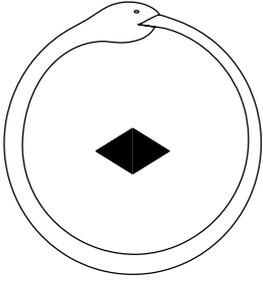


LIVING SCHOOLS
Cristine Takuá



notebooks
SELVAGEM



LIVING SCHOOLS

Cristine Takuá

[Transcription of Cristine Takuá's speech,](#)

in dialogue with Anna Dantes and Ailton Krenak,

in [Conversa Selvagem \[Selvagem Talk\]](#) on 03/21/22.

The cover image was created

by Maira Silva and Cristine Takuá.

March 21, 2022 marked new movements in Selvagem: changes to the website, open and free cycles, more collaborative processes and the activation of a support network for living schools. Living schools come with the impulse to make the dream of encouraging and strengthening four traditional knowledge transmission training centers real: two in the Amazon rainforest and two in the *Nhẽ'erỹ*¹, with the *Huni Kuin*, *Tukano*, *Maxakali* and *Guarani Mbya* peoples. These four spaces have been resisting and developing activities for years, yet they face many challenges due to the lack of financial support. When you [collaborate with living schools](#), your collaboration is made directly to the [Saúva](#) fund, which transfers the amount of eight thousand reais per month to each of the four living schools.

LIVING AND CIRCULAR SCHOOLS

All education is political, and I keep thinking about the very concept of the word “school” that we have been talking about these days. In Ancient Greece, schooling, the school itself was a relationship with pleasure, with leisure, with encounter, with dialogue. So, Epicurus and other Greeks met in the garden to dialogue, to think about life, about many things that drive our journey. Along the time, the school became this place of order, control, and obedience. And many rules that came

1. ‘Where the souls bathe’, in *Guarani*; coastal forest, Atlantic forest.

with school, I call them psychological torture, which are very far from this freedom of dialogue, from meeting, walking, living and feeling together these possibilities of transmitting knowledge, and not simply imposing knowledge. And then, along with that, comes the commodification of the educational process, when that phrase is pronounced: “to be someone in life”. It is very common, I have already heard it from several people, as if the aim to transmit knowledge had the purpose to enter the labor market, generating that competitiveness of entering the university, of acquiring a certificate to be someone in life. This illusion is so stupid and so contradictory to the origin of the principle of school itself, of how it proposes to transmit knowledge. Because, consider, centuries ago, the traditional education of all peoples in Asia, Africa, Europe and throughout the Americas, transmitting knowledge was very disconnected from thinking about entering the labor market. Being someone in life, we all are. My grandfather never went to school, and he was very attentive, curious, and smart in the doings he practiced. So, this illusion to seek superior knowledge through letters and numbers was created, while knowing and doing spring from our own hands, which are a flower. This flower allows us to produce many things: a basket, a fabric, a pot. Hands do not just produce letters and numbers. And what bothered me the most during my time at school was realizing that school is restricted to letters and numbers. And this makes children lose, not completely, but lose the memory of creativity, of creative strength. The *doing things* becomes dormant inside them. So, the very dialogue about the narratives, producing drawings, practicing in other ways, becomes dormant, when it is mandatory to know how to read, write and count numbers. But has everyone come into the world to know how to read and write? Sometimes I wonder about this. There are people who find it easier to play a flute than to write a text, and that is fine. Because the flute’s blowing communicates many languages and narratives that words will not ever convey. I keep thinking about all this.

When I went to college, I suffered a lot . Teachers called me eloquent. And it took me a while to understand what eloquence is. Because, many times, I talked a lot about how the flute communicated more than the texts and how difficult it was for me to write a text. Because

feelings are very deep, and to put them on paper in an objective way, organized by existing rules is really complicated. Therefore, I feel this, not all children came into the world to write a book, and that should be respected. If education does not respect the principle which springs up inside each one of us, be it playing a flute, or making fabric, or even writing a text, there are people who write very well and others who speak very well, and this knowledge diversity should be respected, but it is not! I have intensely lived this for 12 years as an educator in a school, and when I decide to leave this violent and oppressive boat of school, this other opportunity with living schools arises, much more joyful, creative and liberating to dialogue with than with dead schools, of which we know the world is full. Schools which are giving certificates to people to proceed with depression, proceed committing suicide, proceed stuffing themselves with medication. I have many friends with master, doctoral, and postdoctoral degrees who are killing themselves. Whether due to alcohol addiction, different drugs or the very intensity of thoughts, because there are people who devour books and end up stuffing themselves with theories that they cannot put into practice. Because they are locked inside their boxes, inside the order, obedience and control which university itself places on professors and students. So, this living school we are proposing, we are dreaming of together, for me is a possibility to really, collectively weave another way for us to value what exists, what is alive within the territories. And it is not this indigenous school education created/established by the government, which comes embodied in this square school. But it is thinking about a school that is circular, that is cyclical, that also converses with the paca, the agouti, with the rain, with other things besides numbers. We talk with the invisibles. And I had this really strong proof some time ago because I had a meeting with **Dua Busê**, who is one of the coordinators of the [Living Huni Kuin School](#), and I met him on another level, which was not the technology level, calling him up. We were able to talk on other levels. So, *Escola Viva* [Living Schools] provides you with that, invisible encounters, encounters that perhaps not even metaphysics would be able to explain this greatness of plants, visions, mirations, dreams. All this is particularly strong for me, I am still thinking, trying to understand how we are going

to guide this little canoe together, through very different territories. The *Maxakali* reality is quite different from the *Huni Kuin* from Alto do Rio Jordão [Upper Jordão River], or from the *Guarani* or the *Tukano*. They are very different realities, nonetheless, with very deep potentialities among them all. I believe it is a shared dream which is emerging to strengthen not only these territories, these four territories, but to strengthen this certainty that I carry inside me, that education springs from respect, and not only from words and numbers.

NON-HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

[The connection between distant places] is a very colorful fabric, with many shapes and many messages but are made of diverse fabrics, diverse fibers – and not only with words. We are far from solving the education problems in Brazil, within indigenous communities, because I think this comes from a very large complexity. I say that as a person who has spent years struggling for indigenous school education. I come from a front of trying to create a degree for indigenous teacher training, of creating curricular guidelines to change the curriculum. So indigenous school education involves a large amount of activism, there are many relatives who have been struggling for many years to implement an education which actually respects the differential, the interculturalism, in short, everything, education that is communal. Our purpose is different, we do not want to rub salt in these wounds, but dialogue with them in a certain way. And, within these four territories, dialogue with other possibilities to strengthen and weave together, possibilities of transmitting knowledge beyond this institutional space of the school as it is thought of today. So we start tiny, with partners who have been supporting us, believing in this other possibility of also dialoguing about knowledge transmission, but I, in particular, have this thought, coming from humility, thinking that it is an experience we are weaving together, we don't know which form will this fabric take over time, but in time we will feel it, visualize it and also improve this initiative. We know and have a full understanding of everything that goes on in these two paral-

lels, traditional education, and indigenous school education, which are two very different paths. What we are doing is creating a dialogue bridge regarding this model and this process of education within communities, which actually dialogues more with the sage, and not just with people. I have been talking about this for a long time, on the importance of thinking about an education that also converses with non-humans. When I was teaching Philosophy, I would go for a walk with the children and say: “we also need to dialogue with the plants, with the stones, with the other beings”. But books do not give us that possibility; every curriculum is based on knowledge that is often practiced with humans only. The living school that I dream of is this education which engages in dialogue with other things, with the invisible beings as well, with dreams and with non-human beings. I start from this thought, this dream, this impulse to feel and believe it is possible for us to relate and to produce strengthening within the territories believing in this, in other paths.

REFOREST TO REPOPULATE

I kept thinking about the name “Saúva”. Saúva gives me an image of several little ants working together, several little ants building something. I think this metaphor, this idea, already gives me joy of thinking of another agent that adds to this wide fabric, to this web that we are weaving together. So the spider image, the ant image and all these dreams together that Selvagem [Savage] has also brought us during all this time, greatly encourage the idea of the people who will add to this partnership, to these contributions, to this possibility of supporting what is already happening. I think this is the main part of our dream, which is not a project that involves an entire bureaucracy, as Anna said so well. I think supporting these initiatives that already exist - each one has a very different reality - structuring the [Maxakali Aldeia Escola Floresta](#) is of such great importance, as it is to reforest this **Nhe'ery** in Minas Gerais, to offer the **Yamixop** possibilities to continue singing, continue strengthening the territories so that the children can visualize all these beings and spirits which exist and have been present in the chants for centuries.

Once a dreamed village is reforested, there is the possibility these beings will come back into reality. This project, this *Maxakali* dream and all the others are so profound that, when we managed to enter into partnership with Saúva, it gave me great joy. So I really want to thank Kassinha [refers to Kasia Mich] and everyone involved in this more structural support proposal, in this bureaucratic financial process of how to manage this idea of ours. And so, with all the other partners as well, we are here at the [Mbya Arandu Porã culture point](#) and we have been trying to strengthen ourselves for some years now, and this is happening also due to the support of Instituto Maracá, of which I take part and Ailton too. We managed to structure it these last years, creating work possibilities, and now we are able to continue and become even stronger. There are many dreams we want to develop here too, in our space, such as a proposal for workshops, meetings, exchanges, for strengthening memory, which is something we've been talking about a lot, about how important memory is, since we have seen many old men and women departing, and this living memory which lives inside them is gone, as we do not register and do not talk to the younger ones about it. So, I am also very happy, as Anna said, and I really believe this dream of ours will have a huge potential, and little by little we see how this fabric is being transformed by each territory, and not only through exchange, though experiences of which I believe there will be many too. We have this idea of exchanges, which are also so powerful, to encourage this flow between these four spaces of strengthening, and also to watch these territories getting stronger and stronger. I am very happy, and let's carry on, rowing this spaceship, this little canoe together.

SOW IDEAS

I was already expecting this, questions and thoughts would pour down "And now, how can we also do this in our non-indigenous schools or even in other indigenous schools?". As I have already said, at the moment we have neither the intention, the aim, nor the conditions to solve the problem of education in Brazil. So, how to take this to

non-indigenous or even indigenous schools is a question. I think it is a big challenge, and I say so as an educator who has worked in a school for many years. I have always been dialoguing, and I still do, with many educators, about how necessary it is to transform and change the school curriculum. Bring schools closer to communities, to their grounds, to their terreiros, to the local communities surrounding the schools. Therefore, this idea of ours, this dream we are starting is, very humbly, an idea to strengthen transmissions of knowledge, wisdom and practices which are already happening in some territories. I think that, along with this, each educator can intuit or catch some possible way of practicing this within their daily activities, their realities and school contexts. We are not talking, however, about school in the current model, as I said at the beginning, because the school undergoes a series of bureaucracies, formats and rules from which we are indeed running away. We are not talking about a school as everyone understands school; we are talking about the valorization of knowledge transmission. So I think we can carry on the dialogue, and there will be several dialogues happening, and think about how to encourage educators, in general, to transform the way they do their day-to-day work and not that this is a rule or a mandatory condition, but I believe that every educator, whether in a public, private, or community school, has the possibility to transform their means and work processes. Yet that is not our aim; what we can do is sow ideas, sow dreams, sow transformation possibilities. But it is up to each one of us to find a way, to make this possible, I don't have the answer of which way it would be; I have many dreams but [finding] concrete answers is a very challenging path, and we have many things to think about together, to think about this idea jointly. Let's weave, weave this fabric and watch how we bring the worlds closer and strengthen knowledge.

Aguyjevete!

CRISTINE TAKUÁ

She is an indigenous philosopher, *rezadeira*, midwife, educator and artisan. Cristine Takuá lives in the village of Rio Silveira. She is an independent teacher at the Rio Silveira community. She is also founder and advisor of Instituto Maracá. Cristine represents the Unit of Indigenous education at the São Paulo state Secretariat of Education and is a founding member of the Forum for the Articulation of Indigenous Teachers in the State of São Paulo (FAPISP). She participated in Selvagem 2019 and today coordinates Living Schools.

The editorial production work of the Selvagem Notebooks is carried out collectively with the Selvagem community.

More information at selvagemciclo.com.br

This notebook features the special participation of Natália Amari-nho, Katlen Rodrigues and Samia Rios in the Portuguese version. The editorial coordinator of English translations is Daniel Grimoni. Design is by Isabelle Passos and editorial coordination in Portuguese is by Victoria Mouawad.

TRANSLATION

ANA LOUREIRO JUREMA

Proud member of the selvagem community, working as a language craftswoman, contributing as a brincante da língua – tongue-reveller.

REVISION

GERRIE SCHRIK

Educator, hiker, birder, beekeeper and storyteller – living in a small food forest close to a stream.

SELVAGEM Notebooks
digital publication of
Dantes Publisher
Biosphere, 2023

