Epistemologies of Inclusion across Continents and Cultures: Radical Realism and Storytelling

Epistemologías de la inclusión entre continentes y culturas: Realismo radical y narración de historias

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Abstract

For any story, what matters is how it is told and heard. Rutherford describes storytelling as action-guiding. It can allow a division of labor between the teller(s) and the reader(s)/listener(s). Simply by the story being told, normatively justified forms of action can be inferred. Although this account of storytelling looks more prescriptive than realist, no-one is compelled upon reading or listening to it to follow it regardless of how exacting it is. Stories, provided we are epistemically just in our reading and listening, can overcome the dichotomy between prescriptive and interpretive understandings. The opening up of this possibility can furnish contemporary realists with non-moralist and non-status quo affirming normative precepts. Starting from the recognition that how we know reality and how we articulate that knowledge scaffolds how our research processes, we can reconfigure and invent revised judgments about the limits of (political) educational possibility. Through evidence based on collaborative practice, interdisciplinary groups of undergraduate higher education students from the global south and north, virtually navigated the multiple perspectives of volatility, unpredictability, and complexity of our interrelated world through migration stories. By expanding their collective capacity to hold space for difficult conversations about the stories they heard, they opened up the possibility of furnishing non-moralist and non-status quo affirming normative precepts.

Keywords: epistemology, realism, students, dialogue, migrants, stories, perceptions, collaborative work

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Resumen

Lo que importa en toda historia es cómo se la cuenta y cómo se la escucha. Rutherford describe la narración como una guía para la acción, que puede permitir una división del trabajo entre el o los narradores y el o los lectores u oyentes. Simplemente por cómo es contada la historia, se pueden inferir formas de acción normativamente justificadas. Aunque este relato de la narración parece más prescriptivo que realista, nadie está obligado a leerlo o escucharlo para entenderlo, independientemente de lo exigente que sea. Las historias, siempre que seamos epistémicamente justos en nuestra lectura y escucha, pueden superar la dicotomía entre comprensiones prescriptivas e interpretativas. La apertura de esta posibilidad puede proporcionar a los realistas contemporáneos preceptos normativos no moralistas y ajenos al *statu quo*. Partiendo del reconocimiento de que el modo en que conocemos la realidad y articulamos ese conocimiento determina nuestros procesos de investigación, podemos reconfigurar e inventar nuevos juicios sobre los límites de la educación (política). A través de evidencia basada en un trabajo colaborativo y de historias de migración, grupos interdisciplinarios de estudiantes universitarios del Sur y el Norte global navegaron virtualmente por las múltiples perspectivas de volatilidad, imprevisibilidad y complejidad de nuestro mundo interrelacionado. Al ampliar su capacidad colectiva para crear un espacio para conversaciones difíciles sobre las historias que escucharon, abrieron la posibilidad de proporcionar preceptos normativos que no son moralistas ni parte del *statu quo*.

Palabras clave: epistemología, realismo, estudiantes, diálogo, migrantes, historias, percepciones, trabajo colaborativo

Introduction

I felt that the atmosphere of the (zoom) breakout discussions allowed me to open my heart to communicate with everyone and to speak my mind. As for the most touching part, it would be the commonality, rather than the difference, in the views of students from different countries about the migration stories. I found that despite the very different social realities we were exposed to, when it came to issues of principle and the morality of immigration, there was a consistent tendency to oppose all forms of discrimination and to encourage ordinary people to speak out for the disadvantaged groups.[3]

In reclaiming the radical potential of political realism, Rossi argues that realists can support radical and even unachievable political change in the local, national and international—that is, we can be realistic and demand the impos-

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3   Student in the United Kingdom, interviewed for the Epistemic Injustice Project, 2023.

sible as the student's anecdote illustrates.[4] Realism is an approach grounded in social-scientific accounts of politics, but not in such a way as to jeopardize the transformative potential of our political imagination. Radical realism focuses on the intertwining of power and knowledge. The radical approach acquires its normativity by contesting epistemic legitimation stories,[5] in which the distinction between necessary political coercion and raw domination partly depends on whether the exercise of political power, even though manipulated by ideology, makes sense to those over whom it is exercised.[6]

> In many ways, because I got to hear many different points of view from migration stories that got me thinking more about epistemic injustice. Knowing different points of view, from countries similar to ours and others totally opposite, from the first world, from different cultures, helped me understand that discrimination problems exist in all parts of the world, and are even more frequent in those countries where we think that education is a priority.[7]

As Geuss reminds us, facts alone may suggest a certain policy proposal or educational theory in particular cultural contexts.[8] That is, facts as facts require normatively innocent empirical work. If what matters the most is addressing the facts of the matter, then realism is not an alternative political theory but a call to suspend normative judgement until we really know who did what to or with whom both when and where.

> … the atmosphere of the (zoom) breakout discussions allowed me to open my heart to communicate with everyone and to speak my mind. As for the most touching part, it would be the commonality, rather than the difference, in the views of students from different countries about the migration stories had heard and recounted. I found that despite the very different social realities we were exposed to, when it came to issues of principle and the morality of immigration, there was a consistent tendency to oppose all forms of discrimination and to encourage ordinary people to speak out for the disadvantaged groups.[9]

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4 Enzo Rossi, "Being Realistic and Demanding the Impossible", *Constellations. An International Journal of Critical and Democratic Theory* 26, n.º 4 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.12446.
5 Ibid.
6 Bernard Williams, *In the Beginning Was the Deed: Realism and Moralism in Political Argument* (Princeton, US: Princeton University Press, 2005), 4-6.
7 Student in Ecuador, interviewed for the Epistemic Injustice Project, 2023.
8 Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton, US: Princeton University Press, 2008).
9 Student in the United Kingdom, interviewed for the Epistemic Injustice Project, 2023.

Although higher education is framed as a future oriented enterprise, we often fail to serve the diverse futurities of students, particularly in formal learning environments. The cultural norms of formal learning environments are rooted in dominant ways of being and knowing and this shapes how learning environments and learning technologies are designed. As a result, the futures that students can envision for themselves in these spaces can be static and limited by the settled expectations of dominant power and knowledge.

Justification for our research

Political theorists, looking for principles, might consider stories as a way to make normative judgments, prescriptions, and evaluations without resorting to excessive abstraction. Stories overcome the dichotomy between prescriptive and interpretive understandings as they start from the recognition that

> how we know reality and how we articulate that knowledge are themselves part of real historical phenomena and that they are, in any particular moment, one of the constituent elements of a community or a state. Philosophy is thus always a part of politics and of (real) political struggles.[10]

Rutherford argues that story-telling does not dictate and restrict, but reconfigures and invents to the extent that it encourages "revised judgments about the limits of political possibility" in forward-looking and creative ways.[11] For example, story-telling can furnish realists with resources to specify with a non-moralist method which political transformations are desirable and why, the authority of 'why' rests entirely with the assent of the audience. There is, according to Rutherford, one criteria when reading theory, which is: are you persuaded?

Clues and stories

During the Pandemic in 2020, following Aytac and Rossi's description of radical realism as an exercise in suspicion that can uncover flaws in our (political) beliefs about power and knowledge through inferring the invisible from

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10 Lorna Finlayson, *The Political Is Political: Conformity and the Illusion of Dissent in Contemporary Political Philosophy* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015), 297.

11 Nat Rutherford, "Is Political Realism Barren? Normativity and Story-Telling", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 25, n.° 6 (2022): 410, https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2022.2120658.

the visible,[12] and recognizing the normative presuppositions that guided our choice of research focus demonstrating our non-neutrality, we carried out an action research project with teachers and students in the Faculty of International studies at the University of Azuay.[13]

Realist political theory infers the microphysics of power are concealed in moralist reasoning (and practice) from symptoms, clues, or defects betrayed in the epistemology, instrumentality, or aesthetics of that reasoning. A clue that we noticed that was different from the often-observed usual practices between teachers and students was that as teachers began to exercise reflexivity in the action research process, certain dialogic characteristics appeared to demonstrate epistemological and pedagogical transformations which included practice with new roles and modes of interaction with students.

Investigating clues

In 2021, building on the evidence from the action research project, we designed a mixed methods sequential explanatory case study with students and teachers in the Faculty of International Studies at the University of Azuay to compare the perceptions of students and teachers of online learning during the Pandemic (2020/2021).[14] The results demonstrated (to their surprise) that teachers were significantly unaware of students' perceptions of the learning benefits from using/participating with (global) social media. In and through language on social media, students were blending every-day and academic knowledge for learning and generating an international 'third space' or zone of transformation for rethinking boundaries, pedagogy and curriculum that invited their knowledges and experiences.

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12   Ugur Aytac and Enzo Rossi, "Ideology Critique without Morality: A Radical Realist Approach", *American Political Science Review* 117, n.º 4 (2023), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055422001216.

13   Anne Carr, Patricia Ortega and Mónica Martínez, "Online Teaching: Taking Advantage of Complexity to See What We Did Not Notice Before", in *Handbook of Research on the Global Empowerment of Educators and Student Learning Through Action Research*, eds. Alina Slapac, Phyllis Balcerzak and Kathryn O'Brien (Hershey, US: IGI Global, 2021), https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-7998-6922-1.ch007.

14   Anne Carr, Mónica Martínez and Patricia Ortega, "Expectations of Ecuadorian Higher Education in a Time of Uncertainty: A Comparison Between the Perceptions of Students and Teachers During the COVID-19 Pandemic (2020/21)", in *Building the Post-Pandemic University: Imagining, Contesting and Materializing Higher Education Futures*, eds. Mark Carrigan et al. (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023), https://doi.org/10.4337/9781802204575.00017.

Story telling: Law and Epistemic Justice

Contextually and contemporaneously, in 2021, in addition to Colombians, more and more Venezuelans were arriving in Ecuador, which as our national experience of global migration, provided an epistemic nexus for learning and teaching in international studies. Within the confines of Refugee Law there remains a compromise between the sovereign, prerogative of states to control immigration and the reality of coerced movements of persons at risk. Its purpose is not specifically to meet the needs of the refugees themselves, but is to govern disruptions of regulated international migration in accordance with the interests of states.[15] However, cosmopolitan theories, from a humanitarian perspective, mainly insist on the need to welcome asylum seekers and migrants on the basis of respect for their human rights. In this regard, Ecuador with an estimated 500,000 Venezuelans, a majority of whom were undocumented, also began to regularize their status with legal protection, social stability and training opportunities delivered by universities in June 2022.

Guo argues that the dynamics of refugee integration and settlement processes present business and management implications.[16] Supporting the UN's call for more company participation in achieving sustainable development goals, they argue for increased active involvement of host country organizations as part of the solution to this global crisis suggesting greater attention from business and management scholars to issues related to forced migration and refugee inclusion in the workplace.

Does this one pattern of the politics of migration management now shape global mobility whether economic or forced? Has this huge global mobility regime lead to formal institutional formats and informal practices and choices of how refugees are included? For example, UNHCR is a visible institution of mobility with 1951 Convention requirements of states. The IOM (a UN agency) extends national state control of the management of migrant training programs. Mixed migration flows across borders have become binary – compelled and willing – at the same time that international institutions are ad-

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15   James Hathaway, "A Reconsideration of the Underlying Premise of Refugee Law", in *International Refugee Law*, ed. Héléne Lambert (London: Routledge, 2010), 133, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315092478.
16   Grace Chun Guo, Akram al Ariss and Chris Brewster, "Understanding the Global Refugee Crisis: Managerial Consequences and Policy Implications", *Academy of Management Perspectives* 34, n.° 4 (2019), https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2019.0013.

vancing management control of migration – safe, regulated and orderly, –[17] potentially perpetuating intersectional inequality.

The role of universities in Post-Pandemic migration management politics: students and migrants - whose voices are heard?

At this time of a story of considerable transformation in global and national politics about the way we comprehend and manage global migration post-Pandemic, how might the international role of universities be reimagined?

According to a European Parliament Study, Internationalization in Higher Education is

> the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff and to make a meaningful contribution to society.[18]

Since 2017, emerging critical perspectives on internationalization have voiced concerns about the risks of formal learning environments shaped by norms that are often assumed to be a-cultural spaces that reproduce uneven global power relations, representations, and resource flows. By problematizing and complicating the overwhelmingly positive and often depoliticized nature of mainstream approaches to internationalization, particularly in Western/ ized institutions, new possible approaches to international engagements, pedagogies, and forms of knowledge production have been put forth.[19]

Critical internationalization pedagogical frameworks or assemblages might support a relationship to knowledge that is not constrained merely to the methodological level where description (becoming aware of the problems) and then prescription (seeking out appropriate actions to solve it) prevail,[20] but

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17 Ireland, *European Union (Marrakesh Treaty) Regulations 2018 (S. I. No. 412/2018)*, October 9th 2018, https://tinyurl.com/55p528z7.
18 Hans de Wit et al., eds., *The Globalization of Internationalization: Emerging Voices and Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2017).
19 European Parliament, *Internationalisation of Higher Education* (Brussels: European Parliament, 2015).
20 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis, US: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

a cartography that also includes epistemological and ontological lens towards holding and working with and through the complexity and uncertainty of collaboration across cultures and continents among both faculty and faculty and students living in and with different historical socio-political and religious contexts listening to stories of migrants.

Culturally related projects afford the development of intertwined and reciprocal relationships with one's own culture and other cultures - a sociocultural learning process that allows students to develop relationships with their own culture and other cultures in a reciprocal way supporting the constellations of practices communities have historically developed and dynamically shaped in order to accomplish the purposes they value, including tools they use, social networks with which they are connected, ways they organize joint activities, and their ways of conceptualizing and engaging with the world.[21] In this sense, the ways of knowing, being, and doing are rooted in culture, which capture our knowledges of ontology and entities, network of relations among them, and a range of practices that synthesise and articulate these knowledges and relationships.[22]

What really moved us to ask and act in these given circumstances is to discover how new norms of collaborative human interaction might develop among both students and faculty in a variety of cultural contexts, why they are desired and what prescription about action might be derived especially about global migration.[23] If we are hoping for transformation in higher education, then we must tell and listen to stories of which transformations are desirable and why to be able to develop normative prescriptions about action we might derive from them which are sensitive to the realities and futures of global migration. Telling these alternative stories can also undermine the dominant stories which legitimize existing forms of power and so enable realists to follow Rorty and 'invent a reality of (your own)' inevitably, partial and incomplete by emphasising certain aspects and neglecting others.

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21 Na'ilah Suad Nasir et al., "Rethinking Learning: What the Interdisciplinary Science Tells Us", *Educational Researcher* 50, n.° 8 (2021): 686, https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X211047251.

22 Karen Martin and Booran Mirraboopa, "Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing: A Theoretical Framework and Methods for Indigenous and Indigenist Research", *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, n.° 76 (2003), https://doi.org/10.1080/14443050309387838.

23 Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, 9.

Related research

Online Teaching: Taking Advantage of Complexity to See What We Did Not Notice Before[24]

The purpose of this participatory action research study was to investigate if teaching in virtual spaces could offer the opportunity to exercise reflexivity and transform pedagogy by including new roles, modes of interaction, and authentic practice to increase connectivity with students. The study was conducted with a small convenience group of university teachers in a private university in the south of Ecuador. Data was triangulated through individual and group interviews, a specifically designed blog, and participation in three learning-teaching modules. Certain dialogic characteristics in the data demonstrate epistemological and pedagogical transformations. For example, a new university teacher narrates:

> …I'm still in the process of understanding what kind of teacher I am, but in terms of my teaching techniques, my goal is always for students to really understand the topics we see in class and that knowing how and in what situation this knowledge will help them in their professional lives. To achieve this, in my classes I always use examples and situations from real life, I also make the students get involved in the process by being the ones who investigate, analyze and draw their own conclusions, opinions and solutions to problems (Teacher, 2020).[25]

And a teacher with eight years of experience:

> (My teachers) … based everything on the creation of a dialogue, an exchange of opinions, a critical vision and above all in the consideration of being able to consider the ideas of the classics not as immutable and absolute truths, but as a starting point for the mental formation of the individual. So, when I started my work at the University in my early days, I decided to simply be "who I am", not imposing myself on the students, although maintaining the proper academic distance, but conversing with it, opening up to their reflections and ideas and always valuing them.[26]

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24 Carr, Ortega and Martínez, "Online Teaching".
25 Teacher in Ecuador, interviewed, 2020.
26 Teacher in Ecuador, interviewed, 2020.

Expectations of Ecuadorian higher education in a time of uncertainty: a comparison between the perceptions of students and teachers during the Covid-19 Pandemic (2020/21)[27]

During the Pandemic, although digital platforms were (and continue to be) often presented as "empty spaces for others to interact on", as textually mediated literacies they are actually political and increasingly can "gain control and governance over the rules of the game".[28] raising concerns over "power, control and performativity…reinforcing and intensifying the culture of managerialism within education".[29] such as standardization and competitiveness generationally and internationally more than critical thinking and global citizenry.

In 2020/2021 during the Pandemic, we designed a mixed methods sequential explanatory case study with a convenience group of undergraduate students (N=127) who had experienced privileged education in private urban schools and families with managerial backgrounds in business or government before choosing to study a degree in International Studies.[30] As experienced international travelers before the Pandemic and having extensive access to ICTs during the Pandemic they were implicitly in the nexus of a 'third space' of global citizenry as potential future decision makers understanding power and privilege in Ecuador's post Pandemic educational, economic and political innovations.

We analyzed the students' online survey responses as well as the responses of their teachers (N = 21) on how they believed the students would respond. This survey consisted of three questionnaires validated by de Souza,[31] which formed the basis for the descriptive statistical analyses. Qualitative data was collected from a focus group consisting of teachers and students evaluating their university experiences during the Pandemic closure.

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27 Carr, Martínez and Ortega, "Expectations of Ecuadorian Higher Education".
28 Neil Selwyn et al., "Toward a Digital Sociology of School", in *Digital Sociologies*, eds. Jessie Daniels, Karen Gregory and Tressie McMillan Cottom (Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2017), 154-5.
29 Ibíd., 72.
30 Carr, Martínez and Ortega, "Expectations of Ecuadorian Higher Education".
31 Gustavo Silva et al., "Brazilian Students' Expectations Regarding Distance Learning and Remote Classes During the COVID-19 Pandemic", *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice* 20, n.° 4 (2020), https://tinyurl.com/4hc8bedf.

We used three questionnaires: The Distance Learning in Social Distancing Scale (DLSD-S) was developed by de Souza[32] to measure students' expectations regarding distance learning and remote classes during the school closures due to the COVID19 pandemic. The DLSD-S is based on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree), to 5 (completely agree). It comprises 20 items related to the suspension of classes, distance education possibilities, and daily tasks and experiences during the school closure period. Example items include: "I would like the educational institution where I study to offer remote classes during the social distancing period" and "the home environment does not allow me to concentrate on studies at a distance".

To verify access, skills, and technical capacity with ICTs related to distance learning possibilities the questionnaire on the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (QUICT) was applied. The QUICT was based on 5-point discrete scale to record the degree to which different ICTs were used (1 = No time availability, 2 = less than an hour per day, 3 = between 1 and 2 hours per day, 4 = between 2 and 4 hours per day, 5 = more than 4 hours per day), and comprises 9 items (e.g., study availability) (de Souza, 2020).

Skills with Apps Inventory (SAI) was developed to assess the students' skills with applications related to communication, data sharing, and video conferencing, which can be used in remote classes or distance learning. The SAI was answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (I don't know it), to 5 (I know it, and I have the expertise or excellent skills), and comprises 7 items (apps such as "Zoom", "Google Drive", and "Google Classroom").

The statistical data of the groups of teachers and students revealed a significant (p.0.05) disconnect between what teachers and students perceived about students' skills with access to social media knowledge building ecologies, that is, Google Meets and Instagram/Youtube at the time of completing the questionnaires. Although there are some differences between male and female teachers' responses, we do not know if this dynamic prevailed before the Pandemic. There were also interesting differences between students and teachers on DLSDS items, including the items regarding social media for academic sharing purposes (p=.022), experience with virtual learning (p=.0005), difficulty reading on the computer/tablet screen (p-.005), feeling unmotivated to read books during this social distancing period (p=.011), and study continuation during the pandemic (p=.027).

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32 Ibíd.

The digital economy is very powerful in telling you what skills you need to have to be successful. These skills, that the platforms that are telling you about, they can give you. Now I believe that the skills I have been taught, while good, are not adequate and I understand I need to learn about specific innovative platforms that are necessary for economic development, for example, big data management.[33]

Virtual platforms are for us to use our voices – good or bad, positive or negative, useful or useless. You can't say to students, don't use social media even if we know there is constant danger of repudiation of facts. Free speech is better than not. Being within issues that surround us means students are going out of their reality at the same time knowing what they face.[34]

While "today's media environment is reshaping the opportunity structures by which people (as audiences and as mediated publics) can participate in an increasingly mediatized society",[35] early research on the role of active audiences and their ability to deliberate in the new public sphere – comments on the news and conversation opened by expanded social networks - was perhaps over-optimistic.[36] Some studies looked at the facilitating conditions this participation would need in order to improve the debate – digital discussion – such as sharing of information content that feeds conversation in the public sphere.[37]

Although digital technology has simplified the communication process and expanded potential interactive communication opportunities, Carpentier considers participation as structurally different from interaction.[38] Interaction remains an important condition of participation, but it cannot be equated to participation. Interaction has no political meanings because it does not entail power dynamics as does participation.[39]

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33   Student in Ecuador, interviewed, 2020.
34   Teacher in Ecuador, interviewed, 2020.
35   Sonia Livingstone, "The Participation Paradigm in Audience Research", *The Communication Review* 16, n.° 1-2 (2013): 24, https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2013.757174.
36   Merel Borger et al., "Constructing Participatory Journalism as a Scholarly Object: A Genealogical Analysis", *Digital Journalism* 1, n.° 1 (2012), https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2012.740267; Rebecca Molyneux, "College Staff Attitudes Towards the Use of Online Mental Health Interventions in Further Education", *Manchester Metropolitan University*, 2018, https://tinyurl.com/2eph926m; Thorsten Quandt, "Dark Participation", *Media and Communication* 6, n.° 4 (2018), https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v6i4.1519.
37   Carlos Ruiz et al., "Public Sphere 2.0? The Democratic Qualities of Citizen Debates in Online Newspapers", *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 16, n.° 4 (2011), https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161211415849.
38   Nico Carpentier, *Media and Participation: A Site of Ideological-Democratic Struggle* (Bristol, UK: Intellect Ltd., 2011).
39   Janne Matikainen, "Motivations for Content Generation in Social Media", *Participations. Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 12, n.° 1 (2015), https://tinyurl.com/mrxtxb5t.

Third Space thinking challenges fixed notions and dominant views of culture,[40] as well as the role of the teacher and student. For example, Bhabha proposes the concept of the 'third space', as the space where negotiation or cultural translation is the only possible way to transform the world similar to Derrida's analytical and rhetorical method by which internal structures of a canonical text are exposed as ultimately contradictory and dependent on a typically excluded 'third term'.[41] Almost a century ago, Gramsci believed and demonstrated the student/citizen could teach the master. His 'organic intellectuals', unlike the traditional intellectuals, should not stick to abstractions that might not offer concrete solutions. Rather, organic intellectuals might give more attention to inviting societal discourse from citizens hosted in the Italian paper L'Ordine Nuovo which became a privileged 'third space' for knowledge exchange.[42]

Designing the method: radical realism and epistemic justice

By mid-2022, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that global forced displacement had reached 103 million of which more than 53 million were internally displaced, 4.9 million were asylum seekers, 32.5 million were refugees and 5.3 million were in need of international protection. There were at least 4.3 million stateless people in the world as of 2021, according to an official estimate by the UNHCR.

The refugee/migrant assemblage continues be found in discourses, media, imagery, as well as policies that question the testimonial legitimacy of the refugees' claims.[43] Despite "the humanity washed ashore" message written in the sand beside the body of three-year-old Alan Kurdi, who drowned with his brother and mother in 2015 in an inflatable dingy in the Mediterranean Sea between Turkey and Greece, hermeneutic injustice implication that this

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40 Kris Gutiérrez, Patricia Baquedano and Carlos Tejeda, "Rethinking Diversity: Hybridity and Hybrid Language Practices in the Third Space", *Mind, Culture, and Activity* 6, n.º 4 (1999), https://doi.org/10.1080/10749039909524733.

41 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

42 Egberto Pereira and José Carlos Rothen, "Gramsci, as Revistas, o Intelectual e a Educação", *Educação em Revista* 34 (2018), https://doi.org/10.1590/0102-4698178809.

43 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.

is what happens if you try to leave your country. Or, consider a photo of the dust- and blood-covered face of 5-year-old Omran Daqneesh, rescued after an airstrike in the Syrian city of Aleppo, as an implication that this is what happens if you stay.

We took advice from Miranda Fricker in Evolving Concepts of Epistemic Justice and related them to the development of students' epistemic capabilities of listening to migrants' stories in the context of national Ecuadorian and global migration politics in 2021.

"What was needed, I believed, was something much more easily recognizable as making sense of the lived experience of injustice in how a person's beliefs, reasons and social interpretations were received by others, even conscientious well-meaning others".[44] Start with the experience of powerlessness and show that it raises philosophical questions.

> That was the primary phenomenological drive behind the notion of epistemic injustice, and it is why I continue to think it important in any broadly social philosophy to build up slowly from an account of what goes on at the interpersonal level. In this sense the interpersonal is political.[45]

From a critical internationalization perspective, it is important for students across disciplines, cultures and continents "to see the world as matrixes of interconnections whereby there are many similar players, processes, and policies that we need to think about but cannot because of the social categories that we use to represent and understand…".[46] How might questions concerning the "fundamental structures of reality, the knowability, the validity of norms be discussed in such a way that a solution is not propagated unless a polylogue, between as many and as different traditions as possible, has taken place",[47] where students' collective decolonial listening and thinking could act as a rhetoric of 'knowledging' or transcultural overlapping of concepts and theories. For Wimmer

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44 Miranda Fricker, "Evolving Concepts of Epistemic Injustice", in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, eds. Ian Kidd, José Medina and Gaile Pohlhaus Jr. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 56.

45 Ibíd.

46 Daniel Chernilo, *A Social Theory of the Nation-State: The Political Forms of Modernity Beyond Methodological Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2007), 20.

47 Franz Wimmer, "Intercultural Polylogues in Philosophy", *The International Review of Information Ethics* 7 (2007): 87, https://doi.org/10.29173/irie9.

the imagination of meta-intercultural ontologies is to realize a complete multilateral influence supporting epistemological polylogues with cross-influences from all sides to all sides equally while practicing internationalization (that) can foreground how we know what we know, how knowledge is constructed and what is considered legitimate.[48]

Participants

In 2022, we implemented a critical internationalization collaborative project, a series of zooms - Epistemic (In)justice: 'Whose voices count?' An assemblage of trans-disciplinary higher education students from five countries exchanged their testimonies in English about what they understood from their contexts to be the factors that made an epistemic injustice an injustice from listening to the stories of migrants and refugees. An ethics of listening amongst students was cultivated to disrupt conventions of authorized discourse creating spaces for unheard marginalized voices specifically related to migration trends in their countries.[49]

Early in 2023, higher education students in Argentina, Czech and Dominican Republics, Ecuador and U.K. participated in a second series of zooms – Epistemic Justice – in which they shared their understandings of migrants' welcoming and participation in job training programs in their new countries that had also contained discourses of discrimination (article in process at time of writing).

In both zoom series, the format was the same. Each week, during a one-hour session held at 11.00 am Ecuador time, students (usually 10 in a university group) from one of the participating universities took turns to present material in an introductory ten-minute PowerPoint and/or video followed by a 45-minute mixed student breakout session of approximately 10 students per group. The material and process were prepared by students with the support of their teachers. The hosting university students were responsible for leading and managing the breakout sessions. They were also responsible for delivering brief summaries for the last minutes of the session. Online surveys sought data from students about the process. Each university designed fur-

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48 Ibid.
49 Anne Carr et al., "Epistemic (In)Justice: Whose Voices Count? Listening to Migrants and Students", *Journal of Comparative & International Higher Education* 15, n.° 5 (2023), https://tinyurl.com/bdd5k8n8.

ther assignments for their students related to their particular disciplines and institutional requirements.

Undergraduate Students from international studies, law, sociology, English as a Second Language, tourism and psychology in seven universities in the global south and north.

Discussion

Collaborating with both transcultural assemblages – refugee/migrant and professors/students – the interaction of contingency and structure, organization and change,[50] allowed us to analyze processes and events (the zoom presentations and mixed student breakouts) that contribute to the ever-changing identity of refugees, migrants and students both geographically and generationally.

By focusing on the actual components of the refugee/migrant stories, as well as the emergent properties that contribute, specifically concerning the discourses surrounding the crisis and the material effects of such discourses, we considered that the assemblage concept and practices might be useful. That is, capacities or skills of a migrant assemblage that are flexible and adaptive to affect and be affected might be exercised when interacting with other assemblages such as a collective of transdisciplinary multi continent higher education students. Rather than the manifestation of tendencies or habits that are repetitive and limited in their variation – for refugees and migrants what happens if you try to leave; what happens if you try to stay - for higher education students there might be an opportunity to problematize. For example, Allen notes that "The prevailing university approaches tend to institutionalize the homogenization and normalization of the content of knowledge, the centralization of knowledge around core axioms, and the hierarchization of different forms of knowledge production (that) can be seen as a form of testimonial injustice".[51]

Rutherford describes storytelling as action-guiding in two ways. First, it can allow a division of labor between the teller(s) and the reader(s).[52] Simply

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50   Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*.
51   Chris Allen, "Controversy: Is Prevent Harming Universities?", *Political Insight* 8, n.° 1 (2017): 38, https://doi.org/10.1177/2041905817702738.
52   Rutherford, "Is Political Realism Barren?".

by the story being told, normatively justified forms of action can be inferred. Although this account of storytelling looks more prescriptive than realist no-one is compelled upon reading it to follow it regardless of how determinate or exacting it is. But like any story, what matters is how it is told.

October, 2024

Since writing the original draft of this article, during 2023-24, we designed a project where students across continents and cultures collaborated with and listened to the stories of "the investigated, who might normally be considered objects of the research, in the process of investigation itself",[53] striving for methods that are ethical, open, respectful, and alert to power dynamics where participants voices, values, and insights are central a so that they (we) might come "to a critical form of thinking about their (our) world".[54] Stories of students as voluntary or forced migrants, internally displaced and separated from family, stories that opened windows to different knowledges, stories with contemporaneous meanings, stories as rhizomes for which there may be too few words to understand immediately making it necessary to interleave moments of movement with moments of stillness relaxing ontological borders.[55] Interweaving their own stories, students began to collectively piece together a methodology of 'scattered belonging',[56] standing outside constructs of alienation, hybridity and transition, embodying a constant, fluid, situated process of belonging.[57]

The process for both teachers and students is documented in the chapter Collaborative Partnerships: Epistemic Fluency, Transcultural Competence and the Sustainability of Identity in the book Evidence Based Practice in Higher Education Critical Internationalization to be published by Routledge in December 2024.

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53 Shabnam Koirala-Azad and Emma Fuentes, "Introduction: Activist Scholarship. Possibilities and Constraints of Participatory Action Research", *Social Justice* 36, n.° 4 (2009): 1, https://tinyurl.com/5zvtafmr.
54 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972), 104.
55 Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston, US: Beacon Press, 1994).
56 Jayne Ifewunigwe, *Forum for Scholars and Publics* (Durham, US: Duke University Press, 2021).
57 Carr et al., 2024, accepted for publication.

Recommendations

By offering students and ourselves as professors, an alternative to common approaches to problem-solving premised on seeking immediate solutions, we are emphasizing the development of students' intellectual, affective, and relational capacities for navigating multiple perspectives of volatility, unpredictability, complexity and ambiguity in an interrelated and unequal world. We are focusing on and expanding our collective capacity to hold space for difficult conversations about wicked challenges without feeling immobilized or demanding immediate quick fixes.

We suggest, following Prinz, that by analyzing the practices found in concrete contexts, realists might create a positive agenda for political theory as a distinct sort of social and educational practice,[58] rather than analysing the general characteristics of only politics. Critical thinking about the status quo indicates exploring realism in political theory that would benefit from developments to promote both its transition to a more constructive or productive form of political thought,[59] and a diversification of realist political theory.

Stories as epistemologies of inclusion also have to do with meanings of reflexivity that may vary in more or less individually or collectively determined cultural contexts, for example, Latin America, the Caribbean, Western, Central and Eastern Europe; where ideas are being generated and practices are being problematized; where discourses are being analyzed and narratives generated by migrants, refugees, students and teachers to become part of multi-storied intercultural dialogues that transpire amongst us and are real.

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58 Janosch Prinz and Enzo Rossi, "Political Realism as Ideology Critique", *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 20, n.° 3 (2017), https://doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2017.1293908.

59 Matt Sleat, "Realism and Political Normativity", *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 25 (2022): 8, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10677-021-10239-8.

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