Curupira’s Walk: Prowling Ethnomathematics Theory Through Decoloniality

This thesis adopts a decolonial standpoint to introduce a new theoretical framework for ethnomathematics, that calls into question the current theorization (and critique) of ethnomathematics, by claiming a performative, non-essentialist, and interactional approach that assumes the inseparability of socio-political concerns and philosophical questions within the field.

In order to argue for the robustness and contributions of the proposed theorisation, the thesis elaborates further some of the well-established debates on ethnomathematics: the problem of representation in the relation researcher/researched, the coherence of methods employed in research, the sensitivity towards predicaments of Indigenous education, the challenges of multilingualism and linguistic diversity, the political consequences of ethnomathematical research, and the positioning of ethnomathematics on the nature of mathematics.

The thesis works theory in a twofold way: one that develops theory as a structure defining objects and procedures of interest for the field; and other way that introduces and refines analytical notions that function as a toolbox for practice. In the first sense, a theory of interactions and relations among cultures and mathematics is produced. In the second sense, two original theoretical notions that can guide the practice of the working ethnomathematicians are proposed: symmetry and barter. Other notions coming from decolonial studies are adapted and reworked for the specificity of ethnomathematics: locus of enunciation, intellectual property, and propio.

Please email aldo@plan.aau.dk to get a copy of the thesis.