

Building bridges between islands

How can curriculum decolonisation operate in the third space in Global South-North collaborations? Panel H50, 3 December, report by Sol Basarán

A panel meeting consisting of digital squares showing the pixelated face of one panellist per square. Divided by this online platform, in their own delimited digital square, each panellist focused on one dimension of curriculum decolonisation. The speakers presented the individual, the institutional, the global and the local as parallel dimensions. 'They sometimes clash', said Dina Belluigi of the university of Queen's University Belfast.

The focus started on the individual. The decolonisation of institutions requires self-knowledge from academics, because the academic's values and beliefs inevitably affect his or her research. Auto-ethnographic tools, such as *The Decolonising Academic Identity Map*, are useful in this self-exploration. This tool consists of depicting in a schematic way, for example through a drawing, the persona as an 'island' with its own influences and values. Through different examples of this tool Virginia King showed how the pixelated squares are in reality not that delimited. 'Bridges can connect the academic and the institutional,' she said.

However, Dina Belluigi partially burned down these bridges. 'Yes, individual decolonisation is a requirement, but sometimes, the individual might not have as much power as the tool makes us think. In order for the island to have an influence over the mainland, the mainland needs to be more radical.'

This individual/institutional debate was followed by the local/global debate. The last two panelists argued that tools such as *Collaborative Online International Learning* (COIL) that aspire for the internationalisation of the curriculum can also be used for the decolonisation of higher education. In other words, implementing COIL can be a way to reconstruct the bridges. However, there are different instructions to rebuild: should local knowledge or rather global knowledge lead decolonisation? The panel was again trapped in online delimited squares, with the pixelated face of a panellist per square.

This online distance faded away in the end, when the participants concluded that 'to decolonize and humanize' (as Katherine Wimpenny of Coventry University put it) requires a merging of dimensions. The institutional decolonisation needs the individual and the global needs the local.

Take-aways

- Individual, institutional, global and local dimensions sometimes clash
- Decolonising institutions requires self-knowledge from academics
- Internationalising the curriculum can be used for decolonising it