

ALEJANDRA BONI
& DIANA VELASCO

Epistemic Capabilities and Epistemic Injustice: What is the Role of Higher Education in Fostering Epistemic Contributions of Marginalized Knowledge Producers?

Abstract: This paper explores how University as social entity has great potential to confront epistemic injustices by expanding epistemic capabilities. To do this, we primarily follow the contributions of scholars such as Miranda Fricker and José Medina. The epistemic capabilities and epistemic injustice nexus will be explored via two empirical cases: the first one is an experience developed in Lagos (Nigeria) using participatory video; the second is a service learning pedagogical strategy for final year undergraduate students conducted at Universidad de Ibagué (in Colombia). The Lagos experience shows how participatory action-research methodologies could promote epistemic capabilities and functioning, making it possible for the participants to generate interpretive materials to speak of their own realities. However, this experience is too limited to address testimonial and hermeneutical injustice. The Colombian experience is a remarkable experience that is building epistemic capabilities among students and other local participants. However, there is a hermeneutical and structural injustice that tends to give more value to disciplinary and codified knowledge at the expense of experiential and tacit knowledge.

Keywords: epistemic capabilities; epistemic injustice; Lagos; Ibagué; university.

Introduction: Epistemic Challenges as a Critical Matter for Contemporary Universities

At the Davos Conference of the World Economic Forum in 2018 (OXFAM, 2018), Oxfam highlighted that the richest 82 people on the globe control as much wealth as the poorest half of the global population collectively (i.e., some 3.5 billion people). What does this say about us as citizens of our countries and as educators who work in universities? What does higher education as a system have to say about this shocking statistic? At issue then is what higher education says – and more crucially does – about these global development challenges, and which have tremendous impacts upon people's lives at the local level.

This paper sets out to acknowledge these problems and inequalities, highlighting one of the inequalities which is specially related to higher education: epistemic injustice. As Anisur Rahman, a Bangladeshi economist (quoted in Gaventa and Bivens, 2013: 69-73), points out: 'The gap between those who have social power over the process of knowledge generation and those who have not – has reached dimensions no less formidable than the gap in access to means of physical production.' The role of universities in reproducing and enlarging this gap is highly relevant. As Foucault states at the beginning of this century:

‘The political economy of truth in our society is characterized by two features. The first is the dominance of scientific discourses and institutions in the disciplinary production of the conditions of possibility for truth. The second is the diffusion of the political economy of truth throughout the social body through the operation of educational and informational apparatuses such as the university, the media, and so forth.’ (Foucault, 2000: 131).

While in general we may claim that research aims to generate valuable knowledge which is beneficial to society (and we have many good examples of this), research also ‘exists within a system of power’ (Smith, 2012: 226) and, in contemporary times, within digitized flows of globalization and neo-liberal higher education policies. The point to be made is that knowledge, scholarship, and research are not neutral projects, but rather are conterminously shaped by history and the societies in which the work is undertaken, and in which the researchers are themselves molded and positioned. Knowledge is constructed and produced within social and political contexts, and spaces of in/equity (Boni and Walker, 2016).

This paper explores the critical issue of knowledge production in universities from the capability perspective in two ways. Firstly, to highlight how research and teaching could expand capabilities of people not traditionally endorsed as producers of scientific discourse and truth, as per Foucault’s arguments. Secondly, to discuss how different kinds of epistemic injustice could limit and/or even block the epistemic capabilities of said actors.

For this, we will follow, mainly, the contributions of scholars in the epistemic injustice debate. Miranda Fricker’s (2015: 73-90) contribution on epistemic injustice and the capability approach characterizes the capability of epistemic contributions and the three different ways of limiting this: deliberately; through testimonial injustice; and, through hermeneutical injustice. David Coady (2017: 61-68) and José Medina (2017: 41-52) discuss and characterize in a more challenging way the hermeneutical injustice. The epistemic capabilities and epistemic injustice nexus will be discussed through two empirical cases: the first one is an experience developed in Lagos (Nigeria) using an action-research methodology i.e., the participatory video. It is a research project conducted by two universities of the Global North (University College of London, UK, and Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain) in collaboration with a local organization (Justice and Empowerment Initiative) and the Nigerian Federation of Slum and Dwellers. The second one is an initiative conducted at the Universidad de Ibagué (in Colombia), the program Peace and Region aimed

at articulating action frameworks for peace, development, regions, territories, and citizenship in local communities through a pedagogical model directed at final year undergraduate students.

In the following section we will present the main theoretical contributions. Following this, we describe the Nigerian and the Colombian cases and then discuss the capabilities and epistemic injustice links before concluding with some reflections on the role of the university in relation to the epistemic contribution of non-conventional knowledge producers.

The Capability of Epistemic Contribution and Epistemic Injustice

Miranda Fricker (2015: 73-90) points out the importance, from the point of view of equality, of the capability of epistemic contribution from all citizens as contributors to the production and sharing of information. However, she noticed that this capability has not been sufficiently taken into consideration in the capability approach literature. Fricker stresses that one of our most basic needs is to use our reason in order to discern the everyday facts and social meanings that condition, constrain, and make sense of our shared life (2015:76). This has implications for other capabilities; most notably, practical reasoning is dependent upon it, given that deliberation implies knowledge and understanding.

The epistemic contribution capability can be materialized by the giving of *informational and interpretive materials*. The first comprises not only information itself, but also anything bearing upon the question at stake, such as evidence, critical doubt, hypothesis, argumentation, among others. The second, includes the giving of *interpretive materials* required to make sense of a more or less shared social world (including not only interpretations themselves but also anything bearing on their justification and reasonability, such as the concepts used, or alternative interpretations, and other relevant critical materials) (2015:76). This is a relational capability: it implies giving information with uptake, or with likelihood of reasonable uptake.

Fraser (2015:79-80) points out that the epistemic contribution capability can be frustrated in three forms: 1) deliberately, by way of physical force, by legal-institutional ruling, by intentional manipulation of local relations of credibility; 2) through testimonial injustice: this happens when the speaker suffers a credibility deficit caused by prejudice in the hearer related with a feature/s of the speaker; 3) by the use of hermeneutical injustice that occurs when she enjoys less than some reasonable level of participation in the generation of shared social meanings (concepts, interpretive tropes, and so on). The marginalization may be general or it may be highly localized to one specific area of experience.

Table 1 – *the epistemic contribution capability* – synthesizes the principal arguments of Fricker’s proposition on the epistemic contribution capability:

EPISTEMIC CONTRIBUTION CAPABILITY	WAYS OF FRUSTRATING THE EPISTEMIC CONTRIBUTION CAPABILITY		
Production of <i>informational</i> (information, evidence, hypothesis, argumentation) and <i>interpretive</i> (concepts used, alternative interpretations, other relevant critical materials) <i>materials</i> .	Deliberately: Physical force Coercion Legal order...	Testimonial injustice: The speaker suffers a credibility deficit caused by hearer’s prejudice.	Hermeneutical injustice: She enjoys less than some reasonable level of participation in the generation of shared social meanings.

David Coady (2017: 64) points out that hermeneutical injustice, unlike testimonial injustice, occurs *prior to communicative activity*. The concept of hermeneutic marginalization in turn is explained as a matter of belonging ‘to a group which does not have access to equal participation in the generation of social meanings’ (Fricker, 2013: 1319). Coady argues that Fricker’s account of hermeneutical injustice in terms of hermeneutic marginalization is (at least implicitly) a principle of distributive justice:

‘The egalitarian principle according to which it is a requirement of justice that everyone should have equal access to participation in the generation of social meanings. That is, everyone should have equal hermeneutic power. To be marginalized with respect to a certain good is just to have less than an equal share of it’ (Coady, 201 : 65).

Hermeneutical injustice is also addressed by José Medina (2017: 42) who stresses that this kind of injustice occurs when subjects are not simply mistreated as intelligible communicators, but also prevented from developing and exercising a distinctive *voice*, that is, prevented from participating in meaning-making and meaning-sharing practices. In this sense, Medina adds an active component to the epistemic capability (although he is not using this term) illustrating that is not only an issue of giving interpretive materials, but also having the possibility of participation in epistemic practices.

Hermeneutical injustices of this extreme form, continues Medina (2017), not only demand special attention, but also call for a response that is different

in kind to the response appropriate for addressing non-fatal hermeneutical injustices in which one's status and agency as a communicator and interpreter is preserved even if seriously constrained.

Medina dissents from Fricker's interpretation of hermeneutical injustice. For her, hermeneutical injustices are epistemic wrongs that simply happen, without perpetrators, without being committed by anyone in particular, for they result from lacunas or limitations in 'the collective hermeneutical resource' of a culture. Although Fricker accepts the agential production of hermeneutical injustices, she considers it 'a purely structural phenomenon with no individual perpetrator' (Fricker, 2016). But according to Medina, in some cases there seem to be such perpetrators, for example, in the case of racial hermeneutical injustices. He highlights some cases of hermeneutical injustice which function performatively when subjects are judged as unintelligible or less intelligible than other subjects not because of the words they use but because of their communicative performance or expressive style, or when hermeneutical injustices are also often committed in and through interpersonal dynamics. This occurs, for example, when there are hermeneutical intimidations in interpersonal exchanges, as is well illustrated by the literature on micro-aggressions. Or, hermeneutical injustices can also occur according wherein hermeneutical harm transpires through undermining or destroying the meaning-making and meaning-sharing capacities of the victims of such harm.

All these different interpretations of hermeneutical injustice will be useful to analyze the kind of epistemic injustice that our two case studies highlight.

Participatory Video Action Research in Lagos (Nigeria)

In this section we would like to describe our first case which shows the possibilities of challenging epistemic injustice from a different approach to knowledge production. The case is a participatory video (PV) action-research approach developed in Lagos, Nigeria.

During one intense week (between 6th and 10th February, 2017) three academics from Spanish and British Universities (in partnership with Justice and Empowerment Initiative (JEI) and the Nigerian Slum/Informal Settlement Federation), implemented a 5-day collaborative workshop in Lagos with 25 members of the Federation from 16 different communities from around the city. In the following pages, we briefly describe Lagos' context with regard to security of tenure, which is one of the main threats of slum dwellers in that city. Subsequently, we outline how the action research was conducted.

Lagos: the Struggle of Urban Poor's for Security of Tenure

Lagos is the largest city in Africa (with 23 million inhabitants), and this is in no small part due to steady migration from across Nigeria and beyond, whether from those fleeing violence and natural disasters, or those seeking economic opportunities. Simultaneously, Lagos has long been a fishing and trading hub for coastal communities from across (what is now) Nigeria and Benin. An estimated two-thirds of the city's 23 million inhabitants live in riverine slums that are populated by fishing communities that migrated from other riverine areas in Lagos State, other states in Nigeria, and across the border in Benin. Other migrant groups, such as those coming from northern Nigeria, may have lived in Lagos for decades but (if poor), tend to live *off-the map* in informal enclaves, holding onto different cultural traditions and communal ways of life.

One defining characteristic of these slums is a lack of security of tenure. It refers to legal protection for one's occupation of a particular land, structure, or premise, and can be ensured through land law, landlord and tenant law, or otherwise. Without security of tenure, inhabitants of informal settlements live in constant fear of eviction.

According to JEI there has been a recent spate of mass evictions of the urban poor in Lagos, following on a series of mass evictions in recent years,¹ and you subsisting threat of continued evictions to all waterfront informal settlements across the state.² On 9th October 2016, Lagos State Governor Akinwunmi Ambode convened a press briefing in Ilubirin at which he announced: 'we will commence demolition of all the shanties around the creeks in Lagos State [...] and also around our waterways in the next seven days' (Ambode, 2016). One of the most bloody events was the eviction that took place on the 9-11th November: over 30,000 people were forcibly evicted from Otodo Gbame, and thousands more from Ebute-Ikate, two informal settlements on the Lagos Lagoon in Lekki Phase 1. JEI has reported that the demolition of Otodo Gbame was carried out by the Nigerian Police, the Nigerian Military, the Nigerian Civil Defense Corps, and the Lagos State Government Task Force during the middle of the night. It included the use of fire and a 'caterpillar' (excavator) to demolish peoples' homes. Evictees fled the fires and bullets and tear gas shot by police, running into the Lagos Lagoon where at least 11 people lost their lives.

According to JEI team, the forced eviction and demolition of Otodo Gbame

1 Including the mass forced evictions in Badia East (March 2012, February 2013, and September 2015), Makoko-Temideri (2005, and April/December 2010), Makoko-Iwaya (July 2012), Ago Egun Bariga (July 2012), Atinporome (December 2013), Odioragunshi (March 2013), and Iwaya (August 2017), to name a few.

2 See Joint Press Release by JEI, the Federation, and six other prominent Nigerian civil society organizations condemning the evictions at Otodo Gbame despite the subsisting court order against demolition (JEI et al, 2017). https://static1.squarespace.com/static/535d0435e4b0586b1fc64b54/t/58f751fb6b8f5b7002884069/1492603488178/Joint+Press+Statement+%2823+March+2017%29_FINAL.pdf (accessed 25 February 2020).



Source: Andrew Maki, 2017, personal communication.

PICTURE 1: Otodo Gbame after eviction

was carried out in disregard of a subsisting court order restraining the Police and the Lagos State Government from carrying out any demolition or eviction of waterfront communities across Lagos State. Furthermore, JEI and the Federation argue that the Lagos State Government has not rescinded its eviction threat. Instead, in the face of a mass outcry, community organizing, and legal actions against evictions, the Government has reaffirmed its commitment to demolish waterfront informal settlements in public statements on several occasions. It has, however, tried to publicly deny its role in the violent demolition of Otodo Gbame, after first publicly affirming its role in demolishing the community, and despite massive evidence to the contrary – perhaps a sign that it does not want to be publicly associated with the terrible methods (fire, demolition in the middle of the night) used in that demolition (Lagos State High Court, 2017).

JEI has reviewed the public justifications for forced evictions and demolitions of urban informal settlements. Most prominently, these include ‘getting rid of criminals’ (Lagos and Port Harcourt, 2016; Port Harcourt, 2012) ‘city beautification’ (Port Harcourt, 2009-10), ‘clearing drainage’ (Lagos, 2011), ‘enforcing compliance with a master plan’ (Abuja, 2003-2007), and sometimes ‘removing people from unsafe conditions/environments,’ e.g., from flood-prone areas or from underneath high-tension wires (Lagos 1990 and 2012).³ Also, the Lagos waterfront communities are publicly named as the ‘abode of miscreants/

3 One of the most prominent examples of the State using the ‘well-being of residents’ as a cover for a massive land grab was the notorious forced eviction of Maroko by the then military government of Lagos led by Col. Rasaki in 1990. It rendered over 300,000 people homeless. In 2012, when a Lagos State High Court judge finally delivered judgment in the case (which was filed in the days before the 1990 eviction), the judge reasoned that ‘the government could not be faulted for saving people from drowning’ as justification for the eviction since the Maroko area was flood prone (Lagos State High Court, 2017).

street urchins, kidnappers, touts' followed by subsequent allegations that they are home to 'Niger Delta militants,' 'Boko Haram terrorists,' and 'foreigners.' In Lagos, there is an added ethnic dimension, where the ruling class is dominated by ethnic Yoruba, while most informal settlements are made up of a multitude of ethnic minority groups, including the Egun, Ilaje, and Hausa. Accordingly, JEI review argues that the urban poor residing in informal settlements are frequently labeled as outsiders or foreigners, irrespective of whether or not they in fact migrated to Lagos from elsewhere in Nigeria or abroad.

To face this cascade of violent and illegal evictions, JEI and the Federation have increased their media strategy in trying to gain national and international echoes to make visible what is happening in Lagos. This is the reason why the PV project was seen as an interesting and useful approach to equip slum dwellers with communicative capacities to give them a voice and allow slum inhabitants to generate their own narratives and social meanings regarding what is occurring in Lagos coastal slums.

Rapid Collaborative Video Making

PV is 'a process of learning and action' (Wheeler, 2011) that aligns closely with participatory action research, providing a voice to (and promoting) the empowerment of participants. At a basic level, PV involves communities learning a set of techniques to create their own film in a collaborative way, and is therefore distinct from documentary filmmaking (Lunch and Lunch, 2006). PV can facilitate participation and empowerment as well as promoting the collaborative production of knowledge (Wheeler, 2011: 52). The methodology has been applied to numerous situations, and with multiple variations (Lunch and Lunch, 2006). This research emphasizes certain aspects of PV methodologies, in particular the notion that it enables the generation of co-learning, of the enactment of agency and collaborative knowledge production (Boni et al, 2017) in a process of 'rapid collaborative video making.' Where it has been argued that PV as a methodology focuses more on process than product (White, 2003), and therefore less concerned about appearance (Lunch and Lunch, 2006), one aspect of the methodology adopted in this research is the additional explicit focus on advocacy. Through the viewing and discussion of videos at the final workshop, the methodology recognizes the role of different actors in processes of shared intent. The use of PV in advocacy is beneficial when working in a context with NGOs that are collaborating with communities to influence decision making and secure rights for informal settlements.

This research project consisted of a 5-day collaborative workshop in Lagos with 25 members of the Federation from 16 different communities from around the city. Participants were selected by JEI according to different criteria: gender

balance, geographical provenience, age, and involvement in the Federation. Three members of the North universities plus one member of JEI acted as facilitators during the workshop. The activity was granted by the Development Planning Unity of the University College of London.

The workshop was structured in a way that closely followed the five stages of PV, namely: diagnosis; planning; production; curation; and, sharing:⁴

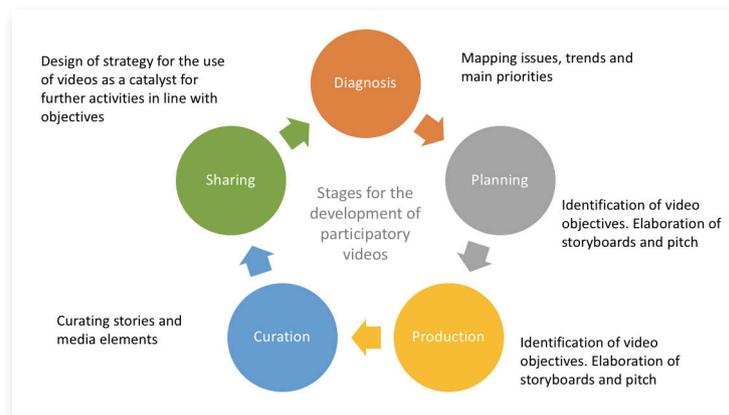


FIGURE 1: Stages of Participatory Video (Millan and Frediani, 2014).

Diagnosis: The diagnosis phase aims to identify shared concerns. This was undertaken in Lagos via a brainstorming session on the dimensions of well-being and how the threat of evictions impact upon them. The concept of PV was also introduced. Finally, initial community walks were planned and undertaken. These walks were structured around informal interviews and participant observation while teams conducted activities.

Planning: The planning stage involves the identification of strategic objectives of videos through the elaboration of storyboards and video pitch. The four groups began the planning phase by developing a basic narrative and video pitch, before working to build a more focused storyboard. The storyboard enabled participants to structure their videos, develop shot lists and identify gaps in order to ‘shoot for the edit.’

Production: The production stage of PV involves the actual filming, which was carried out across a full day by each group in each of the communities upon which they were focusing.

Curation: The curation stage is when the stories are put together to create the video. Following a review of the storyboards, the participants were trained in the skills required for successful editing of their films.

Sharing: The final stage of a PV initiative involves the design of strategies

4 For a full explanation of the methodology, see The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (2017).

for the use of videos as a catalyst for further activities in line with the strategic objectives of the video. During the final day of the workshop in Lagos, an initial group discussion was undertaken in order to consider the role that PV has played in understanding dimensions of well-being. This followed a public screening of the movies to participants and guests followed by discussion on next steps.



PICTURES 2 AND 3: Images of the PV workshop

Source: Alexander McFarlane, 2017, personal communication.

During the PV workshop, the four groups produced four videos whose main features are described in Table 2 – *Main Narratives of the Four Videos Produced during PV*:

<p>▶ VIDEO 1 REFUGEE IN MY OWN CITY https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4emhy_o2_pa#action=share [3:43]</p>	<p>This video is located in the Sogunro community where local residents are hosting ‘refugees’ from Otodo Gbame community, which suffered a dramatic eviction. Through five interviews with two welcoming Sogunro’s residents and three people evicted from Otodo Gbame, the video tells two main stories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how the Otodo Gbame eviction happened and what have been its consequences for the people evicted; • the conditions in which refugees are living in the host community.
<p>▶ VIDEO 2 WE ARE PART OF YOU. RESPECT OUR RIGHT https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wr7ohjkFLoY#action=share [5:34]</p>	<p>This video is located in the Otodo Gbame community where a recent eviction occurred. Through five interviews with Otodo Gbame residents and one interview with a lawyer expert on the Nigerian eviction legal system, this video strives to show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the effect of the eviction on Otodo Gbame’s population; • how the eviction is violating Nigerian law.

<p>▶ VIDEO 3 KEEP OUR DREAMS ALIVE https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tM6CER4w5Rw#action=share [6:43]</p>	<p>This video is located in Ebute Ilaje Bariga community where, recently, Governor Ambode banned the sand business, which was the main livelihood for all inhabitants. Through six interviews (three women and three men from this community) the video aims to show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the history of this community before the ban; • how the stoppage has affected many aspects of people's lives.
<p>▶ VIDEO 4 THE RIGHT TO WORK IN MY COMMUNITY https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JS9vi_Ccf_A#action=share [5:42]</p>	<p>This video is also located in Ebute Ilaje Bariga community and, similarly to the previous one, aims to show how the ban of the sand business ordered by Governor Ambode has changed the community.</p> <p>The structure of this video is slightly different from the other three in two regards: firstly, six of the nine characters that appear are members of the PV team that made this video. They wanted to appear in the movie as a way of denouncing how the Ebute community is living after the ban. Secondly, the first part of this video contains a drama, a short representation of how Governor Ambode approaches the lagoon and banned the sand business. The other three characters are a disabled woman, one of the oldest women of Ebute, and a young well-educated man. The three of them are referring to the bad effects that the stoppage had on the well-being of dwellers.</p>

Peace and Region: An Alternative Pedagogical Approach to Territory, Communities, Policy Makers and Students in Ibagué (Colombia)

Universidad de Ibagué, a medium-size private university (according to Colombian standards, with around 5,600 students and 330 teachers) was founded in 1980 by a group of businessmen and civic leaders from the Department of Tolima. It has defined in its mission is aiming to provide comprehensive training for leaders and entrepreneurs with solid scientific and professional training, with deep-rooted ethical and moral principles, and being committed to social, cultural, and economic regional development. The characteristics of the region where it is located are especially relevant to understanding the mission of the University.

Tolima department⁵ has suffered of high violence levels produced by the armed conflict between the State, civilians, guerrillas, and illegal armed groups. Conflict has impacted negatively upon the human development of the territory,

5 Colombia is politically divided into departments.

putting Tolima in the 12th place among 32 departments with higher poverty levels in Colombia (UNDP-PNUD, 2012). Colombia has had different stages of civil war from the beginning of the 20th century. First, as a dispute between the two traditional political parties up to the 1960s and after a period of truce, guerrillas emerged to fight for social rights becoming (in the 1980s) economic organizations pursuing illegal businesses. In 2016, a peace agreement was signed between the Colombian government and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) starting a disarmament process in 2017. Within this context is that Universidad de Ibagué, located in the region where the FARC was born, has taken an active role to transform the context and to build sustainable peace processes by bringing together students with communities to enhance human development capabilities.

Peace and Region Program Characteristics

The program Peace and Region (P&R) was conceived from 2009 and put into operation in 2011 as an option for students in their last academic semester to do voluntary work in one of the 47 municipalities of the Department of Tolima. P&R has been mainly focused upon in-place training for students with four wide-ranging objectives: 1) to provide a comprehensive training for students from a systematic scenario of citizenship education; 2) to transform positively the regional environment; 3) to support public and mixed organizations through a sustainable and long-term process to improve their performance and municipal development; and, 4) to strengthen regional teaching, research, and social projection.⁶

Between 2011 and 2018, 808 students from 16 undergraduate academic programs have gone through the experience, and 400 projects have been carried out in 45 of the 47 municipalities of Tolima. From 2015 onwards, after a curricular reform that included changes for all the undergraduate programs, P&R was introduced as a graduation condition, so all cohorts of students have the semester P&R as part of their curriculum, reinforcing the training of ethical and integral professionals committed to regional social needs.

Students go through two components: understanding the environment, and participation in projects. Understanding the environment implies a discovery process that leads students to become interested in knowing and *making sense* of the social context of territories where their experience takes place. The students make an analysis of the social reality that involves the recognition of dimensions that characterize the municipality e.g., the historical, sociocultural, economic, environmental, and political dimensions. Through participation in projects students are part of interdisciplinary teams composed by the

6 Peace and Region program website, <https://pazyregion.unibague.edu.co/%C2%BFcomo-trabaja-paz-y-regi%C3%B3n>.

communities and local governments, developing an action plan aligned with the needs of municipalities and local development agendas.

P&R is one of the most ambitious programs Universidad de Ibagué is undertaking. In order to be fully immersed in the local reality, and to respond to the program goals, students must live in the municipality of Tolima where the project takes place, always with the advice of teachers and regional advisors that support their formative process. The organization that receives the student(s) provides housing and living expenses as a counterpart for the contribution of the student(s) to its projects. Continuity of the projects is fundamental, so agreements with the organizations last at least four years in order to guarantee a sustainable and responsible action ethic within the territory and communities. Hence, the program is structured to guarantee that each semester the new incoming students work on the projects based on the results that the previous groups left (Reyes and Aldana, 2011).



PICTURE 4: Project – Strengthening the cotton sector, alliance with FAO in Aipe, Huila

Source: Diana Cruz, 2019, personal communication.

Projects should have several characteristics. Firstly, they should be locally relevant and respond to the social needs and problems of communities and should be aligned with the municipal development plans. Secondly, they should be viable and sustainable. Thirdly, the projects should address the promotion of peace, development, and the exercise of citizenship. Fourthly, and this is interesting from an epistemic point of view, projects should be based on

interdisciplinary team work and should be built around dialogic spaces with local actors. In that regard, second order learning meetings are organized three times during the semester in order to reflect with the students and communities upon their adaptation to the context, cooperative work, conflict resolution, decision making processes, as well as conceptual aspects such as peace, development, and citizenship.

The following figure represents the stages students go through:

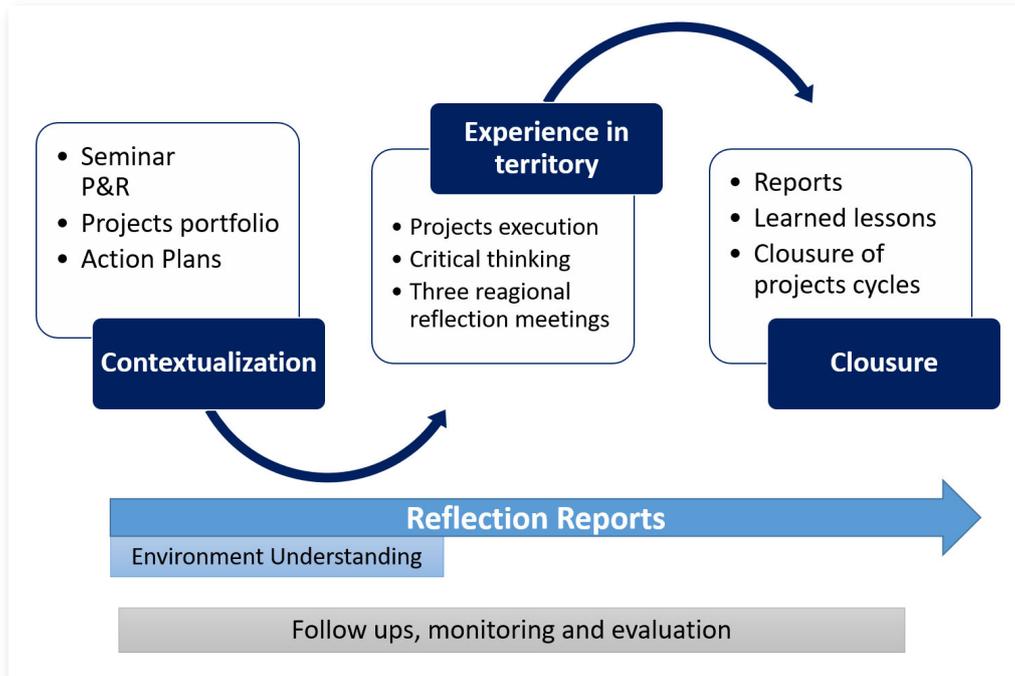


FIGURE 2: stages of P&R seminar

In order to enhance the impact of P&R, there is an observation period of the experiences and interactions between the university, represented by the students, teachers, and advisors, as well as the communities represented by social leaders, beneficiaries, and local authorities. Problems, projects, and real-life situations are used as teaching materials for case studies, and there is also the identification of potential research projects structured with the communities to be funded by the university and external organizations to provide alternative solutions to needs identified and set by the communities.

The Pedagogical Approach: Service Learning

P&R program is rooted in the service-learning approach as a way of experimental education where both the students and the communities participating learn and benefit from each other. The classical definition of service-learning is given by Robert Sigmon (1979) as reciprocal learning in which both i.e., providers and recipients of the service, benefit from each other. Also, service learning could

serve as a way to enhance civic engagement and social justice for communities. In the words of Eyler (2002: 519), service-learning contributes to teaching and embodying responsible citizenship in a number of ways: involvement in authentic service to the community; development of positive attitudes toward community engagement; development of a sense of personal efficacy and commitment; development of a deeper understanding of social issues; development of lifelong learning; problem solving skills; development of skills for community action and involvement; development of post formal reasoning abilities necessary to deal with complex social problems.



PICTURE 5: Activities with children for understanding the environment in Fresno, Tolima.

Source: Universidad de Ibagué.

Although the program is structured from the university side, learning happens and transforms both community and students, and it is also shaped by tacit knowledge⁷ of the local actors through interaction. In this sense, the capability of epistemic contribution is enhanced by the production and sharing of information through the actions of faculty members, advisors, students, social leaders, communities, and local governors. Practical reasoning happens before, during, and after the participation of all actors in service projects, thereby building knowledge and understanding of social phenomena.

Service-learning implies reflection from all participants during every stage of the service preparation, execution, and evaluation. Following Eyler (2002),

⁷ We understand tacit knowledge as one that has not been articulated. The degree of tacitness depends on the ability of the individual to articulate their knowledge into words (Velasco, 2015).

a reflection map should guide the learning pathways in order to successfully build reasoning and reflective capabilities, as can be seen in Table 3 – *Service-learning reflection roadmap*:

	PREPARATION	ON SITE	AFTER EXPERIENCE
SELF-REFLECTION PROCESS	Definition of personal goals Expectations.	Fieldwork journal.	Final reports about the learning process.
PEER-REFLECTION PROCESS	Previous discussion with classmates about hopes and fears Dialog with students that have successfully finished the experience.	Group meetings at least three times during the semester.	Team presentations and discussions.
REFLECTION WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS	Expectations setting between communities and university officials.	Continuous feedback between students and communities. Active role of advisors as bridges between students, teachers, and communities.	Results presentations in every project cycle.

Before undergoing the experience, students are required to take a seminar where the principles of citizenship, critical reasoning, ethics, communication skills, interdisciplinary work, and action research are reinforced through different pedagogical strategies. Once in the field, students engage with communities with the support of academic advisors and faculty members in order to comply with technical requirements of community projects and to ensure they use social skills appropriate to elicit tacit knowledge through learning by doing and interacting (Lundvall and Johnson, 1994).



Source: Diana Cruz, 2019, personal communication.

PICTURE 6: Academic visit to Farm El Ruby, Planadas, Tolima

Epistemic Capabilities Enhanced

In this section we argue that the two aforementioned experiences could generate a positive impact upon the epistemic capability expansion. To obtain this information, we conducted interviews and did participant observation in Lagos and Ibagué.

PV in Lagos

All the participants highlighted how the video process developed technical skills related to video production. Some of the most remarked aspects were: 1) How to handle a camera; 2) How to interview; 3) How to build a narrative and a message for an audience: and, 4) How to edit. These abilities have instrumental value and can open up future opportunities for the participants. In that sense, such abilities can be considered as a means to the epistemic capability that is, according to Fricker, the production of informational and interpretive materials.

An interesting element in the epistemic capability expansion was the mixture of profiles among the participants. Some of them were relevant activists in the Federation, while others were newcomers. Some were middle age while others were younger and closer to the digital technology world. This mixture of profiles and experiences brought a very interesting learning process in which people less aware of the situation of communities gained a more political approach to the causes and strategies to overcome insecurity of tenure. Younger participants

brought their interests and skills to work on the technical side of the video, helping, in a very collective and solidary way, the less skilled participants.

Moreover, the participants acknowledge that they have developed a confidence among themselves, and have also been able to nurture relationships between themselves. Overcoming obstacles, especially in the production and editing phase (lack of batteries, or lack of boats to access communities, or difficulties with the editing software) has been a way of building relationships among the group. In addition, they enjoyed working as a team during the process. The group working on the fourth video performed a drama and ended up having lunch together in one of the resident's homes, experiencing a relaxing, collective moment that enhanced trust and reciprocity. With regard to the relation between participants and community groups, we were able to see how the video process allowed the participants to better understand what was happening in the communities. For instance, the sand business has been a difficult issue to engage with, and the PV worked as a way to help participants to find paths toward advocacy. Also, the refugee issue was an unusual topic to engage with; the PV opened up the possibility of showing how the community is organizing to accommodate refugees, and how things have to improve to overcome this situation, which is a serious threat to residents' well-being.

Developing confidence, relationship, and trust have also been means that have contributed to the exercise of the epistemic capability. Likewise, the relational component allowed the expansion of the epistemic capability. When participants are interacting among themselves and arguing, doubting and proposing as a community, they are truly developing informational materials which is the manifestation of the epistemic capability, i.e., its very functioning.

We also observed how PV worked as a collective mechanism to process and express traumatic experience. This is especially evident in the video 'The right to work in my own community' where, as we described before, five of the characters were likewise participants. They wanted to appear in the video to tell their story; they wanted to communicate the injustice of what they were experiencing. But at the same time, they wanted to present a way to address change. In that sense, we can observe how the epistemic capability enhanced through the video making led the participants to express their traumatic experience which, in our view, can be considered another capability related to the epistemic capability.

To sum up, our observations with regards to the PV process in Lagos were as follows: the abilities learned through the process, plus developing confidence, relationships and trust among participants, and interactions with local communities, have been a means to expand epistemic capability. This has been

reified in the production of the four videos (its functioning) and had another unexpected effect (a new capability), namely the opportunity to transform pain into action i.e., expressing a traumatic experience through the process of video making.

P&R in Tolima

Analyzing how an experience such as P&R contributes to the construction of informational and interpretive materials in the sense Fricker (2015) explains, and the reflection map through which the experience is built, we can find specific elements that a service-learning strategy provides to enhance epistemic capabilities of the different actors involved in the program.

Firstly, there is an agreement with communities, municipalities governments and the university to structure social projects to benefit local actors that are included in government development plans to be funded and prioritized. This happens through previous meetings among social leaders, politicians and P&R program coordinators to set meaningful and practical goals to enhance social well-being. These previous meetings can be considered as pre-arrangements to the exercising of the epistemic capability. Trust relationships, respect for each other's contributions and clear rules are essential in this process.

Secondly, when students go to the municipalities to become fully immersed in the projects they will work with the communities or the local government, they have an induction process with the local communities they will live with in order to learn from them, understand their expectations, and also to provide their knowledge toward the solution of specific problems. Again, this moment can also be considered as a part of the essential previous arrangements to the exercising of the epistemic capability.

Thirdly, during the P&R semester, information, evidence, hypotheses, argumentation and also interpretive materials are collaboratively built respecting each other's knowledge. Through the three regional seminars with the students, a collective process is guided by the academic advisors to reflect with students on their adaptation to the context, cooperative work, conflict resolution, decision making, and conceptual aspects such as peace, development, and citizenship. This reflection process with the classmates re-signifies the actions they perform and how their understanding is continuously fed with more experiences, information, and reflections being produced by the interaction with different actors. It is at this stage when the expansion of the epistemic capability takes place not only for the students, but also for other actors involved e.g., academic advisors, local authorities, and community's members. However, the material representation of this capability, and its functioning, is mainly performed by

the students when they produce reports that contain reflections about their contributions to the project and the territory. In order to do that, they have to use different qualitative methods to approach communities and to generate interpretative materials to write and understand local knowledge.

Finally, the experience closes with a formal presentation of results both to the local project leaders and communities, and the academic advisor. This is another example of the exercise of epistemic capability mainly by the students in dialog with other actors. Its functioning is the formal presentation of results that documents all the learning processes introjected up until that point. Also, this documentation is a necessary arrangement for the expansion of epistemic capabilities of other students and local actors, who will give continuity to the project.

Summarizing our observations of the P&R program, there are previous necessary arrangements (meetings, agreements, etc.) which make possible the epistemic capability exercise mainly, but not only, by the students. It happens during the P&R semester when information, argumentation, materials are collaboratively built. These are the functioning of the epistemic capability that allows, as well generates an expansion of, the epistemic capabilities of successive participants in the P&R program.

Are these Two Experiences Facing Epistemic Injustice?

In the previous section we have highlighted how the two initiatives have enhanced epistemic capabilities of marginalized subjects in the production of knowledge in the scientific realm: slums and dwellers of coastal slums in Lagos, and students and communities in the Colombian Department of Tolima. However, in both cases, we can observe both positive and negative features in challenging the three kinds of injustices highlighted by Fricker (2015).

From one side, the PV participants have challenged the epistemic injustice that occurs in a deliberate way. Although the official version is still predominant due to power imbalances that exist in Lagos in the production of information and social understanding of what is happening in the coastal slums, PV participants were able to produce the videos and, in that sense, to demonstrate that, with appropriate methodologies, everyone is able to produce knowledge.

However, hermeneutical injustice as described by Coady (2017) is still present, as the inhabitants of the slums have been systematically denied their hermeneutical power, and equal access to participation in the generation of social meaning. The four videos are drops in an ocean of hermeneutical marginalization, which has perpetrators, as Medina (2017) claims. The injustices that the slums dwellers are facing are not happening without intention. There is

an intentional act of the Governor and other official stances to label the slums inhabitants terrorists, criminals and kidnappers to be able to legitimize and therefore proceed with the eviction plans. We can state the same with regard to testimonial injustice. We can't perceive that the four videos can have an effect on the hearer's prejudice that confers a lack of credibility vis-à-vis the epistemic producer. As came up in conversation with journalist and members of JEI, the four videos, in order to be effectively used inside the courts, need to be relevant and reliable, showing a more professional editing. Although it would have been possible, it would have compromised the participatory aspects of the process by having a stronger focus on format.

But, from a more positive point of view, we can consider this PV experience a step in the overall media strategy that JEI and the Federation are following, which brings together other project and initiatives aimed at generating social meanings from marginalized actors. Also, it can be considered as a positive example of how a research project driven by two Universities from the Global North can be conducted in a horizontal way, overcoming the usual power imbalances that characterize university and community relations in research. The PV methodology allowed participants to build their own narratives represented in the four videos; the role of the academics was to facilitate that process, not to impose their own perspective.

Moreover, the four videos have been screened in different academic settings in the United Kingdom, Spain, Argentina, Canada, and South Africa. They were (and will be) presented at academic conferences, and have been used as training materials on PV. In that sense, the voices of slum dwellers in Lagos have been, and will be, heard by academic actors and practitioners. All of it is not enough to reverse the multiplicity of epistemic injustices but it is a positive contribution, not only to these specific actors but could also inspire other possibilities to expand epistemic capabilities for marginalized communities.

From another perspective, the experience of P&R highlights another kind of epistemic injustice connected with the power relations in the production of knowledge. As Allen (2017: 190) discusses, the prevailing university institutionalized the homogenization and normalization of the content of knowledge, the centralization of knowledge around core axioms, and the hierarchization of different forms of knowledge production. This can be seen as – but is not necessarily – a form of testimonial injustice that is happening in Ibagué, although the program aims at providing meaningful learning both for students and communities, and respect for each other's views and expertise. Since the program is based on non-traditional practices, its adoption and putting into operation has not come without criticism from students and some faculty

members of the University. A recent evaluation carried out at Universidad de Ibagué points out that, on the one hand, there is resistance from some faculty members since it impacts the formal curriculum by cutting out disciplinary courses. On the other hand, for some students the fact that it is a mandatory program that forces them to have a non-disciplinary social experience is seen as a waste of time, a delay in the insertion to the working market, and even as an obligation to perform unskilled tasks that a professional should not be doing. It is interesting to note that these perspectives are of students who have not yet done the experience, because the perception of students after participating in P&R is generally very positive, recalling that the learning that it entailed is valued to a greater extent.

The rejection, tensions, and resistance from part of the academic community toward this proposal illustrate some of the cognitive injustices that Fricker (2015) highlights. The hegemonic knowledge, codified and that follows the academic formal structure for its construction is predominant, and seen as valid when compared with other types of knowledge. Proposals such as P&R controverts traditional learning strategies, knowledge construction, empowering of students and communities through participatory work where tacit knowledge is as valid as the formal one. Hence, we see power tensions that enforce testimonial and hermeneutical injustice in the academy. This brings us to a structural question: What is relevant knowledge in the University, and who are the legitimate sources of this Knowledge? What and whose knowledge counts? We find a structural hermeneutic underestimation of a type of knowledge that comes from experience, field immersion, and participatory strategies giving equal importance to non-hegemonic actors.

We also perceive a prejudice from students and faculty members toward P&R academic advisors. Since the contact and following up of students is made by professional advisors that are not faculty, they suffer from low credibility among students and faculty members. They usually receive numerous criticisms, reinforced at times by teachers because they are perceived as mere technicians who do not have academic authority to guide students through the whole process. While there are adjustments that need to be made as part of the learning and feedback process related to the tutoring these advisors provide, the criticisms are sometimes unjustified and not related to their actual performance. As noted by Fricker (2015) this configures testimonial injustice.

Furthermore, the academic incentives system both for tenure and economic bonuses privilege formal outcomes such as academic publications, teaching materials, and other types of industrial property products. Regardless of the importance the program has for the academic authorities of the university,

there is still a disconnection between the program, the formal curriculum, and the academic value for teaching, research, and social projection. The university is currently working on structuring a more robust framework that integrates different types of learning and knowledge production, in order to build a human capabilities university policy that impacts every aspect of the academic life. There is a recognition and validation from the authorities to epistemological diversity in order to consciously enforce cognitive justice, but this requires a change in culture in addition to formal measures.

Conclusions

The role of universities, and of higher education in general, in enhancing human development for social equality and well-being is fundamental. Regardless of the mission of the university, positively transforming society with the training of highly qualified and ethical citizens, finding solutions to social problems, and advancing the comprehension of the world in all its dimensions is part of the social contract which every university, by virtue of its very existence, has.

As we have seen in our two case studies, the University as social entity has great potential to confront injustices, especially those that originate in epistemic imbalances. The Lagos experience shows how participatory action-research methodologies could promote epistemic capabilities and functioning, making it possible for the PV participants to generate interpretive materials to speak of their own realities. However, this experience is too limited to address testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, although we consider its reversing a deliberate epistemic injustice set by the Lagos' Government. By the use of coercion and other methods, the Lagos' government is impeding the slum dwellers having their voices heard, and it is building a narrative where the slum dwellers are identified as terrorists, criminals, and predators of the environment. The four videos produced are disputing this version, and depict a totally different image of the inhabitants of Lagos' slums.

The Colombian experience highlights the potential of an institutional strategy to contribute toward confronting local challenges related with peace, development, and citizenship through a service-learning program. P&R is a remarkable experience that is building epistemic capabilities among students and other local participants. However, P&R is also facing challenges- especially inside the institution- showing the reality in many Universities of the Global South and North wealth divide. There is a hermeneutical and structural injustice that tends to give more value to disciplinary and codified knowledge at the expense of experiential and tacit knowledge. Also, this example shows the difficulties of carrying out different pedagogical strategies which aim to foster experiential knowledge and abilities produced outside the classroom and

connected with local needs and demands, and also an idea of citizenship that can contribute to peace and regional development.

However, we nonetheless believe that cognitive justice is a way to contribute to a more democratic and equal world. As Sousa Santos (2014) proposes, through cognitive justice we may arrive at a global social democracy in which there is recognition of the multiplicity of social practices and experiences of the world—but there can be no global social democracy if there is no democracy between forms of knowledge. This requires the university to rethink its traditional view of scientific knowledge as characterized by hierarchies and mono-disciplines. By way of contrast, De Sousa Santos (2014) suggests a ‘pluri-university knowledge,’ which is contextual, practical, and whose results have been agreed between researchers and users. It is trans-disciplinary, and due to its contextual character, is always in dialog with other types of knowledge. This kind of knowledge thus looks for a solidarity reorientation of the relationship between university and society. It offers a wide range of action informed by scientific and practical knowledge, is considered useful and shared by researchers, students, and citizen groups alike. This can contribute to create broader epistemic communities that transform universities within the public spaces where they are situated, where citizens and social groups can intervene without exclusively being either learners, or objects of research.⁸

Alejandra Boni
Professor
Ingenio (CSIC-Universitat Politècnica de
València)
email: aboni@ingenio.upv.es

Diana Velasco
Adjunct Professor
Universidad de Ibagué
email: diana.velasco@unibague.edu.co



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