



## EXPERIÊNCIA SENSÍVEL DE PESQUISA: ENVOLVIMENTO E AFETOS NA CONSTRUÇÃO DE ALTERNATIVAS DE DESENVOLVIMENTO

## SENSITIVE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE: ENGAGEMENT AND AFFECTIONS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF DEVELOPMENTAL ALTERNATIVES

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### Resumo

Esta pesquisa se situa no âmbito das investigações que pretendem pesquisar a própria pesquisa e o processo de produção de conhecimento, propondo pensá-los a partir da concepção de experiência sensível de pesquisa. Nosso objetivo foi compreender a construção do conhecimento que emerge das interações vividas entre pesquisadores e sujeitos subalternizados a partir de experiências sensíveis de pesquisa. Entrevistamos 05 pesquisadores do campo das ciências sociais aplicadas, abordando questões sobre entrada e interação com os sujeitos no campo, o estabelecimento de vínculos, as implicações de suas pesquisas para esses sujeitos e as implicações e transformações da experiência de pesquisa para os próprios pesquisadores. As análises de história oral temática foram organizadas em três eixos: a) envolver e deixar-se envolver: interrelação e interdependência; b) tornar experiências visíveis e credíveis; c) dar sentido ao que somos e ao que nos acontece. Concluímos que a experiência sensível de pesquisa demanda uma ética que surge na interação e nos afetos estabelecidos nas relações com os sujeitos no campo e permite (re)conhecer o conhecimento que emana dessa interação, ampliando nossa capacidade de pensar em outras perspectivas de desenvolvimento, construindo projetos congruentes com os contextos onde a vida acontece.

**Palavras-chave:** Experiência sensível. Pesquisa. Ética. Desenvolvimento. Decolonial.

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## Abstract

This study falls within the scope of investigations that seek to explore research and the process of knowledge production, with the objective of approaching them through the lens of sensitive research experience. Our aim was to comprehend the knowledge construction that emerges from interactions between researchers and subaltern subjects based on sensitive research experiences. We interviewed 05 researchers in the field of applied social sciences, asking them about their experiences entering and interacting with subjects in the field, establishing links, the implications of their research for these subjects, and the effects and transformations of the research experience for researchers themselves. Thematic oral history analyses were divided into three categories: a) involving and allowing oneself to be involved: interrelationship and interdependence; b) making experiences visible and credible; and c) giving meaning to who we are (researchers) and what happens to us. We conclude that the sensitive experience of research requires an ethics that emerges from the interaction and affections established in the relationships with the subjects in the field, allowing recognition of the knowledge that emerges from this interaction, broadening our ability to think of other perspectives of development, and building projects that are congruent with the contexts in which life occurs.

**Keywords:** Sensitive experience. Research. Ethics. Development. Decolonial.

## Introduction

This study falls within the scope of investigations that seek to explore research and the process of knowledge production, with the objective of approaching them through the lens of sensitive research experience. We begin with the decolonial critique of modern science (QUIJANO, 1992; ESCOBAR, 2003; DUSSEL, 2005; CASTRO-GOMEZ; GROSGUÉL, 2007; MIGNOLO, 2014) and the condemnation of wasted knowledge experiences (SOUSA-SANTOS, 2001; 2002) to recognize the construction of knowledge from the assumption of experience/meaning, with the intention of giving meaning to who we are and what happens to us as researchers (BONDÍA, 2002) in the process of researching, and in the practices, actions, and concrete social interventions studied or ignored by the scientific field.

Science was established in the modern society, and it guided the global society model by reducing the interpretation of natural phenomena and social relations to a single, neutral, objective, and universal truth, erasing forms of sociability, work, and life that did not fit this pattern (SOUSA-SANTOS, 2001; LANDER, 2005; CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSGUÉL, 2007; MIGNOLO, 2014).

Since modernity, scientific progress has pushed humanism to the margins of social relations (MACHADO, 2018), guiding a science and development model in which the world is dead matter to

be dominated, with no relationship between beings and things (NODARI, 2015). This model has caused an unprecedented social, economic, political, and ethical crisis, threatening humanity's future (SOLÓN, 2019).

To maintain its hegemony, modern science has reproduced itself around a discourse on scientific rigor, which eliminates the subject of enunciation, ensuring its [supposed] neutrality. Scientific rigor objectified phenomena, destroying nature's personality and reducing knowledge wealth (GODOI; BANDEIRA-DE-MELLO; SILVA, 2020). The objectification of phenomena separates subjects from the construction of knowledge, reinforcing exclusionary development projects and weakening the coping and defense strategies of historically marginalized groups.

Diagnostics and research are crucial in this discursive struggle. However, even these instruments, forged according to the rules of hegemonic science, are capable of ignoring the diversity and inequality that characterize development. Therefore, the actions elicited by such instruments and their respective analyses may result in false consensus and violent interventions that fail to address the cultural, social, political, and ecological specificities of a given territory.

To move beyond this idealized model of development and onto a different path, a radical transformation of the concept of development and progress is required, restoring the communion between humanity and nature, strengthening ways of life suppressed by modernity (ACOSTA, 2015), and constructing other forms of understanding and doing research and science.

We propose a reflection on one's own research experience, seeking to rescue experiences not reported in research documents and products and asking: what are the paths and dilemmas encountered by applied social science researchers in interactions with subaltern groups?

We perceive the research process as a sensitive experience, pervaded by affections and expressions that emerge from our subjectivity, which should not be ignored, but rather recognized as a prerequisite for meaningful science. The term "experience" implies that something must be modified: new knowledge or life lessons. An experience never leaves us in the same place (BONDÍA, 2002; JAY, 2009).

Therefore, this study aims to comprehend the knowledge construction that emerges from interactions between researchers and subaltern subjects based on sensitive research experiences.

We conducted a qualitative research, applying 05 semi-structured interviews with Applied Social Sciences researchers, which were interpreted using thematic oral history analysis.

Our findings contribute to the scientific field by shedding light on critical aspects of research that are obscured by protocols that ignore the subjectivity inherent in research, reinforcing the need to confront the "waste of experience" (SOUSA-SANTOS, 2002). The study also adds to the discussion on the need for changes in researcher training processes to address concrete dilemmas that arise during fieldwork.

In addition to this introduction, we have divided the article into four sections: i) Science, subjectivity, and ethics: contextualized and shared knowledge; (ii) The recovery of experience and the meaning of doing science: experience in the spotlight; (iii) Methodological path; and (iii) Sensitive Research Experiences. Finally, in the Final Considerations, we summarize the discussion and present the References.

### **Science, subjectivity, ethics: contextualized and shared knowledge**

The term science refers to modern science, which was established to serve a social model, and which justified the destruction of multiple experiences and knowledge all over the world in order to impose a single - legitimate and right - way of knowing, being, and living, erasing forms of sociability, work, and life that did not fit this model (SOUSA-SANTOS, 2001; WALLESTEIN, 2002; LANDER, 2005; CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSGOUEL, 2007).

Since modernity, scientific progress has increasingly pushed humanism to the margins of social relations, expanding the voice of science beyond the interests of the state, resulting in a moral imperative for development (MACHADO, 2018). The rupture of the co-relationship between beings and things can be represented as development, and within this conception of development, the world is dead matter, separated from the subject, with no ties, only subjection (NODARI, 2015).

The subject-object relationship in the production of knowledge is the founding assumption of modern science, in which the "subject" - the researcher - refers to a category of isolated individual who constitutes themselves, their speech, and their reflexive capacity (QUIJANO, 1992). The objectified relationship between the research subject and the researched subject, which suppresses subjectivities, is what ensures modern science's universality, neutrality, and objectivity.

This method of knowledge production was legitimized in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the publication of Descartes' "Discourse on Method," which systematized and consolidated the separation of mind-body, reason-world (APFFEL-MARGLIN, 1996; SOUSA-SANTOS, 2001; LANDER,

2005) and defined the scientific and methodological parameters that still guide knowledge production today.

Modern science is guided by neutrality, objectivity, and universality, which reinforce dichotomies such as culture/nature, subject/object, subjective/objective, and others that simplify the world and hide conflicts. The superiority of scientific knowledge (hegemonic) and the inferiority of the senses were guaranteed through this lens (LANDER, 2005; SAYAGO; BURSZTYN, 2006; GERMANO; KULESZA, 2010; CUSICANQUI *et al.*, 2016).

The separation of subject and object of knowledge, that is, the sovereignty of the subject who knows in relation to the studied phenomenon, established the concept of objectivity, which is one of the foundations of modern science (CHAUÍ, 1997). However, objectivity is not an absolute reality because objects do not exist in their own right. When we say something is objective, we are referring to something about which we can speak with meaning, placing it in a shared universe of perception. As a result, objectivity is always relative to the cultural context (FOUREZ, 1995).

To ensure its [supposed] neutrality, modern science has reproduced itself around a discourse on scientific rigor, which serves to erase the subject of enunciation, control, to instrumentalize research work, and suppress the researcher's experience, thus maintaining its universality and hegemony. According to Godoi, Bandeira-de-Mello, and Silva (2010), scientific rigor objectified, disqualified, degraded, and caricatured phenomena, destroying nature's personality and reducing knowledge wealth.

The rigorous application of research techniques with the objective of ensuring knowledge control, which frequently guides ethical protocols in the social sciences, transforms the research experience into an experiment, objectifying subjects and dehumanizing relationships.

Only a formal, bureaucratic posture based on regulations ensures effectively ethical conduct (SAYAGO; BURSZTYN, 2006). The protocols designed to ensure this posture and protect research subjects highlight the asymmetry between the researcher and the community being studied (PEREIRA; GUARESCHI; MACHADO, 2019). Congruence with the principles of respect for others - other subjects and other knowledge -, return of results, and sharing of benefits as a social and political commitment to research work creates another ethics and eliminates the need for formal codes (SAYAGO; BURSZTYN, 2006; ROMERO, 2008; PEREIRA; GUARESCHI; MACHADO, 2019).

The current situation necessitates a shift toward a dialogical ethics of responsibility, understood not as a prescription but as something negotiated and built by everyone involved in scientific work (SILVA et al., 2009; PEREIRA; GUARESCHI; MACHADO, 2019). Instead of defining a rigid prescription of tools and techniques for application, we propose recovering the experience and meaning of knowledge production, avoiding reproductions and accommodations, and producing contextualized and collectively constructed knowledge.

### **The recovery of experience and the meaning of doing science: experience in the spotlight**

Overcoming dichotomies and comprehending the dynamics of the social universe presupposes bringing experience to the forefront, which differs from the controlled experience that gave rise to modern science. Although hegemonic science routinely dismisses our immediate experience as illusory (SOUSA-SANTOS, 2001), all knowledge is embodied in subjects who are riven by social contradictions rooted in specific points of observation, calling into question the pretense of scientific neutrality and objectivity (CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSGUÉL, 2007).

Science must recognize this reality and consequent knowledge production, which involves interrelationships and interdependence processes mediated by subjectivity.

At all levels, life is interrelated and interdependent. According to the South African Ubuntu principle, everything exists because everything else exists. As modernity has taught us, at least since Descartes, there are no objects, no intrinsically existing subjects or processes. The real is not made up of isolated objects that interact with one another; the observer does not pre-exist what they observe (Maturana and Varela<sup>3</sup>); there is no external world to which we can cling; and everything alive is always an integral part of the ever-changing pluriverse (CUSICANQUI *et al.*, 2016, p. 12, our translation).

By embracing the world's constant change, we expand it and our understanding of it. We progress from universal knowledge to pluriversal knowledge. For Sousa-Santos (2002), social experience is much broader than what the western scientific-philosophical tradition recognizes, and the world expands as the field of credible experiences grows.

Development actions on specific communities are often homogeneous and disconnected from contexts and demands. Importing development recipes from far-off contexts and realities

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<sup>3</sup> The text cited by Cusicanqui *et al.* (2016) is an interview with the researchers. In the dialogue, an unofficial reference is made to Maturana and Varela, most likely to their 1995 book "Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding".

(BUTZKE; THEIS; MANTOVANELLI-JÚNIOR, 2018) and abandoning local experiences with roots and connections to daily life (ESCOBAR, 2005) prevent us from developing alternatives for social justice with cognitive justice (SOUSA-SANTOS, 2002).

Alternatives do not emerge in a vacuum, but from the experiences of different movements in society's struggles, initiatives, victories, and defeats, and appear in a sometimes-contradictory process of analysis, practice, and proposals that are validated in reality (SOLN, 2019). The worldview of historically marginalized groups allows us to see other types of societies that are sustained by the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature, based on the recognition of the various cultural values that exist on the planet (ACOSTA, 2015).

According to Sousa-Santos (2002), the concept of experience is capable of making visible and understandable aspects of our worlds that have been erased by scientific consolidation. To make suppressed worldviews, alternative initiatives, and movements visible and credible, it is necessary to propose a different type of rationality (SOUSA-SANTOS, 2002), one that is also experienced as an experience. Disclosing practices, actions, and concrete social interventions that have been studied, not studied, or ignored by the scientific community requires new "journeys" in the investigation and management of social processes, based on sensitivity as a source of knowledge and a catalyst for scientific work (CABRA, 2007).

To think about a lived rationality as an experience based on sensitivity, unveiling its meanings, we bring Bondía's (2002) ideas of experience/meaning, and Haroche's (2008) thoughts about the sensitive condition and the capacity to feel in contemporary societies. Their contributions help us to think of research as a sensitive experience.

For Bondía (2002), experience is the possibility that something will happen to us, but it is becoming increasingly rare because everything moves so quickly, reducing the instantaneous stimulus, which is immediately replaced by another, exciting and ephemeral stimulus (BONDÍA, 2002). Haroche (2008) points out that the impoverishment of interiority is caused by the imposition of the instantaneous, of the immediate, of contemporary society, which results in the emptying of attention capacity, which is inseparable from reflection.

Haroche (2008) approaches the sensitive condition in two ways when analyzing transformations in Western ways of feeling. On the one hand, sensitive refers to ways of looking, hearing, and touching that are related to the senses and ways of perceiving others and oneself, and

that touch on feelings. On the other, condition, in a more structural and abstract sense, refers to the ways in which processes are actualized within people and in life in society. What the senses, sensitivity, and feelings generate ethically and aesthetically in our public and private choices is referred to as the sensitive condition (HAROCHE, 2008).

In the context of the proposed research, we understand that the sensitive condition refers to the forms and choices established in doing science, as well as the principles that govern these choices as we allow ourselves (or not allowing ourselves) to be transfixed by this experience. Inspired by Bondía's (2002) proposal on education, we propose to think about research and knowledge production from the articulation "experience/meaning"; that is understanding knowledge production as a sensitive experience of research.

This concept explains the subjectivity inherent in social relations research. However, it also compels us to reconsider the protocols, rules, and hierarchies naturalized in the academic field, which have limited the scope and relevance of science. The idea of sensitive experiences shifts the emphasis from technique, which prevents us from imagining, seeing, and feeling (CORNILLE; IVERNEL, 1999; GODOI; BANDEIRA-DE-MELLO; SILVA, 2010), to social relations that occur in specific contexts and times.

Experience, as well as thinking itself, demands a moment of interruption: stopping to think, look, listen, in order to feel, to feel more slowly, to suspend the automatism of action, to talk about what happens to us, to cultivate the art of encounter, to be patient, giving yourself time and space (BONDÍA, 2002; HAROCHE, 2008).

To be worthy of the term "experience," something must be altered, whether it is new knowledge or a life lesson. An experience cannot leave us where we started (BONDÍA, 2002; JAY, 2009). According to Bondía (2002), experience knowledge does not exist outside of us and only makes sense in the way it configures a way of being in the world that is both ethical (way of behaving) and aesthetic (a style).

It is necessary to acknowledge the incompleteness of the scientific process and of the subjects who do science, who not only shape but are shaped by their research objects (MACHADO, 2018). Thus, the sensitive experience of research refers to the research process as experienced by the researcher who allows themselves to be crossed, who allows themselves to feel, based on the



relationships built and established in a studied context, which transform them and are transformed by them.

### **Methodological procedures**

This study falls under the umbrella of decolonial thinking, which advocates for an epistemological shift in knowledge production. According to Mignolo (2008), every change in political decolonization must result in political and epistemic disobedience. It is possible to detect an opening of possibilities for the production of knowledge from the appreciation of lived experiences among the authors of decoloniality (PAIM, 2019).

To emphasize the dominant construction's position in science, we conducted a qualitative study, with analyses performed through thematic oral history (POLLAK, 1987; ALBERTI, 2005). This investigation is part of a larger study of seventeen sensitive doctoral research experiences in the field of Applied Social Sciences. We were interested in the experiences of 05 researchers who studied subaltern groups in contexts of resettlement, environmental conflicts, productive reorganization, and cultural conflicts for this discussion. Respondents conducted their research in various regions of Brazil (Northeast, Southeast and South).

These researchers were chosen for the significance of their experiences related to the theme (ALBERTI, 2005) of subaltern groups' coping strategies in defense of their ways of life (ESCOBAR, 2003). During these interactions, the researchers formed strong bonds with the subjects in the field and attempted to build their research paths by appropriating the affectations inherent in these interactions.

As an exercise in remembering the stories of that time, the informants prepared an autoethnographic report (SANTOS, 2017) about their doctoral experience in the first stage of our research. After reading the reports and becoming acquainted with the researchers' paths, we conducted thematic oral history interviews on days and times determined by the subjects themselves. The questions centered on the researchers' access and interactions in the field, the formation of connections, the implications of their research for these subjects, and the effects and transformations of the research experience for the researchers themselves.

We used the Google Meet platform to conduct the interviews and record the conversations, which took place between June 26 and September 8, 2021. By signing the free and informed consent

form, all interviewees agreed to the recording. We also used Google Docs' "voice typing" tool to transcribe the interviews verbatim. Finally, oTranscribe, which is available for free on the web, was used to make corrections and adjustments. The entire interview lasted 6 hours and 37 minutes and totaled 127 pages. The autoethnographic reports were 16 pages long.

We began by reading the reports individually, then organized the information, looking for regularities and exceptions in the set of the interviewees' speeches. In order to maintain the respondents' anonymity, information that could identify the informants, such as institutions, places, and people involved in their work, was hidden in the treatment of the interviews. We've also given Respondents nicknames: Researcher A, Researcher B, Researcher C, Researcher D, and Researcher E.

From this stage, a narrative block was constructed, which was organized into 3 directions after being analyzed from the theoretical perspective that supports the discussion on the sensitive research experience: a) involving and allowing oneself to be involved: interrelationship and interdependence; b) making experiences visible and credible; and c) giving meaning to who we are (researchers) and what happens to us. The analyses and discussion presented below were organized around these axes, allowing us to understand how interactions with field subjects during the sensitive research experience contributed to knowledge construction.

### **Sensitive research experiences**

In this section, we discuss the three paths of the interviewees' narratives mentioned above, focusing on excerpts from the stories told that illustrate the understanding of the paths they took while living the sensitive research experiences. The dilemmas encountered along these paths influenced the researchers, who developed new ways of being in the world and were transformed as a result of this experience.

#### **a) Involving and allowing oneself to be involved: interrelationship and interdependence**

Contrary to hegemonic science's determinations, field experience astounds researchers, who perceive themselves immersed in the daily practices they study, entwined in the life stories of research subjects. This situation implies both discomfort and an encounter with the context that they were willing to investigate. Discomfort stems from socialization and the dominant research perspective, which seeks to create a neutral and distant researcher.

The manner in which the researcher establishes their relationship with the subjects and conducts their field investigation reestablishes the ties severed by modernity, overcoming the concept of subjection (NODARI, 2015).

I clung to those lines because I clung to the lives and memories hidden behind them. I felt indebted to that person. I had to write as much of that story as I could because it was important for that person to talk, so it was important for me to write (Researcher C).

I defended tooth and nail the struggle of residents of traditional communities because their speeches touched my soul, which was a very powerful thing. I was outraged by what they had to go through, and I felt small for not being able to change that reality even slightly. It deeply distressed me (Researcher E).

The sharing of stories heightened the intensity of all of these encounters. There was no meeting that I can recall that was superficial. There wasn't because I shared a lot of my life story with them, and I believe that brought unity to the meeting (Researcher D).

When they saw me outside of the local context, it gave me credibility. They go to a lot of events. When they first saw me at this event, I stayed with them the entire time, I didn't stay with people from my state. I realized that being there with them helped them understand that I was a member of the group (Researcher B).

The stories they tell form relationships that can only be formed when we are very close, even if we only spent a short time in each house. [...]. Going to those places and taking those roads was something I enjoyed doing because it made me feel alive in a way I can't quite explain. That was significant to me, and I wanted to go back (Researcher A).

Listening to stories is not a detached act. The narratives demonstrate that it is not only about asking and listening, but also about sharing stories and exchanging experiences, as evidenced by Researcher D's statement that sharing their story with them brought unity to the meetings, or by Researcher C's feeling compelled to write as much as possible about those shared life experiences. Experience is always an event that happens outside of us but has an impact on us (BONDÍA, 2002; 2006), both in the researcher and in the researched subject.

However, exchanges are not a research strategy; they are part of relationships that are formed, nurtured, and generate a mutual commitment to write that shared story, to talk about oneself in order to build affinity and listen to the other. Beyond indignation and seduction, there is a shift in this process: "I felt insignificant" (Researcher E); "I belonged to the group" (Researcher B); "I was alive" (Researcher A). Because researcher and researched subject only exist in interaction, the sensitive experience of research necessitates interdependence and interrelationship (CUSICANQUI et al., 2016). The exchanges of experiences that occur when we allow ourselves to become involved create a sense of continuity, trust, and depth, all of which are components of our humanity (HAROCHE, 2008).

The senses are stimulated, making the research denser and more in-depth. This is difficult because there is an overload on the researcher who accepts responsibility for their actions and research. However, there is a wealth of information that is more context-specific, producing reliable knowledge, considering intervention processes.

In the sensitive experience of research, shared stories, whether in reports or in everyday interaction, move us, infuriate us, affect us, and do not leave us unchanged. The stories touch us, transforming us, in the relationship of showing a little of oneself and hearing a little of the other.

Because you only learn what you don't know, knowledge from experience emerges from not knowing (BONDÍA, 2002; SOUSA-SANTOS, 2002; HAROCHE, 2008; MIGNOLO, 2014). Systemic alternatives do not emerge in a vacuum, but rather from an understanding of validated practices and proposals that emerge from constructive and creative dialogue between different worldviews (ACOSTA, 2015; SOLÓN, 2019).

To learn what we still don't know, we need new approaches that don't rule out old ones. Unlike the research experiment, the sensitive research experience necessitates participation because new knowledge can emerge from the strengthening of these ties. Exteriority becomes interiority when we allow ourselves to be involved in interactions and interrelationships, because the exterior event, the shared stories, now happens in us, penetrates our ethical conscience, and transforms us.

#### **b) Making experiences visible and credible**

The sensitive research experience requires social and political commitment, not only in terms of sharing research findings and benefits (SAYAGO; BURSZTYN, 2006; PEREIRA; GUARESCHI; MACHADO, 2019), but also in how the researcher relates to the subjects, not just in terms of immediate results. In this sense, sensitive research experience helps to reposition researchers' values, ambitions, and expectations.

I believe that as researchers, we can increase the visibility of the conflict and that social reality so that the demands of these communities are heard in other places, such as city halls and committees, and so that other people are aware of this reality and try to support their fight in some way (Researcher E).

Scientific research can help us reflect on scenarios and possibilities, but I never considered providing direct answers or tools, as is common in some fields. I am incapable of fulfilling the role of the state or local public power, let alone the productive articulation that is their reality (Researcher B).

What I felt throughout this process was a desire to comprehend that reality. While I was there, I believe the research had implications for her to understand the significance of what she did. [...]. Or

when I took them to breakfast, each one's personal rescue, dressed in their best clothes, that emotion. I believe these were the implications I noticed (Researcher D).

It aided my comprehension, and something else written about them may serve as a reference for future works. [...]. At the time, I believe it had an implication. I met a woman my age who had a difficult life, and she became attached to me and began to open up to me. She thought it was lovely that I arrived by car and asked me to photograph her pretending to drive. [...]. I also gave them feedback based on the photos, so they could look at each other, see photos of those from the same community who went to other places, and learn a little bit about others, even though they were no longer together. That, I believe, was the effect (Researcher A).

It is critical to have a more realistic perspective on the complexity of social transformations, which necessitate structural and institutional changes and do not rely solely on the researcher's individual capabilities and performance. Resistance is built daily, especially among subaltern groups, but changes do not come easily.

However, as research with subjects and contexts whose histories have been erased, the collective political awareness of society grows, causing ruptures that can lead to more structural change. Understanding these suppressed experiences makes them visible and credible, broadening the world's social experience (SOUSA-SANTOS, 2002).

Research contributes theoretically to the advancement of knowledge about understanding society. The academic field creates understanding expectations that are met by fieldwork. The narrative excerpts previously highlighted show that the sensitive research experience opens up opportunities to give more visibility to the problems or context of those realities (Researcher E), reflect scenarios and possibilities (Researcher B), and contribute to the continuation of other research (Researcher A).

However, the implications of the sensitive research experience do not end when the research is completed. Experience is always an exteriority that has repercussions on us, within us, on our ideas, representations, and wills (BONDÍA, 2006), and that experience reconfigures our way of being in the world.

### **c) Giving meaning to who we are (researchers) and what happens to us**

The sensitive research experience necessitates a transformation in us as researchers, citizens, and human beings (BONDÍA, 2002; JAY, 2009). We are no longer what we were, and we are no longer where we were as we live our research experience. If we are an integral part of this constantly changing pluriverse (CUSICANQUI et al., 2016), we are also constantly changing, affecting and being affected by the interrelationships between the integral parts.

The bonds between family, godparents, and neighbors were strong. I thought it was solid and significant as a life strategy. I'd come home wanting to apply what I'd learned to my relationships (Researcher A).

They mentioned a strong symbolic relationship with nature, as well as entities that exist to protect it. [...]. I'd never heard of anyone wanting to bid farewell to nature. I wanted to hug him and try to help him say goodbye after what he told me. It revealed to me a previously unknown reality (Researcher E).

I learned to respect differences, to respect religion, to respect immigrants, and to understand people's histories. I had preconceptions that I didn't even realize I had because of my upbringing (Researcher C).

She picked the most beautiful fruits and gave them to me at the end of one day. I explained that I wouldn't have anyone to share it with. She advised me to share it with a neighbor if I couldn't eat it. And she went on to say that we are not required to give anything to anyone, but if we do, may it always be the best! One of the great lessons learned there (Researcher D).

The interviewees lived the experience of being permeated and sensitized (BONDÍA, 2002) by the people with whom they established dialogues, beginning with the concept that life is interconnected and interdependent at all levels (CUSICANQUI et al., 2016, p 12). When a researcher learns a new way of being in the world, they are also shaped by their research object/subject (MACHADO, 2018).

Interacting with different ways of being in the world opens up new ways of being and being in the world, re-situating our ethical perspective and political place (ROMERO, 2008), and imagining other possible worlds (ACOSTA, 2015). Only when we configure our ethical and aesthetic way of being in the world does experience knowledge make sense (BONDÍA, 2002).

The sensitive research experience is a posture and an integrated political practice that allows us to learn other life strategies, values, and ways of relating to nature, the material world, and the symbolic world that are distinct from the dominant logic that pervades our daily lives. It prompts us to reconsider our positions and redirect skewed gazes. As a result of approaching and understanding the social, family, and neighborhood relationships of the subjects in the field (as highlighted by Researcher A and Researcher D), the interviewed researchers rethought their lives and the world they live in and had new perspectives on relationships with nature (Researcher E), about respect for differences, and so on (Researcher C).

Research is always the result of previous investigation and reflections, and it extends beyond project deadlines. The research findings can be seen in the researcher's performance in teaching,

student training, the proposal and execution of new research or extension projects, collaboration with other colleagues, students, public agents, civil society collectives, and so on.

Today, my professional and personal contribution is to prioritize guiding students in socially vulnerable situations. I can only help them by giving what I can, my knowledge, and sharing what I know (Researcher D).

I collaborated with a Public Ministry nucleus and proposed creating a conflict booklet to distribute as feedback to the people I interviewed (Researcher E).

Today, all of my projects revolve around this theme. At a university event, I offered a training course. This is a movement to which I intend to contribute for a long time, whether through a lecture, a speech, or the coordination of a larger project, because working with this theme still gives me great satisfaction. I don't want to lose that research glow (Researcher B).

The narratives show that the sensitive research experience does not end with the creation of a product. The researcher gains knowledge from the subjects in the field and will share it in other places. This is especially true when we consider the significance of the university and the formation of a critical mass of researchers who will work in various fields.

These researchers will conduct new research in classrooms in collaboration with other development agents. The sensitive research experience aids in the formation of reflective spaces and critical citizens, as evidenced by Researcher D's narrative about their specific look and support for students in vulnerable situations. It may also result in a shift in professional activity, as Researcher B proposed, by continuing their work in teaching, research, and extension within the field they learned and developed during their doctoral research.

In addition to developing projects - research or extension - to meet local needs, the researcher can also advise on projects of other development agents, such as Researcher E, who collaborated with the Public Ministry to develop conflict-related material that can be used in other regions experiencing similar conflicts.

As we approach university knowledge and engage in dialogue with different segments of society, society's view of science (and science of society) is transformed. When we defend the social contribution of research, it is important not to convert this position into a reduced view of research results, which has led to the application of techniques with the intention of immediate results, often to meet the interests of powerful groups, and ignoring the particularities of each context, as well as ignoring reflexivity, a fundamental condition in the knowledge production process.

This misinterpretation of research impact has resulted in a disconnection between researchers and subjects from/in the field, preventing this relationship from being lived. A possible

impact is the result of interactions in the field, but it cannot be produced following a pattern of experimentation.

## Final considerations

The dominant science's assumptions limit our ability to comprehend the dynamic reality of our societies, as well as the processes of intervention in them, by instrumentalizing the participation of people (both researchers and research subject) in the production of knowledge. Our aim was to comprehend the construction of knowledge that results from interactions between researchers and subaltern subjects. We expand on our argument by proposing that research be viewed as a sensitive experience.

There is always turbulence in research. We argue that the way to make research more meaningful for researchers and society is to change the way we approach it: from a linear, formal, protocol-driven, rigorous process to a sensitive experience full of affections, involvements, and transformations. The concerns expressed by the researchers interviewed during the course of their projects comprise the sensitive experience of research and are an essential component of knowledge production. Our joys, sorrows, pains, delights, satisfaction, and frustration, which arise from field interactions, imbue us with the experience of the other, and we are no longer the same.

Unlike hegemonic science, which maintains a distance between researcher and field subjects so that subjectivity does not "contaminate" data, the sensitive research experience ensured the rigor and validity of the information produced by the interviewed researchers, through interaction and sharing life stories, everyday life, different spaces, struggles, pain, achievements, knowledge, and so on.

This sharing fostered affection and solidified the subjects' commitment. The sensitive experience touched the researchers, and they became part of the stories. They committed to telling those stories, bringing greater visibility to that social reality, opening new eyes, and assisting in the reflection on the possibilities of intervention, within the limits of each research.

The social context is too complex to expect a study to provide direct solutions to societal problems that necessitate the collaboration of various agents. The study findings are not a prescription for resolving conflicts or social inequalities. However, as new research methods



generate new perspectives on historically marginalized subjects and contexts, making these life experiences visible, society as a whole moves forward, increasing critical mass and political awareness.

When we know/recognize what emanates from our subjectivities, we are no longer neutral; we feel together and expand our ability to understand reality, producing other knowledge that allows us to perceive other rationalities, objectivities, subjectivities, and, in this way, thinking about other development perspectives, building solutions with the subjects and contexts in which life occurs.

When we recognize that the researcher transformed by this experience continues to work in other spaces, the research findings expand. The sensitive experience of research opens up opportunities for the researcher to contribute to student citizenship education by developing research and extension projects that are aligned with society's most pressing needs, or by sharing knowledge with other development agents.

This performance is not limited to possible professional articulations. The sensitive research experience altered the way researchers are/were in the world, teaching them new forms of relationships based on trust, symbolism, and memories, all while remaining in harmony with nature.

By challenging modern science's founding assumptions, we propose alternative research paths in which knowledge becomes an ethical event, and participating subjects develop affectionate, convivial, and sensitive relationships that allow the construction of non-exclusive development alternatives and transform collective life.

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