

## **Environmental and sociocultural issues: the movie "Brave New Land" (Brava Gente Brasileira) and dialogues with students in the Institutional Scholarship Program for Teaching Initiation (PIBID – Biology)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This work was carried out based on an analysis of the assessment made by students in the Institutional Scholarship Program for Teaching Initiation in Biological Sciences (PIBID) at the Universidade Federal de Lavras - MG (UFLA), where they presented their insights about the movie "Brave New Land" (Brava Gente Brasileira). The objective was to seek elements that demonstrate how the film dialogues with sociocultural and environmental issues, promoting addition to the training of biology teachers. With this goal, we used qualitative research that fits the content analysis, categorizing these students' common statements. We found 5 categories exposed in a frame, where we noticed how sociocultural issues stand out, however, the film brings relevant considerations about the Pantanal environment and the relationship between the traditional peoples with this place. Thus, it is possible to conclude that cinematographic art manages to dialogue and build a critical view of the relationships of the most diverse cultures with the collective and the environment.

**KEY WORDS:** Socioenvironmental education. Teacher's qualification. Cinema

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The world went through a health crisis that made direct contact with people impossible. For 2 years, all in-person academic activities had to be interrupted and adapted to the pandemic scenario caused by COVID-19, a disease that killed millions of people and still has many consequences, not only for its victims but also for social and environmental relationships.

In this context, the construction of pedagogical practices for remote interactions became essential, as it was necessary to continue teaching even at a distance, in a way that students could continue their learning process. It was from this point on that classes promoted by platforms such as Google Meet began to be intensively used, allowing discussions on the most diverse topics.

Thus, the Graduate Program in Scientific and Environmental Education (PPGECA), along with students from the Institutional Scholarship Program for Teaching Biology (PIBID) from the Universidade Federal de Lavras – MG (UFLA) began to attend classes remotely, where the arts have become strong allies, especially in relation to socio-cultural and environmental issues.

The most varied types of arts, such as music, poetry, and cinema, have become valuable resources that make it possible to learn about and question the relationships between society, culture, science, and the environment, allowing a more critical look at everything that involves the human being and the world. But, for that, it is important to have works that allow a quality pedagogical practice, that is, works that allow critical reflections on society, the environment, the economy, politics, culture, science, technology, the media, and education itself.

Therefore, artistic manifestations have a social function, as they satisfy the universal needs for imagination that exist in every human being. But in order for its function to be completed, it is necessary to look beyond this universality, as the arts have the ability to form personalities and present the world as it actually is. And, for that, it is necessary to break free from capitalist ideology and see what it is trying to hide.

Lukács (1966), reveals that art has the ability to intensify reality, showing the individual what is present in his daily life. The function of an artistic work is to help a person look at life, in the world. As it's possible to see, art highlights what is invisible to many, hidden by the ideology present in society that aims at presenting things superficially.

In line with Pinheiro (2007), works of art can help in the construction of critical thinking and in the transformation of the individual, as long as one starts to look at art carefully, seeking

to identify the ideas expressed about reality. This will reveal what the system hides. Thus, with reality exposed, the individual starts to bring social and environmental issues into his daily life.

According to Candido (1999), many aesthetic currents, including the Marxist, understand that the collective can follow a path of deep knowledge about the world through artistic works that are, in fact, social products, but also has a humanizing character, causing the individual inserted in that context to be touched by what one sees.

And, as Souza, Monteiro and Nascimento Junior (2021) point out, the different types of works help the individual to see ideas about nature and the relationships between human beings and the world in a different way, with a sensitive eye, but also critical because of the aesthetics of art. One of the resources that is this rich is cinema, with which it is possible to follow the whole context of the film, observing all the elements that are presented. But it is not enough just to watch any film, it is necessary to understand the essence of the work and the message it critically conveys, after all, not every cinematographic work allows you to identify elements of reality, at least not clearly.

Bakhtin (1990) wrote that there are at least three fields that constitute the culture of society: science, art, and life. But it is necessary for all of them to be incorporated into the individual, that is, even if there are ways to enrich oneself culturally, no one can achieve complete cultural development without these fields. The relationship of meaning between cinema and contextualization in addition to a critical discussion about science, the work itself, life, and ideas of nature bring a historical-social look from this knowledge.

According to Gonçalves et. al. (2020), cinema makes students identify the problems that exist in their social realities, allowing them to question their personal and collective experiences, thus they are able to find ways to transform the experienced reality. In this way, the films end up presenting themselves as more than a pedagogical resource, since it is possible to look at society and the world in search of more reflective cultural and environmental knowledge.

In this way, when watching a film, the student can seek to acquire knowledge about the topic and the social groups that appear in the work, in addition to understanding the relationships, concepts, and views of each character. They can also understand the historical context portrayed and the dialogues that arise throughout the exhibition more deeply.

With these possibilities in mind, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, PIBID students of Biological Sciences at UFLA watched the film “Brave New Land” (Brava Gente Brasileira), directed by Lúcia Murat, which was suggested during the weekly meetings that took place through Google Meet platform. The idea was that these students could have contact with a cinematographic work that portrays the life of native peoples and other social groups and their relationships with nature.

## **1.1 The film Brave New land (Brava Gente Brasileira)**

The film Brave New land (Brava Gente Brasileira) was directed by Lúcia Murat and released in 2000. It is a feature film that portrays the Pantanal region in 1778, where a group of soldiers escorts the Portuguese cartographer Diogo Infante, sent by the Crown, through the woods. Diogo's job is to carry out a topographical survey of the region, however, on his way to the Fort of Coimbra, he and the troop come across groups of native women from the Kadiwéu tribe, while they are bathing. From then on, there is a conflict between the two groups, which leads to several deaths and rapes.

Diogo is faced with this problem and ends up feeling coerced into committing rape, but he prevents the death of the native woman he had raped, taking her with him to the Fort. In addition to the woman, a white boy brought up by the native people was also captured and taken away.

Until that moment there was an attempt by the Portuguese to seal a peace agreement with the native people in the region, called knights. But with the arrival of the troops, things start to change and Diogo falls in love with the native woman and gets entangled with her. But when he realizes that she gave birth to his son and as a rite of passage she disappears with the baby, he beats her and throws her out from the fort. Then, as a strategy, the tribe sends women as gifts, but invades the place, killing several soldiers.

The film is based on real facts and this attack against the Fort of Coimbra is now known as the Massacre of the Fort.

## **1.2 The film and the socio-cultural and environmental issues**

The film takes place in the Pantanal environment in the year 1778, where it was possible to find the Guaicuru nation, formed by excellent warriors and knights. The work also shows the Kadiwéu, who still live in the region and are remnants of the Guaicuru. In the plot, we see the relationship between these original peoples and nature, where there is respect for natural resources, the local fauna, and flora.

According to data from the National Health Foundation (FUNASA, 2014), in 2006 it was estimated that 1629 Kadiwéu still lived in Brazil, mainly in Mato Grosso do Sul. Through history, it's possible to note that this group was instrumental in protecting Mato Grosso's borders during the Paraguayan war, fighting alongside the Brazilians. It was from this that their lands became recognized.

But, even though they were strong warriors and had an alliance with Brazil, the tribe lived under constant attacks. As in the real world, in the film, we can see the history of these peoples being stained by violence, with native women being raped and men murdered by the so-called "white men", which we can still see happening even today. In name of progress, not only do native people have their lives massacred but the environment is also degraded in order to provide profitability and pleasure for some.

At one point, a group of soldiers crossing the woods with a Portuguese cartographer encounter Kadiwéu women, where many are raped and killed, leaving only one native woman, who is always referred to as a princess. She survives only because the Portuguese falls enchanted by her and, even after raping her, he decides to take her along with the troops that protected him.

This passage shows how the relationship between native peoples and whites was and still is conflicting, since human beings of European descent see the groups formed by native peoples as inferior beings, always submitting them to their desires. So much so that in the work the native people were always called savages, always with a prejudicial and hateful tone.

Considering our current days: some tribes still live in the Pantanal, but they are always having to fight against the brutality of the large timber and mining industries. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2022), until 2010 less than 900,000 native people were living in Brazil, however, almost 325,000 were already adapted to urban areas.

According to the National native Peoples Foundation (FUNAI), in the year 1500 approximately 3 million native people lived in Brazil. This drastic reduction in the population of original inhabitants is due to the massacres that these peoples have suffered over the years, massacres that claimed the lives of men, women, and children, destroying their homes so their lands can be exploited and the resources found there can be used for the benefit of other groups.

The death of native people is also caused by fires in the region. This deterioration has and still affects part of the Pantanal Biome. As we have seen in recent years, the number of fires has increased significantly. According to data from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE, 2022), in the first months of 2022 alone, 175 fires were recorded in the Pantanal, destroying native lands and killing animals and plant species.

This shows how much the “white man's” quest for profit deteriorates his relationship with other people and with nature itself. Something that happens in the opposite way when looking at the original peoples, who have always sought and still maintain respect between their community and the environment, living in harmony with the living beings that are in the forest and using natural resources only for survival.

In the film, we can also observe the cultural distinction between soldiers and native people. The tribes had their rites, and according to that, women painted their bodies and avoided pregnancy, having, in many cases, only one child. Some native men also dressed up as women to please the other members of the tribe. Their culture and ways of life frightened the Portuguese, who wanted to make a peace agreement with the Kadiwéu so that, together, they could fight against the Spanish.

This traditional reproduction rite took place in the Kadiwéu tribe. Women did not have the habit of bearing children and when they became pregnant, they accepted bearing only one child, forcing an abortion or even killing their other descendants. A custom that was not and still is not accepted by our society.

It is possible to clearly note this in the scene where the cartographer beats the native princess due to the death of their son, and it shows how family relationships are antagonistic. Although killing a child is seen as an act of cruelty in our society, for that tribe it was a sign of respect for custom and the collective, since having children or more than one child could interfere with the struggle for survival of that people.

The cultural difference existing in the country plays out in forming a big conflict between groups and disrespect for rites, customs, and beliefs. While white and European culture was already being established in the country, where the Catholic Church is sovereign, the native beliefs were based on what nature had to offer. And this difference in beliefs is one of the biggest reasons why native culture has been reduced, as since the 1500s the church has been catechizing native people in an attempt to break the link between these peoples and their beliefs.

These differences in culture, religion, and relationship with the environment between the two groups show how much one side seeks resilience, respect, and harmony among people and the environment. The other side lives guided by money and the exploitation of people, and natural resources.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

In this context, the objective of this work was to assess which elements were pointed out by PIBID students of Biological Sciences regarding sociocultural and environmental issues from the film “Brave New Land” (Brava Gente Brasileira), working remotely.

### **3 METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 The context of the activity carried out with PIBID students**

The activity was carried out in meetings held with students from the Institutional Scholarship Program for Teaching Initiation (PIBID) in Biological Sciences at the Federal University of Lavras (UFLA). As these meetings took place during the pandemic period, the students watched the film remotely and then they were asked to evaluate the work, raising points related to socio-cultural and environmental issues.

All activities and dialogues took place through an online platform, Google Meet, as the program strictly followed the health recommendations, preserving the health and life of everyone involved. It is also worth mentioning that these meetings had the attendance of master's degree students from the Program on Scientific and Environmental Education (PPGECA), from UFLA, which enriched the debates.

#### **3.2 Assessment Methodology**

After the PIBID students watched the film, they made an assessment, stating the impressions they had had about the cinematographic work regarding socio-cultural and environmental aspects. Then, based on their written speeches, an assessment was carried out sorting the impressions into categories, and this derived from the content analysis which, for Bardin (2010), is “a research that can be carried out by different means, helping to understand interpretations and inferences”. Therefore, this research falls within the scope of qualitative research which, according to Minayo (2010), allows the construction of an approach related to the studied phenomenon and to the researcher.

Thus, in the first stage, a search was made looking for common ideas within the students' speeches, in order to facilitate the grouping into the categories found, making it possible to interpret the meanings of the words that, as pointed out by Villarta-Neder (2019), it is possible to understand the meanings and ideas through language, as this is an interaction between those involved (researcher and object of study). So, all elements end up reconstructing themselves during the process.

To ensure the anonymity of the participants, the letter “P” from PIBID was used, followed by a number. Ex: P1; P2; P3.

### **4 RESULTS E DISCUSSIONS**

From the student's speeches assessment it was possible to find ideas in common, which led to the creation of 5 categories, as it is shown in the following:

Table 1

Category	Description	Occurrence	Frequency
<b>Violence against original peoples</b>	In this category, the student report how violence against the native people is shown	P1; P2; P3; P5; P6; P7; P8; P9; P10; P11; P12; P13; 15	1 4
<b>Importance for teacher training</b>	In this category, the students talk about how cinema help improve the training of teachers	P4; P5; P7; P8; P10; P11; P12; P13; 14; 15	1 0
<b>Relationship between the film and cultural clash / conflict</b>	This category refers to the fact that in the film it is possible to perceive a conflict between white-men and the native people	P1, P3, P4, P5, P8, P10; 14; 15	8
<b>Cultural Diversity</b>	In this category, the cultural diversity presented in the work was discussed	P4, P5, P7; P8; P9; P12; 14	7
<b>Possibility of constructing a critical and reflective thinking</b>	In this category, the students talk about how the use of this particular film may contribute to the construction of a critical and reflective view on the relationship between white-men and native people	P5; P7; P10; P13	4

In the first category “**Violence against original peoples**”, the students talk about how much of the violence that native people suffer due to prejudice and exploitation of ethnicity was possible to observe.

(P6) “*The film may be useful to demonstrate the importance of reserves and quotas, an entire group of people was decimated by ignorance, it is too cruel that we continue with this behavior*”.

For Popolos and Reboiras (2015), the expansion of primary activities is largely responsible for causing the exploitation of native territories, in addition to causing environmental impacts, which violates the rights and resources of the original peoples, consequently decimating many tribes.

According to Brighnti (2015), the origin of violence against native peoples is in the colonization process and is perpetuated until the present day, and one of the most powerful means for the domination of these peoples was the imposition of Western knowledge as single and valid, depriving them of the native peoples’ knowledge. The author also mentions that the actions by the government, in contemporary times, continues to institutionalize this violence:

In contemporary times, violence is fundamentally institutional, whether in the action of the Brazilian Government, by reducing rights such as the non-demarcation of territories and the implementation of developmental projects that affect these peoples, or by omission, meddling and allowing murders and invasion of native lands ( BRIGHENTI, 2015, P.1).

In the second category “**Importance for teacher training**”, these students talked about how the cinematographic work is a valuable resource for teacher training.

(P10) “*So, I believe that the film contributes to teacher training, as it allows a reflection on aspects of native culture. And we, as future teachers, need more effective training, since our role in the future will be to train citizens who need and should have critical and reflective thought in the face of cultural aspects*”.



According to Costa et.al. (2021), cinema may be able to contribute to the transformational teaching-learning process, with a socio-educational aspect, where students in training are faced with important reports of the history of human beings.

In accordance with the native teacher Gersem dos Santos Luciano of the Baniwa People – AM, “the school was the main instrument of cultural destruction of peoples, but it can also be the main instrument of reconstruction and affirmation in the new era” (FOIRN, 1996 apud CAVALCANTI, 2033, p.1). Hence, the school needs to be the place where knowledge and appreciation of different cultures are made possible, instead of reinforcing the destruction of the culture of these peoples, denying them their rights, as it has been happening for many years. And such deconstruction and reconstruction will only be possible if there is teacher training that enables these socio-cultural debates that are fundamental and urgent.

In the third category “**Relationship between the film and cultural clash/conflict**”, PIBID students reported their perception of the cultural shock present in the film.

(P1) *“We have a great cultural conflict between Portuguese whites and the natives, where we can note the enormous difficulty of cultural understanding portrayed by the “couple” Diogo and the native princess (Anoté)”*.

According to Carvalho and Scaramuzza (2022), native people have always been excluded, to such an extent that it was necessary to create laws and guidelines for them to be recognized as part of the history of Brazil, showing the cultural diversification existing in the country and how these peoples have always been discriminated against and attacked.

The “mismatch of cultures”, as called by some historians, has caused, and still continues to cause submissions and extermination of this native culture. However, as pointed out by Alves (2018), even in the face of colonialist impositions with the goal of silencing these peoples, the natives fight to resist, reaffirming their particularities, and their voices echo in the struggle to continue preserving their socio-cultural identity.

In the fourth category “**Cultural Diversity**”, the students presented their understanding of cultural diversity that exists not only in the film but also in the present day.

(P4) *“The film “Brave New Land” (Brava Gente Brasileira) is very important for our teacher training, as it provides work on cultural diversity, namely, the film allows discussions about inactive culture”*.

For Ramalho (2015), in Brazil there is a great cultural diversity and this is present in society and, consequently, in schools. Therefore, it is important to have an ever-increasing open channel within society, respecting the cultural differences that each person brings with them. Still in this sense, the authors França and Silveira (2014) point out that:

In order to build a free, harmonic, and egalitarian nation, where being a citizen is not a privilege of the few, we must seek to provide information about all the peoples that make up the national society (Asians, whites, blacks, native peoples, among others) and try to value the cultures and deeds of these many peoples, mainly, but not exclusively, within the school. Therefore, the school must begin to see itself as a genuine space for promoting and valuing difference. It should be a space of possibilities for learning about the “other”, the “different” (FRANÇA; SILVEIRA, 2014, P. 68).

In the last category “**Possibility of constructing critical and reflective thinking**”, the students showed how cinematographic works, such as this film, contribute to teachers in training to build a critical and reflective view towards society and the world in which they live.



*(P5) “The importance of this film for our training as future teachers can also be related to the classroom and to being able to work on cultural diversity, thus, helping the students to have a critical and reflective stance on topics that are addressed in the film”.*

According to Costa et.al (2021), constructing a pedagogical practice with topics based on a specific film contributes to the socialization of students with art and the teacher inducing the formation of more humane and critical individuals. Thus, it is essential that the work with native people issues is carried out in a critical and in-depth way, acknowledging the real problems and threats that these cultures have faced and still face, because, as highlighted by Cavalcanti (2003, p.11) 'taking into account the plurality of cultures does not just mean introducing new content and teaching materials to the school'. But it is also necessary that 'we pay attention to the language that is used at school, the examples that are used, the manifestations (more explicit or more concealed) of prejudice, stereotypes, racism, etc.', otherwise we will be contributing to encourage and reinforce such events instead of fighting against them.

## 5 FINAL CONCLUSIONS

As it was possible to assess, the students in the Institutional Scholarship Program for Teaching Biological Sciences (PIBID) from the Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA) were impacted by the activity that was proposed. With the film “Brave New Land” (Brava Gente Brasileira) they had the opportunity to present their perceptions on relevant issues involving native peoples.

Even though they did not demonstrate a focus on socio-environmental relations, these students exposed a more enriching socio-cultural perspective, bringing elements regarding the exploitation of native peoples, the discrimination they have suffered and still suffer, and cultural differences, especially related to beliefs among the groups that are shown in the film.

In this sense, it is possible to note how cinema can influence the students' perspective, enabling them to understand history as well as to learn about the different cultures that make up our society. This helps to reflect on how society was built and what are the effects of this construction on nature. The individual, then, can self-identify as an integral part of the environment in such a way that one is able to notice and value socio-cultural and environmental diversity and, thus, adopt a reflective and critical attitude towards the world.

In addition, cinematographic works can be facilitating resources to promote debates and reflections within the classroom. Therefore, the seventh art contributes so that teachers in initial and continuing training in science teaching may learn about pedagogical practices that stimulate the thought and actions of their students and that they can incorporate this into their own practices.

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