Indigenous Education and Intercultural Dialogue: A Class shared between *Kaingang* university students from Brazil and Students from the United Kingdom

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Education and Peoples: Identities in Construction and Reconstruction, edited by Juliane Schser Angnes and Kaizo Iwakami Beltrão.[1]

Abstract: El artículo presenta una experiencia de diálogo intercultural a través de una clase en compartida entre estudiantes brasileños del pueblo *Kaingang* y estudiantes de historia de la Universidad de Coventry del Reino Unido. Está inspirada en la propuesta de la filosofía intercultural que postula al diálogo entre culturas como método para articular un proyecto alternativo al proceso de globalización actual, sustentado en la diversidad de las culturas entendidas como reservas de humanidad capaces de brindar recursos para una mundialización solidaria, basada en la cooperación entre pueblos y culturas. La construcción de este diálogo requiere de acciones y propuestas concretas que lleven adelante lo meramente enunciado filosóficamente. Creemos que el ámbito educativo, y en especial la educación y la escuela indígena, es un espacio inmejorable para articular el diálogo intercultural de manera práctica y concreta. Por eso además de presentar la experiencia se evalúan cualitativamente sus resultados, mostrando el impacto positivo que tuvo en los dos grupos que participaron en ella.
Palabras - clave: Educación; diálogo; interculturalidad; indígena; *Kaingang*

Indigenous education and Intercultural dialogue: A class shared between *Kaingang* university students from Brazil and students from the United Kingdom
Abstract: The article presents an experience of intercultural dialogue through a class shared among Brazilian students of the *Kaingang* people and history students of Coventry University in the United Kingdom. It is inspired by the proposal of intercultural philosophy that postulates the dialogue between cultures as a method to articulate an alternative project to the current process of globalization, based on the diversity of cultures understood as reserves of humanity capable of providing resources for a globalization based on cooperation between peoples and cultures. The construction of this dialogue requires concrete actions and proposals that carry forward what is merely stated philosophically. We believe that the educational field, in particular the indigenous school, is an excellent space to articulate the intercultural dialogue in a practical and concrete way. Therefore, in addition to presenting the experience, its results are evaluated qualitatively, showing the positive impact it had on the two groups that participated in it.
Key words: Education; dialogue; interculturality; indigenous; *Kaingang*

Educação indígena e diálogo intercultural: Uma aula compartilhada entre estudantes universitários *Kaingang* e estudantes do Reino Unido
Resumo: O artigo apresenta uma experiência de diálogo intercultural por meio de uma aula compartilhada entre estudantes brasileiros do povo *Kaingang* e estudantes de história da Universidade de Coventry, no Reino Unido. É inspirado pela proposta da filosofia intercultural que propõe o diálogo entre culturas como forma de articular uma alternativa para o projeto atual processo de globalização, com base na diversidade de culturas entendida como reservas humanidade capaz de fornecer recursos para uma globalização da solidariedade, com base na cooperação entre povos e culturas. A construção desse diálogo requer ações concretas e propostas que levem adiante o que é meramente declarado filosoficamente. Acreditamos que o campo educacional, e especialmente a educação e a escola indígena, são um excelente espaço para articular o diálogo intercultural de maneira prática e concreta. Portanto, além de apresentar a experiência, seus resultados são avaliados qualitativamente, mostrando o impacto positivo que teve nos dois grupos que participaram.
Palavras-chave: Educação; diálogo; interculturalidade; indígena; *Kaingang*

Introduction

The objective of this article is to present an instance of intercultural dialogue and intercultural education within the framework of the Intercultural Indigenous Degrees of Unochapecó (Community University of the Chapecó region, Santa Catarnia, Brazil) in collaboration the History undergraduate course of Coventry University in the United Kingdom.

Since 2009, the Community University of the Chapecó Region has operated a training program for indigenous teachers that is designed to produce trained professionals that hail from within these communities. The program has been successful in many respects and has produced a significant number of teachers who have gone on to work professionally. However, the program had to solve some specific issues. Particularly, it had to develop a strategy to reduce the non-engagement rate of indigenous students who had historically participated in university-level education.

The main strategy to reduce non-engagement, as we pointed out in previous articles (Santos et al., 2018), was accomplished through the introduction of university-education on Indigenous Lands. That is, instead of the students having to leave indigenous land and travel to the city for their education, the university and its teachers would instead travel to, and teach within, indigenous communities. In previous studies, we argued that three conceptual borders were the primary causes of adult indigenous non-engagement: physical, cultural and economic. Physical borders were created by the need to travel from the comfort and security of indigenous lands to the physically separate, and potentially hostile, environment of the city. Cultural borders were created by negative preconceptions and prejudices that continue to be harboured by many non-indigenous people; outside of indigenous communities, many possess little knowledge about the culture, context and customs. Finally, economic borders were created by the significant levels of poverty that affect so many indigenous peoples and communities – they are among the poorest peoples in Brazilian society.

Given these barriers, prior pedagogical policies (which had sought to train indigenous teachers in the same place and in the same manner as non-indigenous teachers) were naïve, divorced from the relevant cultural context and incapable of producing the desired results. The revised strategy designed by Unochapecó, with financial support from the Santa Catarina State Secretary of Education, successfully reversed the non-engagement trend.

In addition to significantly improving student engagement levels, the move to teaching on indigenous land served to increase the intercultural literacy of the teaching staff who participated in the project. In this new context, it was the indigenous student, not the teacher, who had the most intercultural experience. Having had to live between two cultures throughout their lives, indigenous students possessed significant experience mediating the practices, customs and languages of the other. Conversely, teaching staff, accustomed to education in the traditional university context, had little experience in this area and had to develop a new intercultural skillset once they began working on indigenous lands. In order to decolonise their own pedagogical practices, they had to learn about the cultural context in which they now worked (Santos et al., 2018).

However, this strategy, despite its evident successes, created a problem of its own – "educational inbreeding". Despite being hostile towards indigenous cultures, on-campus education can foster skills and experiences that are important for future educators and professionals, particularly for those who wish to pursue leadership or management positions. It is important for future educators to learn how educational systems work outside of indigenous land so that they can represent (and mediate) the educational needs of their community at different levels of state, from the municipal and provincial level, through to the national level. It was therefore necessary to develop strategies that managed the discrepancy between the educational experience which was being achieved on indigenous land, and the additional

community leadership skills that indigenous students were not receiving due to their absence from campus.

In this article we will analyse a pedagogical project which sought to overcome this weakness by facilitating a globalised, intercultural discourse between indigenous students and their peers from Coventry in the United Kingdom.

In addition to providing indigenous students with a new type of learning experience, this project was also designed to significantly benefit the European students from Coventry University, many of whom lacked prior intercultural experience in any specific type of decolonised spaces. As participants in the university's History degree, they were already studying race relations in the Americas but their direct engagement with indigenous peoples was limited. Aside from their university studies, most had been exposed to indigenous Americans through problematic, colonialist imagery which frequently appeared in the popular culture: cinema, television, digital streaming, and literature. This project would therefore help to redefine their relationship with indigenous America, transforming it from an abstract to a dialogue; one with real people who shared relatable goals and aspirations but whose lived experiences (and many of their cultural assumptions), could vary significantly. That they were sharing a space built for equals, working within a framework of respect and understanding, something which allowed for significant intellectual and personal reflection on their part.

This article will provide an overview of the theoretical framework upon which this project was developed. It will then describe the key characteristics of Intercultural Indigenous Bachelor's degree at Unochapecó as well as providing the necessary context to understand its *Kaingang* participants. It will then describe the characteristics and interests of its European participants, as well as the objectives that both groups aimed to achieve through their participation. The intercultural dialogue will then then be described, followed by a presentation of the results achieved evaluated through qualitative methods, especially interviews and informal questions from the teachers to the participants after the experience. In the final section we will present our findings.

Theoretical Methodological Framework of the Experience

This project was developed within a theoretical framework informed by intercultural philosophy and Freirean pedagogy re-read from an intercultural perspective (Santos, 2017). Specifically, we adhered to Raul Fornet-Betancourt's (2000) proposal that intercultural dialogues can produce an alternative project to the current globalization process. Rather than a force which will ultimately lead to cultural homogonisation, this perspective instead conceptualises globalization as a process which is sustained by a plurality of cultures, each of which is capable of providing resources which can inform the whole; a model of globalization based upon cooperation between peoples and cultures, rather than competition between them, or the domination of some by others.

Intercultural dialogues are thus postulated as projects which can articulate and generate an alternative response to the integration or assimilation of otherness into a supposed global monoculture which is predetermined by the West and sustained by the commercial and financial processes typical of neoliberal globalization. A respectful, empathetic, horizontal dialogue is thus proposed as an instrument to reorganize the relations between geographically and culturaly distinctive peoples based upon solidarity, cooperation and communication. In other words, one globe, many worlds.

Fornet-Betancourt's proposal raises some important questions: in which areas will this dialogue take place; between whom will they occur; who will be the interlocutor of cultures, who will act as cultural representatives?

We must realize that a true intercultural dialogue, which is so widely presumed, is absolutely impossible without conditions of equality. It is even, as Panikkar (2006) maintains, an

affront to speak of dialogue to those who are starving, who have been stripped of their human dignity or who do not have a common frame of reference because of cultural differences.

In the current context, spaces in which equal intercultural dialogues occur are too few. This is particularly problematic when the possibility of intercultural dialogues are considered, particularly their ability to disrupt the hegemonic presence of neoliberal globalization.

The educational field, especially the school, is a space where intercultural dialogues could be practiced under acceptable conditions – concrete action rather than rhetoric. This is especially true of schools in indigenous communities, teacher-training programs, and, in this specific case, the Indignenous Bachelor's degrees offered by Unochapecó. As a result, the dialogue was put into practice between *Kaingang* indigenous students and students of Coventry University. These included citizens of several different European countries, as well as professors from Latin American and Britain.

We are aware that compared to the scale of the globalization process, this alternative proposal is small and humble. But it is concrete and real, not merely a rhetorical or theoretical proposition; an example for the future and a model for duplication, innovation, broader implementation. A grain of sand is nothing to the sea, but it is still a grain of sand.

The *Kaingang* Village in the West Catarinenese and the Intercultural Bachelor Degree

The *Kaingang* are the main *Gê* society of Southern Brazil. Their traditional territory encompassed the states of São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul and the Argentine province of Misiones. Their economy was based on hunting, gathering, fishing and complementary agriculture. The first recorded contact was with Spanish Jesuit missionaries in 1626 who attempted to remove them, without success, to the Guairá mission. From that first contact to the modern day, the history of the *Kaingang* people has followed a similar trajectory to that of other peoples native to the Americas; a history confrontation, resistance, negotiation, and adaptation to the new realities imposed upon them by the hegemonic national culture. We refer anyone who has an interest in the *Kaingang* culture and its history to the work of specialists such as Juracilda Veiga (1994, 2000).

Presently, the *Kaingang* population is approximately 50,000 persons spread across 25 reservations in the states of São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul. An equivalent number survives on the outskirts of cities.

In the state of Santa Catarina, most of the lands demarcated for the *Kaingang* are situated in the western region, among them the Toldo Chibamgue Village, where the Bachelor's Degree is issued. The principle economic activity in *Kaingang* territory is small-scale subsistence agriculture. Many are also engaged in the sale of traditional crafts in the cities. Likewise, the area is one of the largest food and agroindustrial regions in Brazil. As a result, many indigenous people are hired within the meat-processing industry, generally working for minimum wage as low-skilled laborers.

It is worth remembering that the demarcated indigenous territories are not the property of indigenous communities who live within them. They have been granted by the government for their physical and cultural subsistence, but ownership has not been conferred upon their inhabitants. Therefore, possession of the land remains precarious even if it has been demarcated for indigenous use.

Within indigenous territories there are currently elementary and middle schools. According to national and state-level regulations, indigenous education should be carried out by

teaching staff who hail from indigenous territories and communities.[2] In the absence of existing indigenous teaching staff from communities in west of Santa Catarina, the Secretariat of Education, Culture and Sport of Santa Catarina, together with Unochapecó, designed the Intercultural Indigenous Bachelor's degrees which began to be issued in 2009. The aim of this program was to train teachers belonging to *Kaingang* communities and solve the indigenous teacher deficit. Two waves of indigenous teachers were educated as a part of this program, the first between 2009 and 2013, the second between 2014 and 2018. Currently, due to the change of government at the national and state levels, the program has been discontinued. Unochapecó is working with the new administration in order to reopen the program in 2020.

To discourage the nonengagement of indigenous students, and to cross the physical, cultural and economic borders mentioned above, university teaching staff would travel to indigenous lands; the university would be brought to the students who would remain within the safety and comfort of their home territories. This strategy was successful, with regular attendance on the course reaching 90%. However, it risked further increasing the isolation of the indigenous educational community. In order to mitigate this, special classes and events were held on the university campus, such as the intercultural dialogue we are examining in this study.

The indigenous students who participated in this intercultural dialogue were a part of the 2014-2018 intake. The dialogue was conducted on February 28, 2019, a week before their graduation ceremony. Their course was, by this point, practically concluded and, as a result of accessibility concerns, we only required participation of those students who belonged to communities closest to the city of Chapecó. Students from two Kaingang communities (the Kondá Village and the Toldo Chimbangue Indigenous Land) participated in the dialogue.

The professor from Coventry University who co-organized the dialogue had previously visited indigenous lands on the occasion of a *workshop* on sustainable development and governance held in the city of Chapecó in mid-2018. As a result, they already knew indigenous students and had some experience of their schools and communities. This prior familiarity was an important factor in the success of the dialogue, with the earlier personal relationships serving to ease communication. We believe that the experience would not have worked without this step. All of the students who participated knew the British scholar and, as a result, a relationship built upon trust and empathy had already been established.

Along with the indigenous students came some of their younger relatives who were not undergraduate students. The presence of family members, children or younger siblings is frequent in the indigenous university classrooms as the process of educating one's self often begins through the observation of elders and imitation. Three students from Kondá and one from Toldo Chimbangue participated in the meeting, plus three middle school-level students that we hope to receive at the university once courses are reopened.

Coventry University Students

The students from Coventry University consisted of participants from England, Northern Ireland, France, Spain, and Romania, all of whom were in their final year of undergraduate study. The majority of students were enrolled in the History program except for a small number who were enrolled in a joint History and Politics honors course. In both programs, the teaching emphasis was placed upon studying the history of the modern era (1492-2000) with particular attention paid to the histories of Western peoples from the year 1800. The group were all enrolled on a teaching module entitled *Race and Resistance in the United States* which provided them with an opportunity to study the comparative experiences of Native Americans, African

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[2] In addition to Federal regulations, the constitution of Santa Catarina (art. 210) similarly ensures that indigenous communities are able to teach in their own language, as well as developing their own approach to education.

Americans, Latinos, and East Asian Americans from 1814 to 1992. Particular emphasis was placed upon studying the experiences of Native Americans and African Americans. The teaching philosophy of this module is best summarised by the following thesis: 'the histories of racial minorities in the Americas are not stories of repression. They are stories of racial minorities confronting repression. They are histories of empowerment.'

Prior to the session with the Kaingang, the European cohort had two consistent contact points to indigenous Americans: popular culture, such as film, literature, and other forms of media, and through their studies at university. None had met an indigenous American before the session and, like most western Europeans, much of their exposure to indigenous peoples was shaped by a media environment which emphasised the experiences of Native North Americans. Disney's *Pocahontas* (1993), for example, was a common point of reference for the group, with most having seen the film at least once and many professing significant admiration for it. *The Twilight Saga* (2008-2012) was another common point of contact for them, as was Disney's perennial classic *Peter Pan* (1953).

The media narrative surrounding Johnny Depp's controversial casting as Tonto in *The Lone Ranger* (2013), also by Disney, was also well known.[3]

Less literal but no less relevant is James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009), whose fictional 'Navi' (an apparent corruption of the word 'Native') presented well known tropes about Native Americans in a fantastical, but recognisable, setting (Adamson, 2013).

Figure 1
In The Twilight Saga, the character of Jacob, a Native American, is able to transform into a Wolf – a common image associated with indigenous Americans across many different forms of media.

In addition to these popular films, a range of lesser-viewed media products helped to shape the students' underlying assumptions about Indigenous Americans (Schuller, 2014). These include 'westerns' from the 20th century which continue to be aired regularly on television in the

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[3] For examples of the casting controversy of Johnny Depp's casting see 'Who's an Indian? Johnny Depp' *Indian Country Today*, May 25, 2012: https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/who-s-an-indian-johnny-depp-stwXKBQs60yhRxRCmBanAQ; Angela Aleiss 'Disney Exploiting Confusion about whether Johnny Depp has Indian Blood' *Indian Country Today*, June 17, 2013: https://newsmaven.io/indiancountrytoday/archive/disney-exploiting-confusion-about-whether-depp-has-indian-blood-ugk92TVxXEShOK6TvMcgZg; Dana Lone Hill 'Why I'm Willing to Believe in Johnny Depp's Tonto' *The Guardian*, March 12, 2012: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2012/mar/12/johnny-depp-tonto-long-ranger.

United Kingdom.[4] Mid-20th century cinema often utilised indigenous characters in order to tell stories primarily about European Americans. Later works attempted to tell more nuanced stories, but they continued to perpetuate problematic ideas and stereotypes (Saldanha & McGowen, 2015). Even films which have less cynical origins, such as Kevin Costner's *Dances with Wolves* (1990), adhere to common stereotypes which over-simplify indigenous North Americans.

Documentaries and other forms of non-fictional entertainment have also contributed to European images of South American indigenous peoples. The BBC, for example, has produced three seasons of *Tribe* (2005-2007), in which a former Marine, Bruce Parry, attempts to learn the customs of indigenous peoples from around the world, including groups from Brazil and Venezuela. Channel 4, a popular broadcaster in the UK, released *First Contact: Lost Tribe of the Amazon* (2016), a film which reflects the interest of European media in 'uncontacted' peoples of the Amazon Rainforest.[5] Few English-language documentaries deal with indigenous life in urban environments or non-traditional modes of living. Ideas about Indigenous South Americans tend to be rooted in images of the jungle featuring few, if any, artefacts of modern life.

These stereotypical images were deconstructed in the classes which preceded the intercultural dialogue. Popular examples such as *Pocahontas*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Twilight Saga* were all thoroughly analysed from a post-colonial perspective.

Figure 2
In *Disney's Pocahontas,* "Have you ever heard the wolf cry to the Blue Corn Moon?" notice the silhouette of the wolf howl that has been projected onto Pocahontas's face.

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[4] 'Weekend Classic Westerns' *TCM: Turner Classic Movies*: https://www.tcmuk.tv/this-month/weekend-classic-westerns.

[5] Dom Phillips 'Photographer Captures Images of Uncontacted Amazon Tribe' *The Guardian*, December 22, 2016: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/dec/22/photographer-shows-first-images-of-uncontacted-amazon-tribe; Tom Acres 'The Mystery of the World's Uncontacted Tribes' *Sky News*, July 20, 2018: https://news.sky.com/story/the-mystery-of-the-worlds-uncontacted-tribes-11443131; Rachel Nuwer 'The Sad Truth about Uncontacted Tribes' *BBC Future*, August 4, 2014: http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140804-sad-truth-of-uncontacted-tribes; Fiona Watson 'The Uncontacted Tribes of Brazil Face Genocide Under Jair Bolsonaro' *The Guardian*, December 31, 2018: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/dec/31/tribes-brazil-genocide-jair-bolsonaro.

Particular emphasis placed upon the ways in which Europeans and European Americans project common imagery, tropes, and ideas onto indigenous peoples, regardless of whether or not they are appropriate.

For example, the recurring image of the wolf as an indigenous analogue was explored, from the 1710 portrait of Hendrick of the Mohawk (see figures 3 and 4) to modern incarnations such as *Pocahontas* (see figure 2) and *The Twilight Saga* (see figure 1).

Note the wolf by Hendrick's feet and the woodland setting. Hendrick himself wears European clothing and is draped in European cloth, but his context is fundamentally connected to the natural, rather than the built, environment.

In each of these cases, students reflected upon how historic Europeans and Americans of European origin historically understood images of wolves (the wild feral form of the domesticated dog) and how it stood as a metaphor for Native Americans. They were then asked to reflect upon how that imagery was used to project ideas about wildness or savagery onto indigenous peoples. Students were also invited to think about what the image of the wolf, projected onto the 'Other', implied about European culture and self-image. The deconstruction of such popular tropes, together with sessions which placed these images into a centuries-long artistic tradition, did much to demonstrate the problematic nature of the symbolism which is typically associated with indigenous Americans.

Figures 3 and 4
Portrait of Hendrick of the Mohawk, painted by John Verelst (1710).

Through such discussions, the European students had an opportunity to better understand the complexities of indigenous cultures and histories, as well as the colonial imagery which had shaped their assumptions about these peoples. In relation to the Kaingang people, a special seminar was organized in which they were given an opportunity to ask questions of their professor about his research and his experiences with that people. The students then worked in a small groups, carrying out discussions about the types of ideas and concepts which they wished to explore during the intercultural dialogue. Thus, a series of questions was defined that concentrated on issues of identity and culture. Those questions were:

1) What do non-indigenous Brazilians think about the Kaingang?
2) How do you feel about the historical figure, Kondá?
3) What do you want the people of Europe to know about the Kaingang people?

4) What are the barriers that the Kaingang face concerning their education?
5) Can you give us some examples of Kaingang folklore?
6) How many members of your community speak the Kaingang language?
7) Where do the Kaingang come from?
8) Does the education system in Brazil help to empower your community?

For all of the European students, who came from different social and cultural backgrounds, this was their first opportunity to engage in a dialogue directly with any indigenous person. This seminar thus provided them with a unique opportunity: to participate in, and, alongside their *Kaingang* interlocutors, co-manage, a dynamic, intercultural space. In an increasingly globalised world, this teaching experience provided them with an intellectually exciting opportunity, to engage with a different form of globalization which emphasised respect and communication, empathy and solidarity over business, commerce or finance.

The Dynamics of the Intercultural Dialogue

In this section we analyse the organisational issues behind the intercultural dialogue as well as the the dynamics behind the resultant discourse. In terms of challenges, there were two fundamental difficulties which had to be overcome: distance and language.

Ostensibly, the issue of physical distance was easily resolved through the use of video conferencing. However, the Intercultural Indigenous Bachelor's degrees is taught on Indigenous Lands where the technical conditions necessary for a video-conference are totally inadequate. There is no technical support, nor is there a minimally stable internet connection available. As a result, it was decided to carry out the dialogue on-campus.

Because the dialogue was to occur during an academic recess period, there were difficulties in ensuring and organising transportation which would take the indigenous students from their villages to the city. Although a seemingly simple issue, this was not a minor problem owing to the problematic nature of transportation in rural areas. The social, economic, and cultural life within the indigenous land also possess its own distinct dynamics, obligations, and tasks which cannot always be postponed, or which are not always compatible with activities such as the organization of a video conference (Santos et al., 2018).

Additionally, this was the first time that many of the indigenous students had participated in a videoconference. Because of this, we held a small meeting with the indigenous cohort one hour before the conference to explain the dynamics of the dialogue and to ask them to prepare questions for the European students. Some of the cohort were surprised that we had not been able to clearly explain the idea of video conference: they had hoped to meet the European students in person, as they had previously done with the teaching staff from Coventry when they had previously visited their village. However, they quickly came to understand the dynamics of the digital format and managed to prepare a series of extremely interesting questions:

1) How do Europeans view American Indian peoples?
2) Do they have an indigenous population in Britain?
3) What do you know about the *Kaingang?*
4) Why are they interested in our culture?
5) What are you interested in knowing about our culture?
6) Do you want to hear our language?
7) To the teacher who had already visited the indigenous land: what was your opinion about our land and community, and what did you take from your visit?
8) Do you want to know about our dances and our clan system?

As previously discussed, the European cohort had previously prepared for the dialogue, a process which included the deconstruction indigenous iconography. This was an extremely important part of the pre-dialogue experience. Contrary to what is assumed, those who belong to Western culture (Europeans or Americans of European origin) often have less intercultural experience and less intercultural openness. Fornet-Betancourt speaks of a widespread "intercultural illiteracy" even among professors and university students. This was evidenced in Unochapecó's Indigenous Bachelor degrees whose professors, teaching in indigenous villages, learned new intercultural perspectives *in situ*.

Instead, indigenous populations have centuries of contact, learning, adaptations and survival strategies which have been developed in the face of a Western culture which threatens to overwhelm their culture, territory, and even their bodies. The language barrier highlighted the intercultural deficit: the dialogue was facilitated by an English-Portuguese translator. The indigenous students, however, also speak the *Kaingang* language in addition to Portuguese; for the majority of this group, this is the everyday language spoken in their village. It was not possible to fully involve the *Kaingang* language in this intercultural exchange, since the European participants only spoke languages which originated in that continent. This circumstance illustrates the intercultural competence possessed by the session's indigenous participants; they arleady navigate borders between indigenous and colonial spaces in a way which the European participants do not.

The dynamics of the dialogue allowed us to deconstruct colonial prejudices which had been active since the European conquest of the Americas. Savagery (remembering the image of the wolf, discussed above), a lack of education, or ignorance are commonly held assumptions about indigenous peoples in Brazil, but they are compounded by linguistic barriers. Indigenous peoples were ignorant only of European languages, culture, science and religion. They were (and are) fully fluent in their own (Puigros, 1996).

The dialogue was articulated in a bilingual manner in English and Portuguese with the assistance of a translator. Indigenous students, however, wished to demonstrate their own language to their European peers, so they often asked the questions and/or offered answers in the *Kaingang* language, which was then translated it into Portuguese by themselves and, via the translator, into English.

The exchange lasted approximately one hour. It was a dynamic and respectful dialogue that managed to cross linguistic, cultural and geographical barriers. It started with an introduction and presentation of the groups by their respective teachers. The students then commenced the dialogue through a series of pre-prepared questions. The dialogue quickly took on its own organic dynamic, with one answer leading naturally to other questions without necessarily following the pre-planned order. We were more interested in supporting the fluidity of the dialogue than exhaustively going through the planned question-list. In addition to the translator, two professors from Unochapecó and a professor from Coventry University acted as mediators and facilitators of the dialogue.

The results of this dialogue were extremely interesting, particularly as some of the questions surprised the participants or forced them to rethink their conceptions of the other – and themselves.

Results

Due to its length we cannot reproduce the dialogue in full. Instead we will highlight the parts of the dialogue which we consider most interesting, paying particular attention to the views, participation, and opinions of the students. After the dialogue was completed, both groups were asked questions about the experience and their feelings about the process.

The European cohort asked questions which broadly fit into one of two categories – the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples in Brazil; and the culture of the *Kaingang* people.

The questions from the indigenous students were directed to how the Europeans perceived the South American Indians; what they thought of them; what interested them about their culture; and a very particularly stimulating one for their European peers: whether or not indigenous populations exist in the Britain.

As can be seen by the questions which were asked by each of the student groups, it was the indigenous cohort who possessed the greater pre-existing intercultural knowledge. Indigenous students did not ask how the European students lived, nor did they ask them to describe their culture and language. A strong familiarity with Western culture was an already established aspect of their pre-dialogue knowledge-base. Rather, they were much more interested in learning how the European cohort perceived the *Kaingang* and asked questions which interrogated this. The answers given by the European cohort came as a surprise – the European students demonstrated a pre-existing (and rare) degree of knowledge about *Kaingang* culture, as well as evidencing an interest in learning more. The prior preparation of the European cohort was thus very important, not least because in Brazil and even in the state of Santa Catarina, a significant part of the population ignores the indigenous peoples and cultures which are to be found in the south, assuming them to be fully assimilated into the colonialist system. The resulting cultural invisibility is still deeply rooted across much of Brazil.

The interest, respect, empathy and positive outlook shown by the European cohort was helpful in stimulating communication whilst creating a supportive environment in which the *Kaingang* were able to demonstrate aspects of their culture, language and traditions. When the dialogue was over, the *Kaingang* cohort offered to sing a traditional song (in their language) as a token of appreciation and friendship. It was the most emotional moment of the experience.

Here are the responses and insights from four of the *Kaingang* students regarding their perspective on the dialogue:

> It is important to be at the forefront of a new experience, to interact with people who also want to know about the diversity of other cultures. For me, as an educator, it served a lot as a stimulus, to broaden my knowledge about other cultures (…) I valued this extremely important dialogue, I hope to be able to continue talking with these students, and one day, go visit them. (Student 1, June 15, 2019)

> I was surprised. I realized that not knowing how to speak another language makes the questions [I asked] difficult to elaborate…It is important to meet foreign people, to know other stories and cultures. So I can work with my students and tell them what I learned. (Student 2, June 15, 2019)

> I value this type of extremely important dialogue, since it is time for indigenous peoples to seek new mechanisms in relation to knowledge, seeking to bring knowledge from other cultures to indigenous communities…Thanks to Unochapecó it was possible to meet these people. Also, one of the questions that I could not ask is whether there is the possibility, through these universities, to develop or create sustainability projects for indigenous communities. Well, it is very worrying to see the arrival of soybeans and transgenic corn in our lands and in the surroundings, because with them come poisons. (Student 3, June 15, 2019)

> I felt insecure when asking the questions, because we usually ask face-to-face. But it is a different experience, video conference, if I can I will do it at other times….Each group is curious to know the culture of the other. They were

curious to know about our clanic halves. I believe that one people has a lot to
learn with the other. (Student 4, June 15, 2019)

As these responses illustrate, the *Kaingang* students responded positively to the experience. They also demonstrate that one of the objectives of this experience was realised: to broaden the horizon of indigenous education to meet the evolving needs of the community. Indigenous educators are intercultural mediators, and this respectful and empathetic contact with students from another continent, who speak other languages, was extremely helpful. The *Kaingang* cohort are even requesting more of these experiences and are thinking of establishing external links which will help them to tackle the problems faced by their community, such as the aforementioned environmental problem. This dialogue helped to teach the value of this approach, as well as helping to create and manage such links. We rate the experience as highly satisfactory for the indigenous cohort.

The dialogue was a dynamic and intellectually stimulating experience for the European cohort who, for the first time, had direct contact with Indigenous Americans. It provided them with an opportunity to understand, in a practical and concrete way, the concepts and histories which they had previously studied by engaging in a discussion with peoples who still suffered colonial prejudices. They were able to ask directly about the lives and culture of their indigenous counterparts. Perhaps most importantly, they were challenged, not necessarily by the answers they received, but the questions they were asked. The European cohort had speculated about the different types of responses they would receive. However, they were unable to anticipate what they would be asked by the *Kaingang* students, resulting in a series of questions which required the group to think in new ways about their own culture (and how it is seen by outsiders). In particular, one issue was totally unexpected and gave the group occasion to reflect upon their own culture and identity: the question of whether the United Kingdom possessed indigenous peoples or tribes.

This question surprised many of the European students who found it difficult to answer, not because they lacked knowledge, but because they had not considered the history of the British Isles from an indigenous perspective before. Whilst populist nativism (For & Goodwin, 2012) appears to be on the rise in the UK (and other parts of the western world) at present, the concept of a true indigenous people in the British Isles does not exist as it does in the Americas.

This question required the European cohort to think about the concept of indigeneity in their own social and national context. They responded by answering that there were no indigenous peoples in the United Kingdom, although they did add that the inhabitants of Scotland and Ireland represented an imprecise parallel: perhaps, they suggested, some of these peoples *could* be considered quasi-indigenous.

The difficulty they faced in answering that question led to a series of subsequent discussions in which some students attempted to understand their own history from this new perspective. It was an important process as it created new opportunities for understanding, learning, and re-evaluating British history. By reconsidering the history of the British Isles from an indigenous perspective, the students had to reflect upon how sequential waves of immigrant groups have affected the Isles. The historical settlement patterns of these populations resulted in a complicated and overlapping network of identities and cultures which coexisted and competed across the region. The pre-Roman population of the British Isles (the Celts) were, like the indigenous peoples of the Americas, peoples with no common identity, society, or culture. In England, the Romans, Angles, Jutes, Saxons, and Vikings displaced, merged with, or dominated the indigenous Celtic population, resulting in a highly dynamic culture which evolved constantly and which integrated significant cultural elements from each of these groups. In some parts of Scotland and Ireland, however, these migratory waves and invasions were less impactful. This resulted in regions which were less affected by these migratory waves or foreign invasions, such as the Scottish Highlands and large parts of Ireland and Wales, which were able to retain a

distinct sense of identity and, in some cases, language and culture from other parts of Great Britain (Trilling , 2012).

  The intercultural dialogue therefore prompted us to reconsider our own history from an indigenous-perspective which helped the European cohort to gain a much deeper understanding of the role played by immigration, population integration, and the retention of distinct identities within their own historic context. A phenomenon which had been abstract and foreign became relevant as a result of the different perspective offered by the indigenous cohort.

  This was a very clear demonstration of the value which comes from direct engagement with non-western voices. For a group of students with career aspirations which range from the earning doctorates to working for the United Nations and a variety of other NGOs, this experience was of tremendous value. It demonstrated the importance of creating situations in which one can pose questions, but also the importance of creating situations in which one is asked to provide answers to unexpected queries. It provided an opportunity to our European cohort re-evaluate the framework which they had used to understand themselves and their relationship to other cultures.

  Through discussions which followed this session, it became clear that the European cohort understood that this intercultural experience had provided them with an opportunity to learn about the *Kaingang* and indigenous issues, but also to learn about themselves.

Conclusions

  The most important conclusion of this project is that it demonstrates that it is possible to build real and concrete intercultural spaces based upon respectful, empathetic, horizontal discourse. These spaces, this project shows, can reorganize relations between different cultures as a result of cooperation between very different cultural groups.

  The second key conclusion is that this project demonstrates that the educational environment is an extremely important space for such intercultural dialogues. Furthermore, we believe that the indigenous school is a space for dialogue between cultures, where knowledge, beliefs, ways of being and thinking across the world are measured, recorded, and understood. The indigenous school must be a substantial part of a globalizing process in which many different cultural worlds co-exist.

  This study allows us to reach a third conclusion based on the experience of the European cohort: non-indigenous educational systems should become spaces for intercultural dialogue. The impact had by this project on its European participants, the reappraisal of their ideas about others and about themselves shows that in addition to being possible, this is also desirable.

  To conclude, the objectives of this project were achieved, with both cohorts describing the experience as extremely positive: indigenous and European students alike had the opportunity to learn from another culture. Furthermore, this dialogue provided both cohorts with an opportunity to manage and shape a dynamic and intellectually fruitful intercultural space, the type of experience they can aim to replicate in their professional careers. We all learned that a world which accommodates many cultures is possible.

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