



Social innovation and “other” knowledges: what does the construction of formal knowledge have to do with it? ¹

Inovação social e saberes “outros”: o que a construção do conhecimento formal tem a ver com isso?

Innovación social y “otros” conocimientos: ¿qué tiene que ver la construcción de conocimiento formal con ello?

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Abstract

By examining the intersection of sexism and racism in the university, we seek to reflect on the construction of knowledge and how this formal space of knowledge creation can contribute not to reproduce and repeat offered models, but rather build an “other” education. It is argued that the educational context cannot be analyzed without considering the project of modernity, coloniality, racialization, and violence in our country. After all, this coloniality is also present in the university. Starting from this colonial legacy of the knowledge structure (epistemic racism/sexism), the coloniality of power (domination and asymmetry in relationships), and understanding its implications in university life, this essay aims to address decoloniality and to think about social innovations through the valorization of marginalized knowledge (“other” bodies), in order to reflect upon what does formal knowledge construction have to do with it. As a result, the fissures in the Eurocentric wall produced through social innovations and other knowledges are presented, highlighting the contributions and challenges of formal knowledge in Brazil. With fundamental elements such as interculturality, decolonization, and decoloniality, the essay indicates that in recent decades universities have become a space for announcing and denouncing social, cognitive, and relational injustices. This change is occurring through the emergence of new configurations of educational institutions in Brazil. Finally, this feeling-thinking [*sentir-pensar*] about education is considered as a social innovation, as it presents new praxis that articulate love, pedagogy, humanities, and liberation, as found in critical interculturality and the biopraxis of Latin American education.

Keywords: interculturality; decolonizing knowledge; epistemological diversity; decoloniality.

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Resumo

A partir da articulação entre sexismo e racismo na universidade, busca-se refletir sobre a construção do conhecimento e como este espaço formal de construção de conhecimento poderá contribuir para não reproduzir e repetir modelos oferecidos, mas sim construir uma educação “outra”. De tal modo, não se pode analisar o contexto da educação, sem considerar o projeto da modernidade, da colonialidade, da racialização e da violência em nosso país. Afinal essa colonialidade está também na universidade. Partindo deste legado colonial da estrutura do conhecimento (racismo/sexismo epistêmico), da colonialidade do poder (padrão de dominação e assimetria nas relações) e compreendendo suas implicações no cotidiano universitário, este ensaio tem por objetivo abordar a decolonialidade e pensar inovações sociais por meio da valorização dos saberes marginalizados (corpos “outros”), a fim de refletir o que a construção do conhecimento formal tem a ver com isso. Como resultado, apresenta-se as fissuras no muro eurocêntrico por meio das inovações sociais e saberes outros, destacando as contribuições e os desafios do conhecimento formal no Brasil. Com elementos basilares, como a interculturalidade, a descolonização e a decolonialidade, aponta-se que as universidades nas últimas décadas, estão se tornando um espaço para anunciar e denunciar as injustiças sociais, cognitivas e relacionais. Esta mudança ocorre pelo surgimento de novas configurações das instituições de ensino. Por fim, considera-se como inovação social esse sentir-pensar na educação, pois apresenta novas práxis que articulam amor, pedagogia, humanidades e libertação, como encontrado na interculturalidade crítica e na biopráxis da educação latino-americana.

Palavras-chave: interculturalidade; descolonizando o conhecimento; diversidade epistemológica; decolonialidade.

Resumen

A partir de la articulación entre sexismo y racismo en la universidad, buscamos reflexionar sobre la construcción de conocimiento y cómo este espacio formal de construcción de conocimiento puede contribuir a no reproducir y repetir los modelos ofrecidos, sino construir una “otra” educación. Por tanto, el contexto de la educación no puede analizarse sin considerar el proyecto de modernidad, colonialidad, racialización y violencia en nuestro país. Después de todo, esta colonialidad también está en la universidad. A partir de este legado colonial de la estructura del conocimiento (racismo/sexismo epistémico), la colonialidad del poder y comprendiendo sus implicaciones en la vida universitaria cotidiana, este ensayo pretende abordar la decolonialidad y pensar en las innovaciones sociales, a través de la valoración del conocimiento marginado (“otros” cuerpos), para reflejar qué tiene que ver con él la construcción del conocimiento formal. Como resultado, las grietas en el muro eurocéntrico se presentan a través de innovaciones sociales y otros conocimientos, destacando las contribuciones y los desafíos del conocimiento formal en Brasil. Con elementos básicos, como la interculturalidad, la descolonización y la decolonialidad, se señala que las universidades en las últimas décadas se están convirtiendo en un espacio para anunciar y denunciar las injusticias sociales, cognitivas y relacionales. Este cambio se produce debido a las nuevas configuraciones de las instituciones educativas. Finalmente, este sentir-pensar en educación se considera una innovación social, ya que presenta

nuevas praxis que articulan amor, pedagogía, humanidades y liberación, como se encuentra en la interculturalidad crítica y la biopraxis de la educación latino-americana.

Palabras clave: interculturalidad; descolonizar el conocimiento; diversidad epistemológica; decolonialidad.

I am not interested in any theory, in any fantasy, nor in what is else (...) My hallucination is withstanding daily life and my delirium is the experience with real things (Belchior, 1976)⁴.

Introduction: contextualization regarding pluralized knowledges in the construction of knowledge

We start from the assumption that the attempt to think beyond Eurocentric paradigms may contribute to deconstructing thought, questioning dominant ideas that mystify rather than reveal, that exclude rather than include in the day-to-day construction of knowledge in Westernized universities. According to Grosfoguel (2016), the structure of knowledge in these universities has an epistemic framework of the modern world (which is colonial, racist, and sexist), capitalist (imperialist), and patriarchal. For the author, this construction was carried out at the expense of the genocide/epistemicide of colonial subjects and through the elevation of North-centric epistemology through provincialism (five countries posing as “universal” producers of knowledge, namely: France, Germany, England, the United States, and Italy).

Facing this modernity/coloniality scenario is clear that the hegemonic pattern of knowledge construction belongs to the White male. This perpetuates and generates in universities an anthropocentric and humanistic view in which the only appropriated living being is invariably the White human being. This conception of the superiority of the White, European, and male subject brought about consequences to “other” bodies, such as women, children, the elderly, homosexuals, enslaved peoples (Africans and Indigenous), animals, and even nature itself, as these “others” were transformed into objects and made invisible/silenced throughout this process of building a civilized society.

⁴ Antônio Carlos Belchior was a Brazilian composer. Known as Belchior, he was born in Sobral (Ceará) on October 26th, 1946 and died in Santa Cruz do Sul on April 30th, 2017. He composed the song *Alucinação* in 1976.

According to Gonzalez (2020, p. 76), a Brazilian anthropologist, intellectual, and Black activist, social sciences in Brazil have naturalized the process of domination in bodies that are neither White nor male for a long time. She thus sought to address the double phenomenon that occurs in racism and sexism. She sought an epistemology to comprehend Brazilian culture and society, noting, “racism constitutes the symptom that characterizes Brazilian cultural neurosis” and, through its articulation with sexism, produces violent effects upon the bodies of Black women in particular. In the articulation between sexism and racism, Gonzalez, from her position in the university, sought to deepen the analysis and adopt a critical standpoint to avoid reproducing and repeating the models which were then available in the social sciences, as they focused exclusively over the socioeconomic perspective. When seeking to build knowledge about the naturalization of domination in Black bodies, especially in subjectivity and its naturalization in our society, she found some answers in psychoanalysis, as did Fanon (2008), the intellectual of postcolonial studies in the 1950s.

When reflecting on racism, colonialism, imperialism, and their effects on the subjectivity of non-white people, Gonzalez (1988) created the politico-cultural category of “Amefricanity” [*Amefricanidade*] to highlight the unique relationships that occurred with African and Indigenous peoples in our Americas. Here, we are talking about a Black intellectual from the 1980s who published, debated, became a congresswoman, writer, and developed a whole category of analysis on racism. Reflecting on how it was used to create an internalization of the colonizer’s “superiority” by the colonized, generating exploitation and oppression in the subjects of our society. However, who knows Lélia Gonzalez today? Perhaps this lack of memory or knowledge of our own intellectual production, our history, or elements that problematize what is ours, may somehow be a concrete expression of our coloniality.

According to the author, upon closer examination of our history, it becomes clear that the strategy used by European colonizers was a disguised racism. Through it (a racism in disguise or in denial)⁵, “miscegenation” theories, assimilation, and “racial democracy” were

⁵ The concept of “racism in denial” derives from Freud’s notion of denial [*Verneinung*]. See: A categoria político-cultural de amefricanidade (Gonzalez, 1988).

propagated. In Latin America, which is much more Amerindian and Afrodiasporic in its composition than anything else, the greatest example of racism in denial occurs. Hence the importance of looking back at the historical formation of the Iberian countries to understand how this specific type of racism was increasingly constructed among us, in order to understand how such specific type of racism was continuously built among us, and to comprehend how this process was able to become the most effective form of alienation to those who were discriminated themselves.

Walsh (2005) argues that in countries that were colonized and had their culture placed in subordination to a dominant culture, there is a process of coloniality. This process needs to be discussed in education, so that a process of decolonization and decoloniality may take place. Despite Brazil gaining independence from European colonial powers, the political institutions, the scientific rationality, and the socio-racial hierarchies of the colonial period came out practically unscathed. Thus, modernity cannot be analyzed separately from coloniality and violence. Here, we were a colony, we stopped being a colony, yet the process of colonization (exploitation of the territory – people, culture, and natural resources) did not cease to exist. And this coloniality is also present in universities and in the way we look, feel, and act towards “other” bodies.

Ferreira and Silvério (2021) add another important factor, although one that is often overlooked in education, which is human life. In other words, it would also be necessary to have a process of recognizing the human being as a multidimensional being, through an academic experience that teaches about the human condition (the relationship between the subject and the cosmos). The idea of a single thought (the Eurocentric, and more recently, North American), with a “universal” humanism and “universal human rights” that dehumanizes the “other” from their humanity, urges us, as educators, the wish to find a humanity that can humanize non-European persons, humanize bodies other than White ones.

Today, efforts are already being undertaken to design educational processes from our own local standpoint, processes that can part with the structural and institutional practices of racialization, subalternization, and gender- and class-based inferiorization, which break away from economic perspectives and understand the living being outside of a binary system, a system which is not anthropocentric, but rather biocentric, as it values and recognizes life and “other” forms of knowledge (Ferreira, 2019). These efforts can be found in the decolonial approach, which aims for an ontological, epistemic, and

methodological incursion that seeks to create fissures or even fracture the project of modernity/coloniality in academia (the locus of formal knowledge construction) altogether. This approach enables the subject (teacher/researcher) to review, through new practices, their attitudes, positions, know-how, horizons, and projects, both in higher education institutions (professional and technological education) as well as in interdisciplinary postgraduate programs (masters and doctorates) in Brazil.

These new elements indicate that we need horizons with “political, ethical, pedagogical, and epistemic projects of interculturality, projects where collective knowledge, collective analysis, and collective actions are essential” (Walsh, 2005, p. 48) to transform and construct alternative modalities of power, knowing, being, and living. This conception is in line with the theme of social innovation and “other” knowledges, since we consider that social innovation is a collective process resulting from the action of communities, social groups, and actors in a given territory. Knowledge and territory are intimately connected, with praxis being the product of the ingenuity and imagination of actors/people in response to different situations in their territories, characterized by an approach that connects reflection to action (Machrafi, 2014). Within this context, social innovations are catalysts for the application of new ideas to solve society’s problems, but they are also social changes that aim to improve the well-being of these diverse people in the same society.

By situating this colonial legacy in the structure of knowledge (epistemic racism/sexism) and the coloniality of power (pattern of domination and asymmetry in relationships) and understanding its implications in today’s academic everyday life, we seek to address decoloniality and think about social innovations through the valorization of marginalized knowledges (“other” bodies), with a view to ponder: what does the construction of formal knowledge have to do with this?

Racism and sexism and the construction of knowledge: the challenge faced by “other” readings on development

A Black man, a poor man, a student, a woman alone, blue jeans and motorcycles, normal grey people. Girls within the night, revolver: smells like [a] dog. The park’s humiliated people with their newspapers (...) A delicate and happy guy that sings and dances, it is great! (Belchior, 1976)

In order to approach “other” readings on development, it bears stressing that this construction and production of knowledges originated from experiences gathered in the Graduate Program in Sustainable Territorial Development at the Federal University of Paraná (Brazil), where I worked as a professor of the following disciplines: Local Knowledges, Community Involvement, and Interdisciplinary Research. In my teaching practices and pedagogical knowhows, I realized that “other” readings on development were necessary, something more grounded that could create “other” ways of thinking and researching, because the narrative of development offered in Brazil generated a pattern of power rooted in the physical violence⁶ upon bodies that were racialized and inferiorized throughout the ideology of progress and economic development in Latin America. Researchers like Gonzalez (1988) argue that what was developed here was a sophisticated racism aimed at keeping Black and Indigenous people in a subordinated position within the most exploited classes.

This violence is pervasive and has a color, a social class, and a gender bias. We understand the role of racism in the construction of our history, as well as gender. According to Lugones (2008), just as modernity is constitutive of coloniality, modernity is also constitutive of the inferiorization of non-male gender. There was an imposition of a binary gender system, a patriarchal and heterosexual organization of relationships which resulted in a series of violent practices⁷. For the author, there is a process of dehumanization and non-existence of the Black living beings, and this denial of humanity is not only ontological but also a matter of historical-racial (non)existence. This dehumanization, inferiorization, and feeling of non-existence were also addressed by Fanon (2008) in the 1950s in a work elaborated for the defense of his doctorate in France (he was from Martinique), but which was refused because the academy wanted a positivist

⁶ The scenario of violence in Brazil is striking. In 2019, one woman was murdered every two hours, with an average of 13 women murdered per day. The homicide rate is 31.6 per 100,000 people; in 2019, 113 indigenous people were murdered, with a 150% increase in violence against indigenous peoples.

⁷ In terms of the LGBTIQ+ community, Brazil is the most violent country towards trans individuals, with 175 transgender people murdered in 2019. With 58% of the victims being black, 78% being sex workers, 72% not knowing the perpetrator, and 71% occurring in public places. In terms of black people, out of the 4,936 women murdered in Brazil, 68% were black. From 2008 to 2018, the homicide rate of black women increased by 12.4%. Regarding racial inequality in Brazil, 75.7% of homicide victims were black. The homicide rate for black individuals grew by 33.1% until 2017 (IPEA, 2019). It's worth noting that violence against LGBTIQ individuals has only been monitored since 2019.

approach in psychiatry studies, but the work was later published under the title “Black Skin, White Masks”.

Here we discuss the challenge we currently face in Latin America, but we understand that the world-system, where racism was forged within capitalism, cannot be separated from its relationship with the economic base of society, just as sexism has been ongoing since the Middle Ages. They were and are exploited bodies, and in order to cease this exploitation, universities need to develop other readings about development. The decolonial approach could contribute to this construction of knowledge, as it aims to overcome the pathology of the capitalistic colonial regime and to cross over from that regime and domination system to other forms of relationship. When considering the construction of the ideology of progress and development in Brazil, we realize that these ideologies were constructed with the practice of epistemic genocide based on racism and sexism. According to Porto-Gonçalves (2005), the Western epistemic machine held for a long time the power to define what is science from what is not, to classify knowledge and sub-knowledges, to define rationality and irrationality, and to building a coloniality of power through knowledge.

The construction of knowledge, as a human construction, is also historical and geopolitical, varying according to the local and the place. Although we currently know that the process of modernity was conceived as a project of homogenization of the world (epistemicide), obliterating cultural differences and suppressing various local knowledge and practices through the process of colonization in several countries. In the 1980s, Gonzalez (1988), in presenting “Amefricanities”, had already denounced how the violence of racism and its practices affected the legacy of African peoples in relation to philosophy, arts, history, and religion, thus preventing the significant contribution that these knowledges contained. It was also during this period that post-colonial studies began to consolidate in the academic environment of some European countries and in the United States. In Brazil, we had Paulo Freire and Lelia Gonzalez.

Castro-Gomez (2007) argues that the university is colonized because it reinforces the cultural, economic, and political hegemony of the West, thus perpetuating colonial legacies. According to the author, the university presents itself as a triangular structure of coloniality: the coloniality of being, the coloniality of power, and the coloniality of knowledge. However, the contemporary university is in crisis, where postmodernity is

characterized as the moment when the capitalist system becomes planetary, and the university faces a crisis of legitimation because the globalization of the capitalist economy causes the university to no longer be seen as a privileged place of knowledge construction/production. All these events have led the university to reflect on its Eurocentric ideas and practices, its submission to the colonial imposition, and its economic, political, social, cultural, and educational practices and ideas.

It is posited that when practices in the formal construction of knowledge do not contextualize the reality of the lived territory, they are contributing to the coloniality of knowledge and being. Decolonization seeks to change the order of the development model by seeking a new language and a new humanity through critical interculturality and decoloniality. By recognizing the process of racism and sexism in history, it is possible to advance in the construction of more sensitive knowledge that helps to part with the still existing intellectual servility and mimicry and possibly promote cognitive, relational, and affective justice.

By understanding history, we realize that we need to unlearn what knowledge is in order to learn adequately about our territory and about the discourse on development that has been presented to us. A development that excluded, segregated, silenced, and is violent towards so many bodies, such as Black bodies, Indigenous bodies, women’s bodies, and LGBTQIA+ bodies. As Lugones (2014) emphasizes:

To see coloniality is to see the powerful reduction of human beings to animals, naturally inferior, in a schizophrenic understanding of reality that dichotomizes the human from nature, the human from non-human, thus imposing an ontology and a cosmology that, in its power and constitution, deny all humanity, all possibility of understanding, all possibility of human communication to dehumanized beings (Lugones, 2014, p. 946).

One challenge that arises is that due to this cultural and violent domination, we perceive that modernity/coloniality operates in the colonized subject by relating colonialism to non-existence (Fanon 2008; Gonzalez, 1988; Walsh, 2005; Lugones, 2014). However, the pedagogy that strives to change, transgress, subvert and impact the ontological, epistemic and cosmogonic-spiritual denial are the decolonial pedagogies. The new, the insurgent, and the self-production are related to decoloniality. According to Walsh (2009), it is necessary to break with the coloniality of knowledge that considers the production of knowledge as privileging only one people, class, and category.

According to Quijano (1992), the domination of Europeans through rational knowledge is more than a paradigm, because coloniality, modernity, and rationality are the products of this domination and served as a power structure that involved European colonial domination over the world, generating the idea of colonial difference (the inferior and the superior). Coloniality is related to colonialism, yet these are two distinct concepts. Lugones (2008) argues that both coloniality and colonialism hold power relations over human existence and these effects can still be observed in the intersectionality of race and gender. For the author, the cognitive needs of capitalism, the naturalization of identities, and the relations of coloniality, and the geocultural distribution of capitalist power have oriented towards this form (power pattern) of knowing. Therefore, decoloniality emerges as a response to the process of coloniality of the power of knowledge and being.

Lucinda, Ferreira, and Kleim (2019) argue that this new post-colonial or decolonial approach to knowledge construction allows us to understand our own knowledge, recognizing transdisciplinarity, care, playfulness, and cosmovision through a sensitive gaze that embraces “other” epistemes, “other” ways of life, and “other” worlds (pluriverse), such as Amerindian perspectives.

Considering diverse epistemes, it is understood that all knowledge is geopolitical and locally situated. Every ontological, epistemological, and methodological journey towards knowledge construction is contingent upon the cognizant subject who accepts difference and diversity, understanding that there is no separation between the cognizant subject and the external object. In this sense, all knowledge is also autobiographical (Santos, 2000; Ferreira, 2019), as the researcher is a sentient being in their relational territory, and there is an intersubjective and intrasubjective dynamic (mind-body-spirit) in the weaving together of living knowledges. Here we also recognize and comprehend the cognizant subject in their bio-psycho-social-cultural dimension and the importance of this recognition in teaching-research-outreach processes in the university (Ferreira and Silvério, 2021).

Within this context of the cognizant subject, Escobar (2014) discusses that to “think-feel” [*sentipensar*] with the territory implies thinking from both the heart and the mind. He highlights that this “thinking-feeling” [*sentipensante*] concept was popularized by Fals Borda, based on his experience with the riverine communities of the Atlantic coast. This approach aims to feel and think with the land and offers “other” readings on

development, considering the territory and the difference. These readings are critical of the development model in Latin America, and in recent years, researchers of the Modernity-Coloniality-Decoloniality Group have presented five trends on this subject: a) decolonial thinking; b) alternatives to development; c) transitions to post-extractivism; d) the crisis and change of the civilizational model; and e) various interrelated perspectives that focus on relationality and the commons.

The discourse of development in Latin American, African and Asian countries, in particular, operates with the “colonization of reality” through a narrative of development and progress. And development has continued to be used as a strategy of cultural, social, economic, and political domination over the bodies of women, Black, and Indigenous peoples, developing a devaluation and disregard for their knowledges. To break away from a development model that has generated so much violence and barbarism, there is an urgent need for alternative readings, such as post-development or going beyond development.

Aiming to part with hegemonic models of development, these decolonial approaches draw attention to culture as radical difference, as an emerging concept. Thus, culture as radical difference is related to “other” processes of civilization, worldview, epistemic difference, community logics, pluriverse, and feeling-thinking with the Earth. This approach questions the constitutive dualisms of dominant forms of modernity and the idea of a single world, also seeking new ways of existing and new ethical-political discourses in order to promote cognitive metamorphosis for thinking alternatives to development.

Escobar (2014) highlights that for these approaches, relational ontologies beyond culture are also included, as territories are vital space-times for all communities of men and women, but moreover, they are also the space-times of interrelationships of the surrounding natural world. These material spaces manifest themselves as mountains, as lakes that are seen and defended by these peoples, as animated spaces, in short, as spaces with life. Finally, these approaches move away from the Eurocentric axis and open the paths of intercultural education, which can shake the power established by the announcement and denunciation, because they point to a social change and social transformation through re-existence and life itself, towards an “other” imaginary and an “other” agency of coexistence and living with and in society (Walsh, 2009).

The fissures in the Eurocentric wall through social innovations and “other” knowledges: contributions and challenges of formal knowledge in Brazil

But I am not interested in any theory. In any fantasy, nor in what is else. Far away, the prophet of terror announced by the clockwork orange. Loving and changing things interest me more. Loving and changing things. Loving and changing things interest me more (Belchior, 1976).

Over the past decades in Brazil, we have had several advances in education regarding cultural and racial diversity, recognition of difference, especially in terms of intercultural dialogues. During this period, formal education has become a space to announce and denounce social, cognitive, and relational injustices. This has been taking place through the emergence of new educational institutions that aim to build knowledge from a Black and Indigenous perspective through new praxis (subject-subject) and through new laws that encourage the development of new pedagogical practices and new subjects in universities.

Regarding laws, we have the Affirmative Actions in universities and the proposals for anti-racist education enacted by the Federal Law 10.639/2003 (Brasil, 2005). According to Oliveira and Candau (2010), in addition to a decolonial struggle for power and knowledge, for peoples who were enslaved such as Afro-descendants, the coloniality of being is a relevant factor in epistemic disputes in the educational field. For the authors, the dispute over Law 10,639/03, in addition to presenting an epistemological and political character, also characterizes itself as a “life existence project”, since epistemic racism considers non-Western knowledges as inferior, urging a debate about epistemic decolonization. Further, Federal Law 11.645/2008 instituted the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture as mandatory.

Another advancement was the National Education Plan, which proposed 10% of extension activities in all Higher Education Institutions from 2023 onwards. In order to understand this transition, which presents itself as an opportunity for the practice of a social policy of knowledge and social innovation, Ferreira and Blaszyk (2020) analyzed the National Education Plan (henceforth in the acronym in Portuguese, PNE)⁸, the

⁸ BRASIL. Plano Nacional de Educação (PNE). Ministério da Educação. Brasília, DF: INEP, 2001.

National University Extension Plan (PNEU)⁹, and Resolution No. 7 of 2018¹⁰, which regulates the provisions implemented by Goal 12.7 of the National Education Plan.

The authors found that university outreach in Latin America can be seen as cultural resistance and as a concrete activity for building knowledge through “other” knowledges. These are related to the concepts of decoloniality and action-research in Fals Borda and Mora-Osejo (2003) on committed science and own science. They observed that the created laws support the decolonial approach and the social policy of knowledge, as they encourage action based on the territory with proposals for interrelated teaching-research-outreach practices based on the local reality (the place). The 2014 PNE, by promoting the production of local knowledge, whether in terms of capacity for scientific production in higher education or in the training of professionals in general, consolidates the provisions of Article 214 of the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988.

Although the contributions of the PNE to the development of new practices through the accreditation and promotion of extension activities are important, the challenge is to develop them in the face of limitations established by the State itself through the Constitutional Amendment [*Emenda Constitucional*] 95 of 2016 – widely known as *Teto de Gastos* in Portuguese, literally “Spending Cap” – henceforth EC 95. Its effects have been severe for social areas, especially health, education, housing, food security, and social assistance. According to Pellanda (2020), education has only worsened since the beginning of austerity policies under the Temer government in 2015, with the EC 95 resulting in a loss of R\$ 99.5 billion, of which R\$ 32.6 billion were lost in 2019 alone, according to calculations by the National Campaign for the Right to Education [*Campanha Nacional pelo Direito à Educação*]. In this scenario, it is impossible to implement the 20 Goals of the PNE and what is provided for in Law 13.005/2014. The EC 95 not only asphyxiates the current PNE but also the upcoming one, which will come in effect between 2025-2035, as the Spending Cap is set for 20 years.

Hence the paradox: there is a Federal Constitution known as the “citizen Constitution” in the midst of neoliberalism. On the one hand, we have a charter geared toward social rights, and on the other hand, we have social inequality and colonial

⁹ BRASIL. Plano Nacional de Extensão Universitária (PNEU). Fórum de pró-reitores de extensão das universidades públicas brasileiras. 2012.

¹⁰ BRASIL. Ministério da Educação. RESOLUÇÃO CNE/CES N° 7, de 18 de dezembro de 2018. Diário Oficial da União, n° 243, de 19 de dezembro de 2018. Seção 1. p. 49 e 50.

difference (which is very visible in the reality of young Black people, single mothers from the urban peripheries, abandoned children, violence against Indigenous peoples and homosexuals), corruption, tax exemptions, and all the post-COVID-19 aggravations. The State, deciding who should or should not live, after all, when the State decides to act or not to act in the face of a social problem, both decisions impact society and are political decisions, or rather, as Mbembe (2018) presents, it is a necropolitics (contemporary forms that subjugate life to the power of death).

According to Correia *et al.* (2018) and Rodrigues (2007), institutions that aim to promote changes in legal, political, social, historical, cultural, and economic environments can develop social innovation. Some of these environments with a new institutional architecture for education are emerging, such as: first, the UNILAB¹¹ – the University Of International Integration Of Lusophone Afro-Brazilian is an autarchy linked to the Ministry of Education of the Federative Republic of Brazil, located in the city of Redenção, in the State of Ceará. According to legislation, UNILAB has the specific institutional mission of training human resources to contribute to the integration between Brazil and the other member countries of the Community of Portuguese-Speaking Countries (CPLP), especially with African countries, as well as promoting regional development and cultural, scientific, and educational exchange.

Second, the UNILA¹² – The Federal University of Latin American Integration is an autarchic entity linked to the Ministry of Education, with headquarters and jurisdiction in the city of Foz do Iguaçu, State of Paraná. Its institutional mission is to train human resources capable of contributing to Latin American integration, regional development, and cultural, scientific, and educational exchange in Latin America, especially in the Southern Common Market (Mercosur).

These two examples provide clues that the new can occur within the environment of formal knowledge construction. Where the fissures in the Eurocentric wall have already begun to show, other ways of building new practices of interaction of “other” epistemologies in which Amerindian and Black perspectives can be conceived. These new institutional arrangements may lead the way for new knowledge to come into play in the University space through “other” readings and “other” experiments with the people who

¹¹ Created by Law 12.289 of July 20th, 2010, and implemented on May 25th, 2011.

¹² Created by Law 12.189 of January 12th, 2010.

live in the territories where the university is located. With these spaces of experimentation, creation, and the valorization of these diverse knowledges, we will perceive small fissures in the Eurocentric wall. These knowledges are constructed not by domesticated but rather decolonized subjects. Formal education shall foster daily an education for all forms of life, where the social struggles of these subjugated groups become pedagogical scenarios based on the concrete experiences in Brazilian universities (Brasil, 2005)¹³.

However, we recognize that we live under Capitalism in imperialist and patriarchal societies and that our process of constructing society and knowledge has been based on Westernized universities, fraught with tensions. These tensions unfold in violence that cannot be extinguished by the stroke of a pen. With the culture of indifference and violence embedded in society, decolonial pedagogy and interculturality aim to contextualize, expose, and construct alternative practices in formal education, as it is the encounter between colonial praxis (domination) and its denunciation, becoming fundamental studies for countries that have undergone territorial colonial domination.

The critical interculturality, decolonization and decoloniality: social innovations and “other” knowledges in the University

Within this context, for a process of emancipation, social innovation, and “other” knowledges, it was necessary to rescue and recognize the history of capitalism, Eurocentrism, imperialism, racism, and sexism in the processes and relationships that reverberate in the academic world, as well as in the narratives of development, in order to think about transformative social changes through political practice, by perceiving and acting on processes of alienation, domination, exploitation, and epistemicide. Historical and political recognition and a sensitive view of real things through “other” thoughts can promote the act of decolonizing. It is a recursive process: decolonize the researcher (decolonize oneself) to decolonize the university.

¹³ Experiences have already emerged in the recognition of Affirmative Action in Brazil and a process of proposing the decolonization of universities by enunciating the regime of racial confinement that Black, Indigenous and LGBTQIA+ persons live in the country. Cassiani and Linsingen (2019) present the Graduate Program in Scientific and Technological Education (PPGECT) at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) that created a group in motion called “Discourses of Science and Technology of Education” Research Group (DiCiTE) that develops decolonial pedagogical practices.

In the face of the vulnerability experienced by these racialized bodies in Brazil, small changes can be observed within the state apparatus, although the Eurocentric and colonial epistemological pattern remains hegemonic. However, it is possible to create fissures in the Eurocentric wall through new forms of action, both in processes from within and from outside of the universities. Even with the raging neoliberalism in our country, it is still possible to make some progress in intercultural dialogues.

Thinking about intercultural dialogues, interculturalization, and democratization, Candau (2016) points out that these elements are necessary to think about an “other” education. Walsh (2009) argues that interculturality and multiculturalism are not synonymous, as the former emphasizes the relational aspect while latter emphasizes the affirmation of differences in their specificities. In multiculturalism, difference is recognized, but it will tend toward the integration of everyone into society as incorporated into the hegemonic culture, while interculturality considers the structural-colonial-racial process and recognizes that diversity and difference were constructed within a racialized and hierarchized colonial power matrix.

In this way, the author presents interculturality as a tool, a process, and a project that is built with people from the bottom up, showing it as a political, social, ethical, and epistemic project of wisdoms and knowledge. This Intercultural perspective affirms the need to change not only relationships but also the structures, conditions, and forms of power that promote inequality, inferiorization, racialization, and discrimination.

However, intercultural education in Latin America for Candau (2009) is complex, as we want the recognition of these “other” knowledges in institutions, and this inclusion is even manifested in politicians’ speeches, yet the Brazilian problem remains unsolved, there are struggles of indigenous and Afro-descendant movements, but there is a sabotaging racism and tactics that seek to undermine all these mobilizations. However, intercultural education is possible and necessary because of the cultural history of violence in our country. We need to decolonize the mind, thought, language, and life, taking care not to reproduce exclusionary actions in the daily life of the university territory. We know that this is challenging for the academic community.

Given this scenario, we need a critical interculturality for the development of social innovation, which can incorporate traditionally excluded bodies. However, not for the reproduction and perpetuation of racialized and dominating practices and thoughts in the

capitalist world-system, but rather to develop new processes of intellectual intervention that part with neoliberal multiculturalism and that can intervene in the reinvention of society. This can also include the recovery, revaluation, and application of ancestral knowledges through academic praxis, and these actions would already be social innovations.

We need to decolonize, something like moving away from the Eurocentric and US-centric perspective deeply rooted in “I think, therefore I exist” and “I exterminate, therefore I exist” (Grosfoguel, 2016), towards an Amerindian perspective, “the other exists, therefore they think” or a Black perspective, “the other exists, therefore I see them”. Something like alterity and care in knowledge construction, something like education as a practice of freedom, as proposed by Paulo Freire (1979; 1981; 2000; 2011) regarding various pedagogies (of the oppressed, of hope, and of autonomy) or something like Walsh’s reaffirmation (2014) of decolonial pedagogies (walking and asking) through their emancipatory proposal of decolonial (re)existence inspired by Freire and Fanon. But this attentiveness for the other’s knowledge, this decolonization, will be more conceivable if we understand that it was through epistemic racism and sexism (or epistemicide) that this epistemic dominance of Western, White, male, heterosexual, and Christian science occurred. It is from this recognition that the questioning will occur, the search for building curricula contextualized to the Brazilian reality, the breaking of a neoliberal rationality in universities, and the rise of dialogues, insurgencies, and policies.

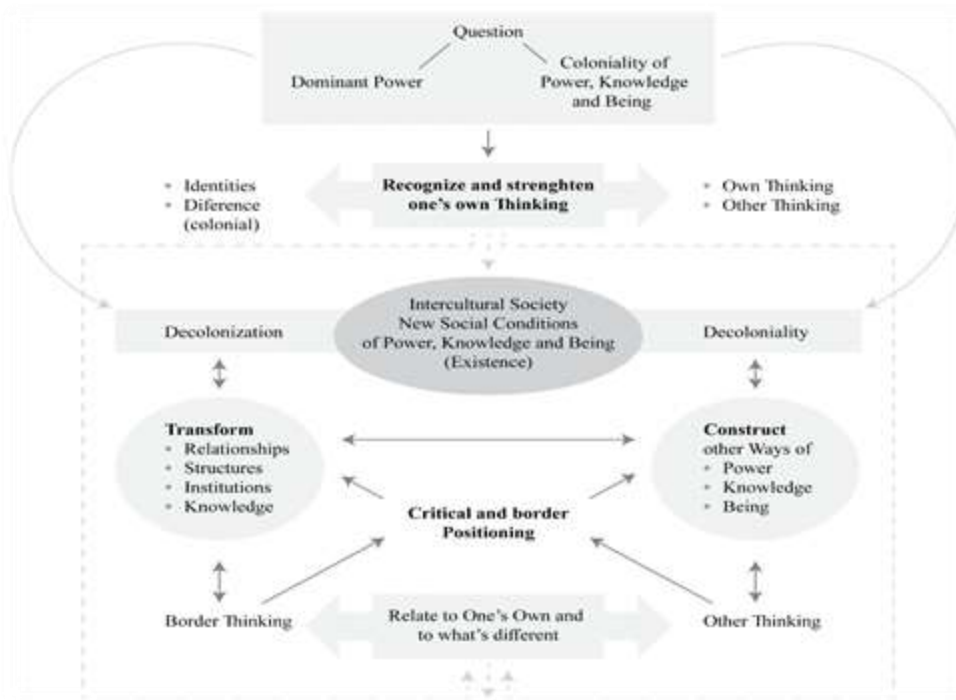
Interculturality is also a conceptual tool that organizes and shows the colonial difference, furthermore, it represents a logic built from difference and works to transgress hegemonic borders, seeking to construct “other” thoughts and “other” knowledges, highlighting:

the logic of interculturality entails a knowledge and thinking that is not isolated from dominant paradigms and structures; by necessity (and as a result of the coloniality process), this logic “knows” these paradigms and structures. And it is through this knowledge that “other” knowledge is generated. An “other” thinking that guides the program of the movement in the political, social, and cultural spheres while operating by affecting (and decolonizing), both the dominant structures and paradigms as well as the the cultural standardization that constructs the “universal” knowledge of the West (Walsh, 2019, p. 15-16).

In this sense, interculturality, decolonization, and decoloniality are intertwined elements in these new processes of intellectual intervention in the proposal for formal

education on decolonization and decoloniality (Figure 1), showing themselves as both ethical-political and epistemological.

Figure 1 - Diagram - Decoloniality



Source: Walsh (2005, p.49).
Org: translated by the authors

Walsh (2007) argues that it is necessary to imagine truly innovative solutions based on the practices of actors and to see the entire modern colonial complexity as a central framework that continues to organize and guide science and academic thinking. The author emphasizes that it is in this reformulation of knowledge, in dialogue with “other” knowledges, that a new perspective on the geopolitics of knowledge production is announced, and perhaps a civilization can emerge¹⁴. Ultimately, for Walsh (2019), interculturality represents an “other” way of thinking and acting, appearing in a border-thinking of social change and transformation. It questions and modifies the coloniality of power while at the same time rendering visible the colonial difference, offering a path for thinking from difference and proposing the construction of a society radically different from the one we know.

¹⁴ Manoel de Barros, a poet from Mato Grosso do Sul, wrote: “When my eyes are not dirty from civilization, a lust for trees and birds grows within them”.

Starting from the reflection, “what does the construction of formal knowledge have to do with it?”, it is considered that regardless of the search for new readings of Development that foster reflections on decoloniality, on laws, or even new institutional designs that can contribute to social Innovations, the construction of formal knowledge is involved with social change. And the main subjects involved are members of the academic community, especially the teaching staff. Because changes occur from whence the researcher is located and through their decolonial praxis. It is in the process of self-decolonization of the researcher that there will be recognition of the plurality and diversity of ways of living, being, thinking of students in the territory. Social innovation can occur in this daily life through an ethical-political practice of the involved subjects, who can imagine and experience a post-Western, decolonial, ethical, democratic and situated science, based on the construction of “other” knowledges and wisdoms.

However, social innovations also involve an ethical perception of the cognizant subject who is implicated in the Brazilian formal education environment. This subject understands their involvement in this process by developing knowledge of the synchronous nature (information and research on present injustices) and the diachronic nature (in relation to their understanding of the historical process of racism and sexism in Brazil and its injustices). By recognizing dehumanization as a strategy and practice of the colonization process, they seek to find a response to this dehumanization through humanization, that is, to decolonize the university in order to humanize it. For Walsh (2009, p.33), “individual humanization and liberation require social humanization and liberation, which implies the connection between the subject and the objective”, meaning the connection between the internalization of dehumanization and the recognition of the social structures and conditions that make this dehumanization possible. According to the author, both Freire and Fanon address pedagogies that stimulate new forms of political action, insurgency, and rebellion, denouncing injustices and facing them with hope and love, and she emphasizes:

“Here I am not talking about romantic love, but love as a political and existential apparatus, as a central component of a dissident and creatively insurgent consciousness that can intervene (and rise up) both within and in the modern/colonial/neoliberal relationships that maintain domination and dehumanization” (Walsh, 2009, p.39).

She further underscores that the pedagogical contributions by Fanon and Freire are manifold, yet Freire is well known in Latin America while Fanon is not so much so. However it is Fanon who approaches the connection between love, pedagogy, humanity and liberation through his decolonizing struggle.

Consolidating the reflections on the elements of the construction of formal knowledge, beyond the process of selfdecoloniality, there is the humanization aspect, of affection, tenderness and love in education. The decolonizing to exist is an act of love, as our Belchior (1976) would say, “loving and changing things interest me more”. It arises from the act of engaging with others, of humanizing by feeling implicated. Ocanã, Lopez e Conedo (2018) present that this feeling-thinking in education manifests itself in decolonization, referred to as the practices of decolonial pedagogical biopraxis¹⁵, as they are practices that do not subalternize and take “the other” into account. By using them, a dialogical relationship is provided, a feeling-thinking-acting in relational territories that generate a transformative and loving coexistence.

These daily practices with tenderness that humanize the construction of knowledge in formal education. And these practices shall be possible by each individual’s choice of to sow love, that is, not to exclude but to love. It is an ethical-political stance of the engaged subject to perceive love as an existential political apparatus in the construction of formal knowledge, which develops through a hopeful decolonial pedagogy (parting with sexism and racism), it is a loving pedagogy, in which love is a tool for liberation, as Freire and Fanon have already pointed out. Through these choices and practices, perhaps we will find in love our greatest social innovation, for this act of love implies recognizing the existence of “other” knowledges in the university and “other” ways of existing in which everyone fits.

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¹⁵ The decolonial turn in the educational sciences is valued by the possibility of developing biopraxis, which through formative actions develops decolonial actions. “Decolonial pedagogical biopraxis is every critical, disobedient, emancipatory, unruly, insubordinate and insurgent, liberating, tenacious, resisting and transformative action that emerges in the formative process, inside and outside of the classroom, whether on academic or non-academic spaces” (translated from Ocana, Lopez e Conedo, 2018 p. 225).

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