

Systematisation of Experiences: New paths to academic work in universities

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The social sciences we have inherited – its disciplines, methodologies, theories and concepts – do not reflect our times adequately and, therefore, we cannot trust them to guide us in the ongoing social transformation processes (Boaventura de Sousa Santos)

Abstract

This article presents systematisation of experiences as a proposal for the production of knowledge from and about educational, organisational, and social and community practices. It particularly highlights the interest arising from experiences in the field of University Extension. It is argued that systematisation of experiences in University Extension can help to strengthen the transforming commitment of the university work, and contribute to the production of academic knowledge informed by the richness of the economic, social, political and cultural reality in which the university is inserted. Concrete steps to implement the systematisation of experiences in the university context, based on his experiences at the Universidad de Costa Rica and others, are presented here.

Keywords: systematisation of experiences, university extension, social action, popular education, Latin America

La sistematización de experiencias: nuevas rutas para el quehacer académico en las universidades

Resumen

El artículo presenta la sistematización de experiencias, como propuesta de producción de conocimiento sobre y desde prácticas educativas, organizativas, sociales y comunitarias. Resalta particularmente el interés surgido en el campo de las experiencias de Extensión Universitaria. Se argumenta que la sistematización de experiencias de Extensión Universitaria puede contribuir a reforzar el compromiso transformador del quehacer universitario y, además, aportar en la producción de un conocimiento académico nutrido de la riqueza de la realidad económica, social, política y cultural en la que la Universidad está inserta. Basándose en su práctica en la Universidad de Costa Rica y otras, se presentan pasos concretos para llevar a cabo Sistematizaciones de Experiencias en el ámbito universitario.

Palabras claves: sistematización de experiencias, extensión universitária, acción social, educación popular, América Latina.

Introduction

The new challenges for the creation of knowledge, that we face when recognising the complexity of unknown situations presented by the current context, increasingly demand the renewal of approaches, categories and methodologies with which we work. This is due, on the one hand, to the need to fuel the processes of democratisation of knowledge, both regarding their production and their flow, which implies the recognition of the importance to rely on various viewpoints from different practices by various individuals; and, on the other hand, because it is fundamental to dig deeper and rigorously into the novelty of events produced by recent situations. This means the development of the ability to transcend the descriptive and narrative, in order to generate from it an interpretative and theoretical exercise, that goes beyond the mechanical application of predefined conceptual frameworks, and that also has, as a component, the vitality of the emotional strength. This openness to a personal and collective “sentipensamiento” means definitively, according to Fals Borda, a radical break from traditional positivism and adherence to its methodological rules, as well as a critical detachment from an individualistic and encapsulated production, which has been the dominant characteristic of the academic work .

It is thus a matter of looking at the source of these renewed processes of knowledge production: concrete experiences that are performed by collectives, social movements, institutions, research and social action teams, and others. In them and from them it is possible to deal with these new challenges and design relevant epistemological and methodological strategies. Let us look at a few characteristics of one of the proposals that have become more relevant in recent times: The Systematisation of Experiences (Jara 2013, Ghiso, 2010, Torres Carrillo 2010, Falckemback & Torres, 2015, Streck & Jara ,2015).

Systematisation of experiences, as a proposal for the production of knowledge about and based on educational, organizational and social and community practices, has become, since the nineties of the last century, a focus of interest in academic and non-academic circles, in public entities, in social movements, in non-governmental organisations or international co-operation agencies. We can highlight particularly the interest arising from the field of experiences from University Extension, also called Social Action or Social Projection at different universities in Latin America, with which we have had the opportunity to work in recent years.

A common concern in these practices involves the need to strengthen the production and flow of academic knowledge at universities, resulting from extension projects, programs and activities. Despite the recognised and too-often heard statement that extension is a substantive dimension of university work, equal to research and teaching, the fact is that it is not treated in the same way. It is still considered an area or dimension of lesser importance, even expendable

The experiences underlying our discussion

In 2013, when identifying needs and expectations to justify a University Extension project for training on Systematization of experiences (CEP, 2013), it was considered, for instance, that:

- Academics do not document their experience regarding the work done by the university in communities through university extension or social action projects, or if they do, this is done very descriptively and schematically.
- Tools that will help recover, review and evaluate the scientific contribution of the practices of extension projects would be needed.
- We should give value to the importance of recovering the voice of the communities, with the purpose of going from “working in the communities” to “working with the communities”.
- Academics have only a basic and very abstract information about conceptual design and methodology for the systematisation of experiences. They lack knowledge about its epistemological and theoretical foundations, and of the methodological challenges involved.
- It is necessary to promote comprehensive training processes in this field, both theoretical and practical, and to have concrete products and results.

Based on the above, taking into account the people who promote extension programs and projects, we consider essential to provide visibility and value to this specific activity, as well as to its links with the teaching and research dimensions, in order to break their silos and effectively integrate them as component parts of a single comprehensive formation strategy.

Nowadays, when the growing trend emphasises a market approach to public universities, arguing that the priority is on training professionals to supply the needs of the market, and that therefore the resources of the universities should be centred on teaching, seen as an action focused on classroom activity, it is important to go back to the purposes and principles that animated the University of Cordoba Reform a century ago. According to the recent Manifesto of the University of Costa Rica, put forward to commemorate its centennial:

We must reaffirm a model of democratic and democratizing university that confronts inequality and inequity, as well as the tendency to the specialisation of a knowledge that is increasingly foreign to the popular and impoverished sectors to whom we serve.

A hundred years after the Cordoba Reform, the University of Costa Rica raises its voice again, reclaiming all university work and, above all, the social action or extension as a transforming and liberating practice closely articulated with teaching and research. The communities of the future must continue to feed public universities, not only with the resources needed for them to function, but with the accumulation of knowledge and wisdoms that give them life and meaning. Let us not allow the university to go back to be a dusty cloister, open only to market interests. Let us fight for a university that, on the contrary, provides space for the affection and hope of all people (UCR, 2018).

From the time when University Extension was started in Latin America as an essential component of academic activity and, even when movements to create Popular Universities in Latin America took place to follow similar experiences in Europe, the model of university that is proposed as necessary considers opening the walls and cloisters of universities to the most

critical issues of our societies and to the participation and proposals of the major social actors of our countries. Hence the commitment to a public, free, lay, inclusive, socially committed university, with high quality Extension (or Social Action), research and teaching programs, to become part of a single and unique ethical, political and pedagogical process. The university as a space for debate and confrontation of ideas. The university as a space to build critical thinking and relations of solidarity as a contribution to the democratisation of society.

Given the growing interest in going ahead with academic training projects in systematisation of experiences at the universities in Costa Rica, we have gradually had the opportunity of organising and participating in training activities of systematisation of experiences within the framework of inter university efforts, such as the proposals of the evaluation and training sub-committees of the National Council of University Principals (CONARE – Consejo Nacional de Rectores), and later, in proposals presented by some public universities in particular.

A first inter university project was started in 2013 (Jara 2015) aiming at offering a basic training process to learn the key concepts and tools of systematisation of experiences, at the same time that they were being put into practice. This work produced critical and participative thinking around the socio-cultural, political, technical and academic issues related to University Extension and Social Action.

This project consisted of three workshops during the year, with intervals for practical work designing and implementing systematisation processes of experiences selected by the participants themselves, and providing time for interchange among them, and follow-up and virtual consultancy from us. Thirty-seven persons from four universities participated, and 24 concrete experiences were processed.

One year later, after a positive evaluation of the mastering of the approach and methodology and its usefulness to contribute both to specific work and to constitute a space for inter-university exchange and critical thinking, it was decided to drive forward a multiplying dynamic. Thus, a course to train-the-trainers was devised, where the participants were those who had been in the previous course, who now would become advisors and tutors of other teams at their universities and would be in charge of the systematisations.

This course had four workshops and virtual tutoring from us. The last workshop consisted of a space for the socialisation of the products that had been developed by the people whom they accompanied and advised during the year. Twenty-three persons participated and 15 experiences were systematised.

A relevant aspect was the recognition of the importance of changing the roles of the participants, from the first to the second course. They went from being participants-systematisers to provide theoretical and methodological tutoring. Systematising other people demanded from them a deeper knowledge of their work and they even had to face unexpected or unknown situations.

Many lessons were provided by these first training activities, which allowed us to experiment and apply different dimensions of the systematisation of experiences: creating academic knowledge during Extension practice; exchange and knowledge dialog among the participants of Extension/Social Action projects (from universities as well as from the communities); historic reconstruction of the experienced processes; information was organised, and available records of experiences were searched; distancing from their own experi-

ence to analyse it and interpret it critically, looking at problem aspects found during the historic reconstruction; identification of analysis categories and relevant theoretical interpretation; drafting of conclusions and learning obtained from these analyses and interpretations, aside from generalities and platitudes; preparation of communication material to share learning and, at the same time, give a new look at the systematised experience and think about how to communicate it; etc.

All of this was more complex and meaningful than the traditional narrative reports of the University Extension or Social Action activities that would have to be delivered as a procedure in rendering accounts. It also implied a critical look from the logic and avatars of the process experienced, that enriched the elements obtained at previous evaluations.

After this, new training activities for systematisation of experiences were designed, with a similar pattern. From the one organized by CONARE's evaluation sub-committee in 2015, also inter-universities, to those provided by the Direction of Professional Development of the Universidad Nacional in 2016; the Vice-principal office for Social Action of the Universidad de Costa Rica in 2017 and 2018 (the last one for the regional Pacific office); the Vice-principal office for Extension of the Universidad Nacional in 2018 and 2019: which has already published five volumes with the results of the systematizations performed (UNA, 2018); the Interdisciplinary Initiatives of the Centre for Arts Research, teaching and extension of the same university; and others.

As an example, we cite the titles of some of the systematisations performed in these courses:

- The experience with the community of Palito Chira and local actors in oyster farming as socio-productive alternatives for marine-coastal communities.
- The experience of training and competition of mentally retarded swimmers who participated in the special Olympics in Athens, Greece, in 2011.
- Building of the concept "working with the community" in teaching Extension projects.
- The role of indigenous Bribri women in creating and consolidating the Iririá Alaklpa training center during the period of 2007-2009.
- The experience of the project to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit at Costa Rican penal institutions.
- The promotion of community tourism and local development initiatives in the Pacuare river basin.
- The experience of promoting fruit and vegetable consumption at school to develop healthy eating habits in early childhood.
- The experience of training in hygiene and manipulation of food for a population with intellectual disabilities.
- The experience of interdisciplinary academic articulation and of connection with social action in performing a socio-productive diagnosis with communities.
- The experience of the project of participative strategies of local climate change in two regions of the country.
- The contributions to recognising the knowledge and identity of the original peoples of Costa Rica.
- The work on the culture of peace and artistic expressions with people deprived of freedom at two different prison centers.

- Access, availability and sustainable use of drinking water by implementing a rainwater intake system with the populations settled on Isla Caballo.
- Popular education and community voices. The experience of the popular communication tool workshops with the communities of Guácimo and Palmar Norte during 2017 and 2018.
- The experience of the Laboratory exploring dramatic acting on the music-body relationship.
- The experience of 3 decades of teaching applying the Züllig contemporary dancing method in the bachelor's degree of Dancing course.

Clearly, there is a great thematic diversity thanks to the multiplicity of experiences that are performed in the University Extension or Social Action projects. Thanks to this approach, training in systematisation of experiences has helped, on the one hand, to gain a broader look of the complexity and diversity of practices that take place, or are unknown; and on the other, to develop a discussion and academic debate about the role of University Extension and its challenges, the limits and possibilities for producing academic knowledge based on practices, the participation of people from the communities as subjects of the processes, the link with research and teaching, the formative role for students of social action experiences, etc.

Training on theory and methodology of systematisation of Extension/Social Action experiences, has a starting point in the needs and motivations presented to the participants by the dynamic of the projects and programs developed together with the people in urban and rural communities, as well as through agreements with primary and secondary schools, state and municipal institution, and other social players. We start from the belief that the richness of teachings that can be found in the concrete experiences of university Extension, Social Action or Projection, does not necessarily become learning or academic knowledge. Activism or concern centered on the mere execution of the projects and on a formal rendering of accounts of what has been done, becomes the major obstacle to build those learnings to which we must dedicate a systematic and organised reflexive effort. Quite often, the necessary time to do it is not even considered in the work plans and distribution of responsibilities; besides, there is a need for methodological guidance and technical tools that will allow to do it.

From this dual starting point: the strong belief that experiences contain varied and rich learnings that we must identify, discover and explain; and, the need to have guidelines and tools to allow us to do it, we have been exploring possible and viable ways to systematise the experiences that set the way for the training activities offered by various universities, in Costa Rica, as well as in other countries.

An aspect that has been taken into account, is the need to suggest proposals for systematisation of experiences that are feasible and constitute a reflexive component of the very dynamics of the extension action, so that they are not seen as an additional task, which would demand putting aside what is being done to concentrate on the systematization (we have had to deal with the tendency: very frequent in universities, to consider that systematising is equivalent to writing a "thesis", which would demand us to isolate ourselves from everything to do it, and furthermore, file it once it is concluded. Making it possible that systematisation of experiences be permanently present, as a dimension of the extension prac-

tices, is the goal sought by practicing these flexible and feasible modalities in order to show, firstly, their usefulness and effectiveness and, secondly, how to motivate their continuity. And here we are, on this path).

We will present now the conceptual and methodological approach with which we have worked, as well as some assertive reflections about the ways that are being opened in the academic life, related to the importance and feasibility of this approach to the production of knowledge via the practice.

Aliveness, ephemerality and transcendence of experiences

When entering the field of University Extension, Social Action or Projection, as it is called by different Latin American universities, the starting point considers that we are dealing with academic projects that are implemented in different ways. However, the focus is not on the design, structure and objectives of these projects, but on the processes that the said projects produced from the day in which they were conceived and implemented. Besides, and in particular, we are interested in identifying those aspects that impacted us and, as a result, became the focus of our attention: the experiences lived by the people who are their key players. In them, facts of events not just “happen”; it is us, the people, who “make them happen” and they impact our lives; people who think, feel, take action, and relate to each other in given contexts and situations and, as a result, live experiences that, in turn, will become new contexts, situations, ideas, emotions and relationships, in a historic dynamic of links and frames that never end.

Thus, we make explicit the importance of living the experiences that are marked by the characteristics imprinted by their players. We *live* the experiences, not just perform them. And we live them with expectations, fears, hopes, ideas, and intuitions that are intertwined with complex and dynamic processes, that, in turn, impact us, condition us, demand from us, make us be. The experiences are individual and collective, we live them, and they make us live.

Besides, no experience “begins from scratch”; all experiences are lived in a historical moment, in a specific economic, social, political and cultural context which conditions and frames it, but does not completely determine it, because, at the same time, each experience carries the potential for its own innovative contribution. In this sense, each immediate and personal experience is connected to the entire human experience, from the particular historical moment in which one lives, even though this relationship may not appear in an evident or immediate way.

To find these transcendent threads, it is necessary to perform deliberate exercises which will allow us to go beyond the perceptions of the current and momentary event in order to identify the multiple temporalities nested in it.

The historical condition conceived from experience allows clearing the way to a nomadic, migrant, transitive reason, sustained by its own lived processes (...) recovering the plot of life as a complex network of contingent vital relations, that, acknowledging their transitivity can glimpse from that the transcendence that emerges as a certainty of the experience of what is human (Osorio & Rubin, 2010, 4).

Experiences are also living places for creating and re-creating knowledge. This everyday knowledge, “sentipensante” according to Fals Borda, that everybody has, is a fundamental part of experience: this is the knowledge produced by the experience, “saber de experiencia feito” in Portuguese as Freire said (1997, 32), which can be of variable nature depending on who lived it, and the conditions, habits and reflection characteristics: from immediate, empirical, descriptive, focused knowledge, to knowledge with a high conceptual framework. Yet, regardless of its nature and even if charged with transcendentalism, as has been mentioned, knowledge will always be related to a particular, new and “ephemeral” experience (Ghiso, 2010), becoming the starting point for a critical exercise of knowledge building and of discovery of the meanings of what has been lived. This is then the place for the systematization of the experience

What do we mean by systematisation of experiences?

From the conceptual point of view, it is necessary to distinguish from what is commonly understood by “systematisation”: to organise, classify and catalogue scattered data and information. The concept of “Systematisation of Experiences” refers to the critical interpretation of lived processes which, once organised and recovered, identifies significant learning that must be communicated and shared in order to nurture the experience itself or to inspire others in a transformative perspective. This second meaning, always related to “experiences”, implies an intellectual exercise of multiple tasks: recording, description, recovery, analysis, synthesis, interpretation, communication. Ultimately, it implies theorising starting from the lived experiences, something which demands a rigorous and, therefore, systematic procedure.

The processes of training in theory and methodology of the systematisation of experiences that we have been promoting with several universities, are performed with a Popular Education approach, that is, from a liberating, horizontal, dialogue-based educational perspective, that seeks to build transformative knowledge and develop abilities for social and personal change. This assumes an exercise of theorisation from practice, committed to transformative processes in which our work is reinforced as protagonist subjects of a History yet to be built, based on the interests, needs, aspirations and proposals of the popular majorities that suffer inequalities in our societies.

Accordingly, the systematisations of University Extension experiences have a double sign of commitment with the oppressed, marginalised, excluded or discriminated sectors of our societies: on the one hand, because these programs and projects mean university commitment to these problems in order to contribute to their improvement; and, on the other, because systematizing them to create meaningful learning will strengthen the critical and assertive understanding by those who are the participating subjects in the processes.. The latter promotes a dialogue between popular and academic knowledge, which is intertwined in the processes of Extension or Social Action, and, in turn, invigorates the investigative dimension and enrich the teaching dimension.

We want to elaborate now on some key aspects of the conceptual design with which we work, and thus reaffirm that:

Systematisation of experiences is the critical interpretation of one or several experiences that, once organised and recovered, unveils or clarifies the logic and meaning of the process lived in them: the various factors that intervened, how they related to each other, and why they did it in that way.

Systematisation of experiences produces knowledge and meaningful learning which allows the critical appropriation of lived experiences (their knowledge and feelings), understanding them theoretically, and directing them to the future with a transformative perspective (Jara, O. 2013, p. 78).

This conceptual framework requires the following elements:

- It is an intentional exercise that seeks to penetrate the intimate and transcendental framework of the experience with an interpretative exercise of theorization and conscious appropriation of what has been lived. It requires an effort of “epistemological curiosity” and assumes “methodical rigour” (Freire, 1997, 28-35) to turn the knowledge that comes from experience into critical knowledge, through its problematisation.
- It considers systematisation of experiences as an interpretation based on the arrangement and reconstruction of past events. This means, that it is the result of a complex effort to locate, describe, narrate, classify the elements, analyse and reflect on the lived experience.
- This interpretation seeks to identify the logic of the lived process: where, how and why the different factors of the experience related in a certain way throughout the experience? Which were the most active and determinant factors?, and which were the most dependent or secondary ones? What continuities, discontinuities, contradictions and ruptures happened and why they happened? What were the phases or stages of the experience and why was it possible to move from one to the other?
- The interpretation produces critical knowledge and significant learnings, starting from the features of what was lived during the experiences and from those who lived them. This often implies the possibility to perceive previously unknown dimensions and perspectives that were present in our experiences, but that we had not perceived or recognised.
- Thus, the systematisation of experiences allows the critical appropriation of the meaning of the experience, not because it previously existed already, but as a way of “making ours”, the meaning of our practice. Therefore, it becomes a critical and conscious construct of the meaning of the experience, making it possible, not only to understand it in its foundations and invisible framework, but also providing clues for its transforming guidelines towards the future.

What was just said reaffirms that we are subjects of History, and not just objects acting in it. The systematisation of experiences becomes a possibility condition to the theoretical understanding: with a greater level of abstraction and generalization, of the particularity of the experiences of Extension, so that we can take them into our hands with a transforming intentionality.

Therefore, the systematisation of University Extension experiences can help strengthening the transforming commitment of the university work, and also contribute to the production of academic knowledge nourished by the wealth of economic, social, political and cultural realities in which the University is immersed. This will also contribute to a social change where the social sectors of the communities we work with will be the main players,

and ultimately, to the support of projects of local management and social impact of varying scope.

This conceptual framework of systematisation of experiences breaks with the traditional schemes of extension intervention whose intention was to “take the academic knowledge to the communities”, and instead builds an academic knowledge nurtured by a dialogue of the knowledge produced during the experiences. This is why we also demand a methodology consistent with this vision.

A flexible and feasible methodological proposal to make systematization possible

During the training processes on systematisation of University Extension experiences that we have co-ordinated, we have been following the stages (not “steps” in a linear sense, nor a recipe to be applied) of a methodological proposal which, starting first with the lived experience, proposes a systematisation plan in which it is important:

- a) *To delimit the object or experience* to be systematised (in time and place) to identify the concrete practice, its actors and conditions and the period which will serve as the base to build the learning
- b) *To define a precise objective* as a result of this systematisation
- c) *To establish an axis* around the central aspects of the experience that interests us most, and , thus converting them into a guiding thread to read the experience.
- d) *To identify the information sources* available: registers of documents, photographs, sound recordings, audiovisual records, etc., and those that it would be necessary to obtain to gain knowledge of the experience.
- e) *To formulate the procedures*, techniques and activities to be performed and determine responsibilities, dates and products, and also prepare a budget to cover the exercise of systematisation.

Once the Plan has been elaborated, next comes a stage of Recovery of the lived history, of looking at the experience as a process, of using the possible records and sources, of identifying its stages, actors, interrelations. For this, it will be necessary to organize the information and also perform a historical reconstruction based on the systematisation axis formulated. Chronological matrices, testimonial narratives, timelines, maps, etc., are the type of techniques usually employed for this stage. This moment which is characterised by “distancing” from the lived experience to look at it critically and obtain a panoramic overview of the experience (in most cases for the first time), creates the conditions for looking beyond the events that happened and build an interpretation of the threads and substantial framework of the experience

This historical recovery provides the foundation to analyze separately: from this point on, the different aspects and to determine synthesis and interrelations between the elements found. This is the key and substantive moment of critical interpretation of the lived experience. At this point usually there will be several types of findings that were not noticed when they occurred, or that are now visible because they related to different aspects that occurred

during the experience. This is when we use the available categories of analysis and theoretical references, but it is also possible that it will be necessary to search for other references that help us establish a dialogue with other theoretical contributions. This is when we open from the reconstruction of what has been lived: a specific moment of theorisation, of abstraction, of understanding causes, common and different factors, tensions and contradictions that marked that process and defined it. This allow us, therefore, to move towards the formulation of conclusions, learnings and recommendations.

Lastly, these formulations must be communicated, shared, discussed to get consensus and guidance and to present proposals and lines of action for the future. Here is where the systematization of experiences allows us, not only to “appropriate the past experience”, but to aim at “appropriating the future”. Its main objective is to guide, with greater capacity and projection, what is proposed and recommended.

Following this path by means of face-to-face workshops and individual and collective exercises guided by a virtual educational Computer Platform¹, with the support of reading and audiovisual materials, each team or person who began the process a few months earlier becomes interested and feels the need to systematise a given experience of Social Action. This phase ends with a written academic article that synthesises the results of that systematisation. Moreover, based on the work on this systematization of an experience, some teams or persons will use the photos, recordings, videos and historical recovery matrices to develop other communication products to be shared, either with colleagues working with Extension or Social Action projects, or with the people in the communities where they worked, or others who have similar experiences.

Each product of systematisation supposes a heavy load of organising, reflecting, learning and exchanging. Many products are also developed with the people of the communities where the work was done, to allow their voices and knowledge to be expressed and shared through them. Having been subjects of the systematisation process has meant an opportunity to consolidate the autonomy of the projects, once the presence of the university has ended. Recently we have been encouraging this participation, and also have offered training activities with the participation of teachers, researchers, students and people from the communities.

Paths that lead to new ways

Although there is already a road or way that we have been walking for many years in this field, each new training experience produces different learnings, innovative issues, and demands for methodological variables suitable for never-before encountered conditions, and for a deeper look of new topics. This is how we can overcome the propensity to : activism, which does not leave time for reflecting ; prepares merely descriptive and narrative reports, which lack critical thinking; puts distance between the dialogue of knowledge produced during the extension experiences and knowledge gained by research activities. We also see a growing number of extension projects which include, from their planning stage, specific

1 We usually work with the Moodle platform, but we also communicate via email, WhatsApp and a Drive folder exclusive for each course

moments and human and material resources allocated to the systematisation of practices as an interpretative-critical exercise closely related to the development of the projects, and not as an external, occasional or subsequent task.

Each new training and capacity building experience in systematisation of experiences of University Extension, Action or Social projection is, in fact, an incentive and a marvelous opportunity to learn for those of us who are proposing them. Therefore, we continue to learn and share learnings such as those we have discussed in this article. We hope that this will also provide an incentive to add this dimension to the extension work, not as an isolated activity, but as a permanent exercise that will help support the efforts for a committed and coherent university in dealing with the challenges of our societies.

We definitely consider that we have opened paths towards achieving the always wanted inter or transdisciplinarity in academic work, as well as the linking of the research, teaching and extension dimensions (having as a rallying axis precisely the complex and rich experiences of extension). Finally, we believe that this is a fundamental way to meet the challenges of an academic work committed to brave the threats of our times, and to build a transforming public university, that, as a responsible social and political actor, provides critical thinking based on practice and on the interaction with the major sectors of our societies.

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