and Abdias do Nascimento in the case of Brazil. Post-colonial theory is usually associated with the analysis of British colonization in India and British and French in the Middle East, with special focus on the struggles that took place in the XVIIIth and the XIXth centuries. More recently appeared the movement of decoloniality, located mainly in the US and in Hispanic Latin America. Writing in English and Spanish, decolonial authors, such as Enrique Dussel, Aníbal Quijano and Catherine Walsh, emphasize what they call “the first wave of coloniality”, which began with the Spanish arrival in the American continent in 1492. This way, they distinguish themselves from the post-colonial authors, like Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Ranajit Guha, Edward Said, who focus mainly on the “second wave of colonization” (term coined by the “decolonial” authors) that happened mainly in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in India and the Middle East.

Although the Meeting of Knowledge decolonizes our academia, it does so by using a specific political move, quite different from other movements of decolonization, such as the African, Indian and Middle Eastern, and even the Hispanic American one.

To de-colonize has a basic meaning of getting rid of, or free oneself from a concrete and defined external violence and imposition. Thus, an initial meaning of de-colonize can mean: to un-do; like, for instance, to un-dress a clothe that the oppressor forced you to wear. Mabika Kalanda, one of the first Congolese intellectuals of the new independent Congo in the sixties of the last century, wrote *Decolonising the Mind* in 1967. He started the movement he called authenticity: to stop wearing Western clothes and start wearing Congolese traditional garments, which were forbidden under Belgian rule. He also led the movement to

use their traditional names and refuse to use Western Christian names. In this case, to decolonize is to get rid of a signifier, to reject it, to un-do, to un-dress.

We can see a similar type of rejection of the colonial signifier in the ‘Rhodes must fall’ movement in South Africa: the statue of the infamous British White racist is a master signifier in Lacanian terms, and resonates in the chain of colonial signifiers that is tied to it. The idea behind the act is that to destroy the image is like ceasing the colonial narrative. Spivak also gives an apt example of a master signifier when she describes a British soldier walking alone in the Indian countryside, ‘worlding’ that space as non-Indian, with his foreign and, I would add, unassimilable presence. The psychopolitical mechanism behind the imposition of signifiers works as if in his dressed body the entire British empire had colonized the entire Indian subcontinent.

The colonized mentality is created by the systematic circulation of signifiers controlled by the colonizer. That which is defined by Gayatri Spivak as epistemic violence based on a specific structure of feelings, controlled by the colonizers. In the Brazilian case, this kind of epistemic violence is constitutive of our nation building. For this reason, I believe that without the presence of traditional masters in equal conditions to academic doctors, there can be proposals, statements, and theoretical formulations, but not effective decolonization.

Postcolonial and decolonial authors build a dissident voice inside the hegemonic space. Such as, for example, Homi Bhabha, who defends the inbetweenness and the interspace, and the same time works in Harvard, at the center of global imperial academy. *The Meeting of Knowledges* is characterized by a series of epistemic interventions combined with a set of proposals of institutional changes that can guarantee the continuity and expansion of the desired academic decolonization.

Still another version of the destruction of an oppressive signifier, such as the Rhodes statue, was performed in an extraordinary way by B. R. Ambedkar, when he deliberately took water from the Chowdar Pond in 1927. That lake was considered ‘pure’ and exclusive to the Bramans, and if a Dalit drank water from it, it would pollute it definitely. When Ambedkar drank its water, he didn’t destroy the lake physically (as it was done with the statue), but he destroyed the signifier “the unpolluted Chowdar Pond” forever. A new pact of co-existence between Bramans and Dalits had to be built from that day on.

A second move in decolonization is to attach other meanings to the colonial signifier: instead of getting rid of it, you make it work within a new symbolic economy, which is and is not colonial: that is the case of syncretism in Afro-Brazilian religions (and Afro-Cuban and Afro-American in general: Our Lady of Conception is considered to be the syncretised image of Yemanjá, the Yoruba goddess of the sea, as Shango is St. John, Ogun is St. George, Oya is St. Barbara, and so on. You may combine the elimination of some signifiers with the operations of syncretism, hybridization, or *métissage* performed in some colonial signifiers.

We have many examples of this strategy in the performing arts. However, overtones of racism, subalternity, neocolonialism, compromise and disguised submission sometimes appear in this strategy. For example, there is now an antisyncretic political stand on the part of some prominent priest and priestesses of *candomblé* who claim that you don't need our Lady of Conception in order to worship Yemanjá. And they take the performing arts as an example which reinforces their position: the music and dance of *candomblé* are a variation, or a development of African arts in the Diaspora, without any need to incorporate Western arts in order to be effective and complete; the arts of *candomblé* gives foundation and expression to the violence and the wonders of the Afro-Brazilians communities after slavery. Maybe we are just on the way to consolidate two 'schools' or lines of *candomblé*, similar to different schools in Christianity (Roman Catholic and Reform), Buddhist (Hinayana and Mahayana), Islamic (Sunni and Shia), for example:

Most of the time we see two attempts at decolonization through a politics of semiosis: on the one hand, a decision to eliminate colonial signifiers; on the other, to maintain and attach new meanings or to re-semantize central Western signifiers. As to the second alternative, Homi Bhabha is a postcolonial theorist who has elaborated on this ambivalence, or the third space, as he sometimes calls it. Although Bhabha announces transition, an intellectual and activist who chose to exercise it was Gloria Anzaldúa, who lived in the state of *nepantla*, a constant transition between two worlds, the North-American and the Mexican, writing in a Spanglish language she invented for herself. However, even elaborating on the borders and transitions, the point of departure of post-colonial theory is that we are now in a post-colonial situation (or time, or condition), and we can see this perspective also in Achille



Mbembe, in his work *On the Postcolony*; he is elaborating on the dilemmas of a post-colonial Africa as a continent.

On the other hand, authors who identified themselves as decolonial, elaborate on the condition they call coloniality, meaning a continuation of the same colonial pattern of power, to use an expression of Quijano, since the XVI century – and for some of them coloniality reaches a quasi-metaphysical status: coloniality of power, coloniality of knowledge, even coloniality of being. What they don't seem to offer is a way, or a method, to go beyond coloniality; or better, of how to decolonize, be it knowledge, power or being.

The Meeting of the Knowledges grew as a consequence, in the epistemic field, of a third political move, which is the inclusion of new signifiers which were silenced, repressed, denied, and obviously excluded from academy and State culture through racism. For instance, the politics of quotas for Blacks and indigenous is a politics of inclusion. The idea is that the previously only-White academic institution can continue to exist – we don't want to destroy it – but it can't continue to be of benefit only to the white elite: it has to be multi-ethnic and multi-racial – and each group can continue to be - now, inside the university - with their full identity, exactly as they are outside the university. In other words, they don't have to 'whiten' themselves in order to have a place inside academia. Since racism is a basic component of the colonial machine, quotas as an anti-racist struggle have become a powerful decolonizing weapon in Brazil. Once young Blacks and Indians start attending classes, they demand the second and complementary dimension of inclusion, that I am now defining as 'epistemic cuotas': the inclusion of Black and Indigenous knowledges.

The Meeting of the Knowledges is a political and epistemic framework for the inclusion of new signifiers, to which it will be assigned a status inside academic knowledge either equal in status, or deserving the same respect, as Western signifiers. Thus, if classical music and ballet are master signifiers, candomblé music, Congado, Reisado, Jurema, Indian singing, dancing and flute traditions, can also be master signifiers – that is, they can inspire new developments and elaborations. The Meeting of the Knowledges does not reject Western traditions of knowledges nor does it propose syncretism or hybrids. Of course, let it be clear that I am not against hybridization, fusion or syncretisms – we simply have to find another place for them. What it would not be proper for them to do would be to dislodge part of the

hegemony of Western forms by narrowing or competing with art forms performed in Black and Indigenous communities.

Epistemic inclusion works with the logic of complexity, which is quite different from Aristotelian logic. Edgar Morin has said more than once that a human being is 100% biological and 100% cultural; it is not a 50 + 50 mode of counting the relationship between our two components. A pluriepistemic university of the arts in Brazil can continue being 100% Western (as it has always been), 100% Indigenous, 100% Afro-Brazilian – and 100% hybridized. One whole can contain not various parts, but various wholes. This is not theory only, but the practical side of the realization of the project.

Some challenges of the editions of the Meeting of the Knowledges in various universities seem to repeat, with local variations. One of them is the radicality, or remoteness, of some of their traditions, that students are getting acquainted with them for the first time. One example is the Jacuí Indigenous flute, which expresses a musical language whose parameters are challenging to make sense of - bearing in mind that we are limiting ourselves to Ethnomusicology students, but to Art students in general. A strategy to face this challenge is to ask a big question: how many different musical languages (or performing arts languages, maybe better as a basic form of expression) we have in Brazil? Western musical system is one; candomblé music is another one; Indigenous flue music is a third one. But how many others?

We are still in the initial stage of feeling the impact of experiencing some performance traditions for the first time. At some point in the future we will have to face the task of dividing new curricula and a new format for other Arts Faculties once it is guaranteed that they will operate as a pluriepistemic academic school. In this line of challenge, questions of nomenclature of genres, taxonomy and definitions of parameters of description reappear forcefully with the expansion of the project. Another problem to be faced is that most of the professors don't know the majority of the country's cultural traditions and they will begin to learn about them directly from their masters; in some cases, instead of being partner professors, they behave more like older students.

A second challenge, maybe even more difficult, is how to deal with the place of spirituality inside the secular academic environment. In fact, all of the masters are

spiritualized persons, regardless of their specific fields of knowledge. If they will be included, they will have to be included fully, as they are. Maybe we will have another instance of the logic of the included third: our university will be secular, and will be spiritualized at the same time. Anyhow, we have entered here in a rather totally new discussion on the topic of decolonizing of knowledges, i.e.: the spiritual dimension of decolonization.

In the case of Brazil, discussion of decolonization is more recent, and the concept must reflect the specificity of our history, which is quite different from Spanish American countries: while they were fighting for independence from Spain in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Brazil became the center of Portuguese Empire. Therefore, in the strict sense of the term, we have never really ‘decolonized’ ourselves from Portugal. Putting it simply, our institutions of knowledges have always been entirely Westernized, and it is only very recently that we started the movement of opening them to the other founding epistemic traditions of the country: Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian. In this sense, colonization of knowledges in Brazil means generalized and forced epistemic eurocentrism, in all areas. To decolonize, in this context, means to expand the limited eurocentric outlook of our university by including other epistememes, such as the Indigenous and the Afro-Brazilian.

This decolonizing move has gained a special momentum in Brazil since 2010, when we created the Meeting of Knowledges movement at the University of Brasília. Starting as a pedagogical experiment in one institution, it has already been expanded to twenty Brazilian universities, and also in Colombia and Austria, and soon in Ecuador.

The Meeting of Knowledges aims at including the whole range of cultural traditions practiced by Indigenous, Afro-Brazilian and other traditional groups that have been excluded from our universities. Given the great diversity of those traditional forms of knowledge, genres, and expressions, we can divide them basically in four areas: sciences, technologies, arts, and spiritual practices. In order to attend to the focus of the present Symposium, I will concentrate my presentation on the area of arts, with special emphasis on the performing arts – bearing in mind that one third of the masters that have taught so far in the twenty universities of our network are connected with the performing arts.

Although it is clear that all areas of knowledge must be decolonized, the Arts, Letters and Humanities in general have played a central role in the process of colonization in Latin America (as well as in other parts of the world), due to the fact that cultural expressions,

when assimilated by people at a younger age in the context of teaching institutions, stimulate the identification with the cultural tradition and the worldview of the colonizer, through the establishment of primary affects of intimacy and positive identification. In other words, through artistic and symbolic expressions, more than to science and politics, the colonial structure is reproduced in the individual subject; and it is also through these areas that the colonized mentality can be transformed in great measure. For this reason, to reject, as an adult, symbols and aesthetic expressions of the Western world that one absorbed as a child or a young person, may lead to an internal self-mutilation, or to the rejection of one part of oneself. Effective decolonization has a lot to do, therefore, with transformation and widening the realms of affect, reason and conviviality, much more than with attitudes of defense, reaction, or rejection.

Overcoming the dual logic of denying one heritage in order to affirm others, the Meeting of Knowledges provides the conditions for the development of another set of affective identifications, putting in circulation other signifiers, connected with the historical experience and the worldview of the groups that were submitted to colonial violence and exclusion. For the first time, students project the image of master and guide in teachers (acting as academic professors) coming from the excluded peoples, with different traditions of knowledges, and begin to identify themselves with artistic and symbolic expressions in the same way that they do with eurocentric expressions. In other words, the decolonizing attitude begins when non-eurocentric knowledges, that is, knowledges of the colonized peoples, that finally take the stage of epistemic authority; and this authority is embodied in traditional masters, instead of academic professors (as it has been the case up to now).

Colonization of knowledges always operated with the exclusion of numerous non-Western cultural expressions and consequently narrowed the general epistemic horizon. To colonize meant, therefore, to restrain, diminish, or even eliminate diversity, this being achieved on the basis of various mechanisms, such as:

a) silence and denial: Western art traditions are taught as if they were the only ones that exist; no artistic status is given to Indigenous, Black, or popular aesthetic and artistic expressions. We can envisage an aesthetic or artistic racism, embedded in the fact that it is the White segment of the Brazilian population that teaches and presents the performances and the circulation of Western art pieces and products.

b) inferiorization, devaluation and de-legitimization: non-Western art forms and performing arts are mentioned by white Eurocentric professors and teachers only to be dismissed as subjects of study worth paying attention to: either they are taken to be irrelevant, or are treated as aesthetically and conceptually inferior to Western expressions.

c) overt repression and censorship: Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous cultural traditions were attacked by police forces and the Catholic church, with violation of temples, destruction of sacred objects, prohibition of rituals and celebrations, etc. This physical and symbolical violence, that still goes on, is exercised outside the universities; however, they resonated sharp inside them, through various types of racist theories, provoking generalized epistemic violence during the entire twentieth century.

To decolonize academic knowledge, therefore, in our context, is to change this restrictive perspective and transform it into a broader one, capable of reflecting our great diversity. This way, our universities can cease to be monocultural (i.e. Western culture forms the basis of the curricula); monoepistemic (what is taught is essentially the modern Western scientific outlook); monolingual (only Portuguese is spoken in classrooms, in spite of the 170 Indigenous languages and various African languages used in Afro-Brazilian rituals); and monoethnic and monorracial (because until one decade ago, 95% of the students and 99% professors were white, in spite of the fact that Blacks represent 50% of the country's population); and, finally, they will become pluricultural, pluriepistemic, polyglot, dialogical, pluriethnic and pluriracial.

It must be emphasized that to decolonize does not mean to expel the Western cultural and scientific traditions of knowledges that were transmitted by State and private institutions such as schools (basic and middle), the academic system (universities, and research centers), museums, etc. To decolonize, in this context, is not like a surgical operation, as if you pick a sharp razor and extract a tumor that was causing illness in the body. It is more like the transformation of a worldview, of a way of life, of a set of values and beliefs that organize one's relationship with those who are close and with those who are distant from us. For the region of Latin America, the decolonizing turn implies demands for the inclusion of that which was excluded; to expand as a consequence of the inclusion; and to transform the meaning of the signifiers associated with the various cultural traditions involved. Those moves entail a new pedagogy of pluriepistemic co-existence to overcome colonialism and

racism altogether. Colonization was unilateral and forced incompatibility between Western and non-Western traditions of knowledges; on the other hand, the Meeting of Knowledges can be conceived as accepted co-existence and conviviality between all traditions. This concept of decolonization as a constant expansion of the horizon of knowledges throughout different epistemes is in line with the position of Eli Meghji, of Cambridge University, who said recently: “decolonising is about adding, not cancelling, knowledge” (Meghji 2021).

Euroexclusivism colonizes the minds as far as it is able to articulate two different, but complementary pedagogical mechanisms: the establishment of an affective bond of the students with Western arts and culture, taught to them as if they were complete and sufficient; and the discourse about Western civilization as if it was unique, unrivalled, and the only model to be follow. This structure of primary affective binding works as a vaccine to make it difficult to open oneself to other artistic and cultural traditions. In the moment that a student or a professor reacts rationally against Western culture as the colonizing pattern, he/she enters in conflict with his/her structure of affects, built upon his/her identification with this very same Western culture, now repelled.

The Meeting of Knowledges is a decolonizing move, not by negation, but by the opening to new identifications, which provokes a dilution of the precedence of Western culture. In other words, the project works as an expansive affirmation, or affirmative expansion, of the Arts and Humanities put on an equal stand with sciences and technologies. Obviously, identification with the masters acquire an inevitable reflexive dimension, because it is a consequence of a political demand, which, again, is a result of other parallel struggles. A relative ease for the exercise of this polyidentification, if we compare it with the present difficulty of the co-existence of non-Western traditional sciences with modern science, is that, in the case of science, acceptance of other epistemes goes against the established Western paradigms. On the other hand, in the case of the arts, it is possible to realize co-existence and legitimation of various simultaneous artistic systems - in short, positive polyidentification, or multiple identificative affirmation is a more viable mechanism of absorbing new languages, both symbolic and aesthetic.

The euroexclusivist curriculum has caused epistemic violence of two types: Black and Indigenous students were confronted with the negation and censorship of the cultural traditions of their communities, which were not studied nor even mentioned in classes; and

White students, who used to live in eurocentric intellectual environments, were deprived and limited in their upbringing, because they were kept ignorant of the diversity and richness of knowledges of their own country as a whole. These two violences, which are obviously connected, became even more unsustainable after the introduction of quotas and affirmative action in the last decade. With quotas, white students developed a wider awareness of their ignorance of Black and Indigenous cultures, once they began to share a classroom with Black and Indigenous students; and many of them supported their colleagues in their demands for a new curriculum, not euroexclusive anymore, but really pluriepistemic.

The colonized mentality is the result of a systematic circulation of signifiers controlled by the colonizer. What Gayatri Spivak defines as epistemic violence is based on a specific structure of feelings, aimed at generating positive identifications with Western culture and negative identifications towards Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian cultures. In the Brazilian case, this kind of epistemic violence is constitutive of our nation building. For this reason, I believe that without the presence of traditional masters in equal conditions to academic doctors, there can be proposals, statements, and theoretical formulations, but not an effective decolonization and transformation of the academic paradigm of knowledge.

To exemplify, the Meeting of Knowledges does not come to fight Western arts, culture, and sciences, but to expand the whole universe of knowledges present in the university courses and active as a basis for research, inquiry and ways of expressing feeling and form. This way, we project to build the richest academic environment possible: pluricultural, pluriaesthetic, polycentric. Instead of being euroexclusive (as it is the case now in Brazil), an Arts course must be not only Eurocentric, but also afrocentric, indigenouscentric, asiancentric, popular, or folkcentric, etc.

## II. An integral approach to the Meeting of Knowledges

Basically, we can sum up that academic knowledge is produced and reproduced through four epistemic means: teaching, researching, supervising, and examining. In our university system, the subject of teaching, in all courses, is dominated by Western science and culture; research is based exclusively on the modern Western scientific outlook; and the roles of supervisor and of examiner can only be fulfilled by those who have acquired a

complete Eurocentric formation (that is, undergraduate, Master, and Ph.D. degrees), and who have been hired as university professors.

The first and fundamental intervention is, undoubtedly, in the teaching system.

#### 1. Teaching.

The greatest impact in the movement of decolonization occurs not only because the excluded traditions of knowledge are finally present in the university classroom, but the fact that they are taught by masters that belong to the communities that sustain and reproduce those traditions.

Since 2010, we have already invited around 230 traditional masters (Indigenous, Afro-Brazilian, among others) as teachers in regular courses, undergraduate and graduate. So far, they have taught in all areas of sciences, technologies, arts, and spirituality, in an interdisciplinary and integrative approach to knowledge. Without a doubt, the real revolution the Meeting of Knowledges is provoking is its intervention in the Brazilian higher education system, so much so that the project expands first and foremost by the opening of new disciplines in the universities that have decided to adopt it. Here is a timetable of its expansion:

2010 – University of Brasília

2014 – Federal Universities of: Minas Gerais, Juiz de Fora, Pará, South of Bahia, Cariri, and State University of Ceará

2015 – Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul

2016 – Federal Fluminense University

2018 – Federal Universities of: Roraima, Vale do Jequitinhonha and Mucuri and Rio de Janeiro

2020 - Federal Universities of Tocantins and of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

2021- Federal Universities of the Integration of Lusophone Africa, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, and State University of Minas Gerais.

2. Research. In 2015 the Institute developed a project with the Yawalapiti Indians of the Xingu National Park in the Amazon to create a Center of Indigenous Traditional Knowledges in their reservation. For each academic researcher there is an Indigenous researcher fulfilling the equivalent function in the research team, on a model of symmetric collaboration. We



have inaugurated, this way, the position of an academic researcher trained in another epistemic tradition, different from the modern Western one.

3. Supervising. In 2017 the Maroon master Antonio Bispo acted as the co-supervisor of one of my post-doctoral residents, who is a full professor of the University of Rio de Janeiro. In another unprecedented move, a master of traditional knowledges with only basic schooling was able to supervise a university professor.

4. Examining. In 2018, Deco, a master of Congado, an Afro-Brazilian spiritual tradition, formed part of the examination Committee of a Ph.D. thesis about his tradition and in whose text he appears in a prominent position.

Deco features strongly in the thesis, with long quotations from interviews with him. He started by asking all of us, examiners, whether we know exactly what a Congado is. We all became silent, admitting implicitly that our academic knowledge is incomplete compared to his. He was not trying to be arrogant nor offending us; as he spoke, it became apparent that our knowledge of *Congado* was far from deep as we used to believe. Thus, there was recognition of Deco's knowledge and an acceptance of one's unknowing. For the first time, the so-called unlearned became the learned one, and the so-called learned became the unlearned one. Even more radically, apart from examining Talita, Deco was also examining the examiners.

5. *Notório Saber* (Acknowledged Higher Knowledge). On the institutional side, some universities that form part of the Meeting of Knowledges project are granting the title of *Notório Saber* to traditional masters, certifying them as equivalent to a Ph.D. holder. This is another profound transformation in our university model.

6. We are also producing a bureaucratic and legal justification to hire masters of traditional knowledges to teach and pay them a salary equivalent to that of a Visiting or Temporary teacher.

From compossibility (a Leibnizian term) to conviviality of various systems of Arts and Humanities – Western, Indigenous, and Afro-Brazilian – we can see the beginning of a transformation in disciplines, theories and sciences. Thus, while the fields of Art Studies are basically eurocentric (Musicology, Ethnomusicology, Art History, Choreology, or Dance Studies, Performance, Theatre Studies, Visual Theory, etc.), through the decolonizing act of the Meeting of Knowledges they can pass from monoepistemic fields of scholarship to

interepistemic fields.

### III. A program for decolonization of knowledges and for building a pluriepistemic academic institution

As the Meeting of Knowledges expands, we can now formulate an integrated and complete program for the realization of a truly decolonized and pluriepistemic university. Here are some basic transformations to be achieved:<sup>4</sup>

1. teaching must be polyglot, and must reflect the linguistic plurality of the country;
2. classes must combine contents based on written tradition with contents based on oral tradition;
3. students must be Blacks, Whites, Indigenous, and those belonging to all the traditional peoples and communities of the country, ideally with the same percentage of their relative demography in the national society;
4. pedagogical protocols and methods must be sensitive to the reality of every discipline and field of knowledge;
5. professors must be of two kinds: a) Black, Indigenous, and White who got their formal doctorates in universities; b) masters of all Indigenous nations, Afro-Brazilian communities, Maroons, of popular groups and of the other traditional peoples;
6. there should be no previous exclusion nor previous hierarchy among knowledge systems to be taught, be it on the grounds of their epistemic, ethnic, racial, or geographic origins, or by their written or oral support, nor for any other difference;
7. the relative authority of each knowledge tradition to be taught will be built as a result of interepistemic dialogues made possible through the methodology of the Meeting of Knowledges.

With these epistemic argumentations and institutional interventions, we have devised a concrete movement of decolonization of knowledge that aims a responding to the demands of traditional peoples in the Latin American continent. We hope it can also be received as a contribution to similar decolonizing efforts and debates in other parts of the world.

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<sup>4</sup> I formulated this program for the first time in Carvalho (2010), and elaborated it in Carvalho (2017 and 2022).

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