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ENTRE ABISMOS E HORIZONTES, DIÁLOGOS: UMA EXPERIÊNCIA DE EXTENSÃO NA UFG

BETWEEN ABYSSES AND HORIZONS, DIALOGUES: AN
EXTENSION EXPERIENCE AT UFG

ENTRE ABISMOS Y HORIZONTES, DIÁLOGOS: UNA
EXPERIENCIA DE EXTENSIÓN EN LA UFG

Eliane Gonçalves

Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG), Goiânia, Goiás, Brasil
elianego@ufg.br

Deyvid Santos Morais

Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG), Goiânia, Goiás, Brasil
ydmorais@gmail.com

Resumo: Este artigo trata do projeto de extensão “Abismos e Horizontes: Diálogos sobre o Contemporâneo”, conduzido pelo Ser-Tão – Núcleo de Ensino, Extensão e Pesquisa em Gênero e Sexualidade da Faculdade de Ciências Sociais da Universidade Federal de Goiás –, entre 2020 e 2023, em modo remoto. Ao longo de três temporadas, o projeto proporcionou uma plataforma para a expressão de diversas vozes, incluindo intelectuais, ativistas e gestores/as de diversas regiões do país. O texto contempla as 14 entrevistas realizadas, oferecendo reflexões críticas e

delineando caminhos de superação das crises sanitária e política no período recente. Esta iniciativa de extensão universitária, que alcançou considerável participação do público interno e externo da UFG, exemplifica a eficácia da interseção entre saberes acadêmicos e não acadêmicos, demonstrando como a mobilização de diferentes agentes fomenta estratégias coletivas de análise e transformação da realidade.

Palavras-chave: Brasil. Conhecimento. Democracia. Extensão universitária. Política.

Abstract: This article deals with the extension project “Abyssees and Horizons: Dialogues about the Contemporary”, conducted by Ser-Tão – Teaching, Extension and Research Group on Gender and Sexuality of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Federal University of Goiás, between 2020 and 2023 remotely. Throughout three seasons, the project provided a platform for the expression of different voices, including intellectuals, activists, and managers from various regions of the country. The text includes the 14 interviews carried out, offering critical reflections and outlining paths of overcoming the health and political crises in the recent period. This university extension initiative, which achieved considerable participation from UFG's internal and external public, exemplifies the effectiveness of the intersection between academic and non-academic knowledge. Thus, it demonstrates how the mobilization of different agents fosters collective strategies for analysis and transformation of reality.

Keywords: Brazil. Democracy. Knowledge. Politics. University extension.

Resumen: Este artículo examina el proyecto de extensión “Abismos y Horizontes: Diálogos sobre lo Contemporáneo”, realizado por Ser-Tão – Núcleo de Enseñanza, Extensión e

Investigación en Género y Sexualidad de la Facultad de Ciencias Sociales de la Universidad Federal de Goiás, de 2020 a 2023, en formato remoto. A lo largo de tres temporadas, el proyecto proporcionó una plataforma para la expresión de diversas voces, incluyendo intelectuales, activistas y gestores/as de diversas regiones del país. El texto incluye las 14 entrevistas realizadas, ofreciendo reflexiones críticas y delineando caminos de superación en las crisis sanitaria y política en el período reciente. Esta iniciativa de extensión universitaria, con participación notable de la comunidad interna y externa de la UFG, ilustra la eficacia de combinar conocimientos académicos y no académicos, demostrando cómo la colaboración de diferentes agentes impulsa estrategias colectivas de análisis y transformación de la realidad.

Palabras clave: Brasil. Conocimiento. Democracia. Extensión universitaria. Política.

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Introduction

Whatever the definition of university extension, it emphasizes its in-dissociability to education and research, encompassing an “interdisciplinary, educational, cultural, scientific, technological, and political process that promotes transformative interaction between the University and other areas of society” (CONSUNI Resolution No. 39/2020).¹ Extension reflects a mobilization of knowledge, an articulation between scholarly and non-scholarly knowledge engaging multiple agents. Compared to education and research, it holds a different status and prestige; however, Curricular Extension Activities (ACEx) have gained institutional strength and are now regulated by Resolution CEPEC/UFG No. 1699/2021 as part of graduate courses’ Pedagogical Projects (PPC). These activities also comprise an assessment item for the postgraduate programs evaluated by Capes.²

¹ **Original definition, in Brazilian Portuguese:** um “processo interdisciplinar, educativo, cultural, científico, tecnológico e político que promove a interação transformadora entre a Universidade e outros setores da sociedade” (RESOLUÇÃO CONSUNI Nº 39/2020).

² CAPES stands for: *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* - the **Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel**. CAPES is a Foundation within the Ministry of Education in Brazil whose central purpose is to coordinate efforts to improve the quality of Brazil’s faculty and staff in higher education through grant programs. CAPES is particularly concerned with the training of Doctoral candidates, Pre-doctoral short-term researchers, and Postdoctoral Scholars. (Source: Institute of International Education, 2024). More information available in: <https://www.iie.org/programs/capes/>

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According to data by the 2023 *Analisa UFG*, the university has 2013 active extension projects connected to its 30 academic units. It is worth mentioning the project **Ser-Tão - Education, Extension and Research Center on Gender and Sexuality**, recognized inside and outside the Federal University of Goiás (UFG).³ The group has conducted important collaborative research for 16 years since its beginning. Nonetheless, the courses, study groups, events, and projects reflect its true calling: fostering transformative dialogue in the topics that comprise its identity.

Until early 2020, the Center's initiatives were in-person. On different occasions, we offered activities on Campus I (Faculty of Law and Museum of Anthropology); within the grounds of the Pontifical Catholic University of Goiás (PUC/GO), in collaborative initiatives with this university; and at UFG's Cultural Center, among others. In recent years, the activities have been held at Campus II. The COVID-19 pandemic generated new collective actions to continue education, research, and extension, and the *Ser-Tão* project adhered to the remote and online world, reinventing itself. According to Cládia Mélo *et al.* (2021), 87.5% of public higher education institutions continued their extension activities during the pandemic in 2020. Of

³ **Original designations:** Ser-Tão - Núcleo de Ensino, Extensão e Pesquisa em Gênero e Sexualidade. Universidade Federal de Goiás.

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these, 87.9% adapted their activities and 71.8% relaxed their norms. In that sense, universities maintained extension activities and developed new continuity strategies even in this scenario.

Historically, *Ser-Tão* adds efforts to strengthen feminist, critical theory and shed light on disparity within the university. It applies a two-way street approach: it enables the integration of such debate into the academic curriculum, renewing it and highlighting its often hidden contributions to the scientific practice; and contributes to the internal academic environment, enabling an external movement, the connection through extensionist projects, research, and dialogue with activism and spaces of civil society.

This is a characteristic of similar extension projects. Márcia Alves da Silva (2018) reports the journey of the Gender and Diversity Observatory⁴ from the Federal University of Pelotas (UFPel), created in 2014 to approximate researchers connected to this theme with an interdisciplinary perspective. Through this acknowledgment, the Observatory could reach solidified regional groups, external to the university, like the City Council of Women's Rights and other autonomous collectives. Extension projects enable integration to impact university spaces, provoking them. Silva (2018, p. 296) mentions that

⁴ **Original designations:** Observatória de Gênero e Diversidade.

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Historically, just as women have been excluded from scientific knowledge production, issues of gender and sexuality have also been minimally incorporated into academic curricula, regardless of the significant output from feminist theory and gender studies. This situation directly results from a long exclusion period for women in humanity's history.⁵

The extensionist action as praxis of differences is essential, nonetheless, it does not erase the obstacles in promoting it considering the asymmetry within knowledge fields - for example, the old distinction between nature sciences, exact sciences, and human sciences, and, additionally, resource distribution to project development.

Beyond these challenges and opportunities for extension projects' journeys in Brazilian universities, the pandemic propelled the reinvention of multiple activities, as *Sert-Tão* exemplifies. Carmen Campos *et al.* (2022) indicate three extension projects from the State University of Maringá connected to the fight against domestic violence. They offer assistance and promote initiatives with the State and other civil society organizations. Furthermore, the projects reveal the difficulties in maintaining activities that secure

⁵ **Original citation, in Brazilian Portuguese:** Assim como as mulheres foram, historicamente, excluídas da produção de conhecimento científico, da mesma forma as temáticas de gênero e sexualidade também foram pouco incorporadas nos currículos acadêmicos, apesar da considerável produção advinda da teoria feminista e dos estudos de gênero. Essa situação é consequência direta de muito tempo de exclusão das mulheres na história da humanidade. (Silva, 2018, p. 296)

assistance for violence victims as well as for the women who research, mentioning that “the experience of the pandemic is not the same for men and women” (Campos *et al.*, 2022, p. 3).

Ser-tão Project and the Pandemic

Ser-Tão, connected to UFG’s Faculty of Social Sciences, conducted the extension project “Abysses and Horizons - dialogues about the contemporary”⁶ between 2020 and early 2023, the period when professors, students, and education professionals had to convert their households into workspaces and rethink their actions while social isolation and distancing occurred. In bimestrial sessions, the project reunited fourteen spokespersons - intellectuals, politicians, activists, and numerous social actors - committed to democracy. Professors Eliane Gonçalves and Luiz Mello, who created the project, also coordinated it for two cycles. Later, professors Mariana Prandini and Rayani Mariano coordinated the third cycle. In all of the cycles, we relied on extension scholarship recipients (Probec)⁷, volunteers, professors, and students connected to the Research Center. While

⁶ **Original title:** Abismos e Horizontes - diálogos sobre o contemporâneo.

⁷ UFG’s Pro-Rectorate of Extension and Culture conducts a yearly selective process called **Probec** to offer financial assistance for a limited number of extension projects. Students who receive financial aid thanks to this process are called “*bolsistas de extensão*” (extension scholarship recipients).

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respecting the plurality of voices and expression plurality as a criterion, the project successfully achieved its goal by welcoming people of different sexes/genders, races/ethnicities, generations, erotic/sexual orientations, and regions of the country. In summary, its primary goals were:

- To promote an environment to discuss national and international circumstances, through a critical and humanistic analysis of the sanitary, social, political, cultural, and economic crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- To facilitate the theoretical developments and practical ways to overcome exclusion, discrimination, and suffering, especially in social segments defined by multiple intersected axes of oppression, emphasizing gender, sexuality, color/race, age, and social class - among others;
- Contributing to the formulation of proposals and policies committed to overcoming structural inequality.

The article aims to assemble dialogues available on the *Ser-Tão* YouTube channel, offering a summarized description of the sessions, and focusing on notable and common aspects of people's commentary.

Year 1 - 2020

Sônia Correa inaugurated the first season sessions of “*Diálogos*” [Dialogues]. The guest is an architect, political theorist, and analyst who became one of the most prominent Brazilian feminists internationally. In addition to overseeing the Sexuality and Politics Observatory, a global forum composed of researchers and activists from numerous countries and regions around the world, for decades, she has been dedicated to advocating for sexual and reproductive rights, as well as other social causes, through both reflection and political action. According to Sônia, she was raised by an agnostic and secular family, directly influenced by the cultural environment of the 1960s, “a synthesis of micro and macropolitics”. Her debut in Brazilian feminism occurred in the 1970s and consisted of advocating for social justice and women’s health rather than liberal feminism. Sônia participated in all articulations that resulted in major global conferences of the United Nations in the 1990s: the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (1994), and the World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). She meticulously explored the scenery we live in and offered a provocative analysis to think of the abysses but also the horizons.

According to Sônia, we got through a scenery of double catastrophe: the election of Jair Bolsonaro as president, in 2018, and the COVID-19 pandemic, where the challenge is precisely “comprehending its inner anguish” and the axes that characterize it: the sense of disorder, crisis, structural violence, and corruption. During the pandemic, the anti-abortion and anti-gender virulence that have scarred Brazil since colonial times aggravated. The pandemic illustrates the biopolitical dimension, where gender and sexuality are not a smoke screen as we are led to believe, instead, they are at the center, “at the heart of these ideologies, right-wing mobilization and its project of society”.

Neoliberal politics became clear during the pandemic and made sexuality cross paths with the economy. It disclosed the accumulation dynamics where socially marked groups, for example, sexual workers, had difficulties in accessing emergency resources. Thus, she states: “It is a challenge for the future; we are not defending democracy, we’re at the stage of restraining democratic decay”. In this model of political management, citizens are reduced to consumers and voters, society as a political sphere disappears and the State is a necessary evil, existing solely for reprehension. What remains for the poor is (conservative) churches’ embrace, which invades social relations. Another challenge Sônia points out in the

agenda for sexual and reproductive justice, within the social rights field, is the possibility of building friendship and solidary politics, that is, not investing in isolated models of identity activism.

Our guest for the second session, Marco Aurélio Máximo Prado, approaches the matter similarly to Sônia Correa. He is an associate professor at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), holding a Doctoral Degree in Social Psychology from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), as well as a Ph.D. from the Center for Brazilian Studies at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst, USA. His personal presentation highlights interconnected axes that helped him build his trajectory as an activist and intellectual: 1) family origins and experiences in a contradictory environment - literate citizens, militaries, and a mother with “feminist rationale”, which allowed him to think philosophy and democracy “as political affection”; 2) the 1980s and ‘90s: the emergence of HIV/AIDS and the urban community experiences during Luiza Erundina’s government [first woman mayor of São Paulo (1988-1992)], the completion of his Master and Doctorate studies, Marxist analysis and Agnes Heller’s perspective on the importance of daily life; 3) Psychology as a profession and his experience as a therapist in a seamstresses’ labor union in São Paulo; 4) an academic life that provides immense pleasure and

“ties up loose ends” in a rare exercise of living democracy. In the 2000s, the Center of LGBT Human Rights and Citizenship (NUH/UFG) emerged.

Considering the pandemic in Brazil, Marco draws a parallel between it and the HIV/AIDS epidemic, in accord with his article in co-authorship with Rogério Diniz Junqueira (2020). They analyze the common ground between both experiences and, among other things, the inaccurate notion of “risk group”. From this perspective, he proposes viewing the pandemic as an opportunity, a methodological horizon beyond the catastrophe. Equally, he proposes thinking of gender and sexuality as articulated structures, devices, and scene arrangements, not just “as larger structures that govern us, preventing us from seeing the abysses and catastrophes.”

To Marco, the idea of the abyss comes from far away and bears longevity from the past and into the future. Mixing management with politics allows us to visualize how specific misalignments that have been normalized operate: the citizen became a consumer; the worker became a collaborator; and the people became mass. With time, we cease indignation, conform too much, and create too many identities, reinforcing hierarchy and exclusion in considerable cases. We obscure the frontiers, become indifferent and not different, without possibilities to ally ourselves

in political action. This abyss is a historical arrangement and, within the context of COVID-19, aligns with the shift to the right. It should be considered within the "inter-pandemic"⁸ and also as a dystopia. In the period between one and the other, the political crises worsened and the economic one was the worst in decades. During AIDS, Brazil had a responsible, courageous, and substantial stance, very different from what we observed during the COVID-19 management.

AIDS and COVID-19 have contact points, they refer to us and our connection manners. The pandemics impact the economy and the poor are the most affected, however, what concerns us is what is disputed: science, politics, and daily lives. The pandemic implicates from general risks, what the government does, to particular matters, what we do in our intimate relationships. This is the pandemic as political management. In Marco's perspective, one of the troublesome topics when thinking about the abyss is the seizure of progressive discourses and their distortion.

Under new horizons, Marco envisions great prospects, especially in science. For example, re-thinking individual production of knowledge to more collaborative ones. He also mentions the need to

⁸ **Original expression by the author, in Brazilian Portuguese:** entrepandemias.

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recover the notion of conflict and disagreement; answers a question from the audience with Sônia Corrêa, and affirms that we couldn't create or strengthen political organizations outside and beyond the State.

Following Marco Aurélio's criticism against state-centrism, as if prearranged, Federal Deputy Áurea Carolina brings the richness of the collective project of the "Muitas" [Many] to the third session of *Diálogos*, as explained further ahead. Graduated in Social Science with a Master's Degree in Political Science from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Áurea Carolina had a mandate as the most-voted City Councilwoman in Belo Horizonte and, subsequently, conquered the mandate as Federal Deputy by PSOL, a Brazilian political party.

In her words, Áurea defines herself as dissentient with the world and life inequalities, someone for whom "the penny dropped" when observing how capitalism swallows the small (neighborhoods, businesses, people...), as the sole mother of three daughters, relying on the help of other women and multiple other youth social battles, for the right of access to the city, hip hop cultural movements, and others. Perceptions and realities that push her to politics, to collective action; politics made in the trenches, in anti-racism and feminist fights.

The collective political project *Muitas* is an innovative proposal for electing a political alliance rather than an individual. The project could reunite experiences from youth activism, academic life, and institutional policies in an “experimental laboratory of democratic actions”. According to Gabriel Peixoto (2022), the collective mandates fomented innovative democracy by ensuring that a group of women, who would hardly be elected individually to legislative power, secure election and operate as a unified mandate. Additionally, the participants “insert the identification with feminisms and the institutionalization resulting from popular mobilizations into their narratives and actions” (p. 14).

Concerning the abysses and horizons in Brazil in 2020, Áurea asserts that:

I see our process of building resistance in a rather dialectical way. It occurs internally within our emotions, subjectivity, and collective experiences. I call it the “pedagogy of encounter”, where we search for emancipation. As an anti-racist feminist with all this baggage, I don’t have the illusion that we will call it a day and wake up tomorrow to this idealized Horizon, right? It is not that I don’t believe in overcoming things, it’s just that things are contingent, systematic. Capitalism constantly finds ways to reinvent itself, thus, structural violence follows the trend. And these battles should also happen in our daily struggles, families, and communities. How we’re going to make richness circulate and how we care for ourselves. That’s what I

believe in. In many respects, we're better off now than in the 20th century.

At the center of feminist and anti-racist resistance are projects for well-being, environmental justice, acknowledgment and recognition of diverse experiences, human and non-human, “for the otherness of the other who’s different from me”. From Áurea’s perspective, the pandemic cannot be halted solely by the vaccine or technology but rather by a science that doesn’t aspire exclusively for the interests of dominant and privileged groups, a counter-colonialist science.

In line with this utopia, we receive Joaze Bernardino-Costa for our fourth session. Joaze holds a doctorate in Sociology from the University of Brasília (UnB) and a postdoctoral degree in Ethnic Studies from the University of California, Berkeley, and is one of the Brazilian intellectuals who fought for affirmative policies in public universities. A former professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences/UFG, in 2002, he relocated to Brasília and currently teaches at the graduate and postgraduate levels at the University of Brasília (UnB). In his words, entering university to study Social seeking to change the world is frustrating because academic-focused sociology wants to understand the world, not transform it. After a while, it stops reflecting

on revolution as a Marxist class struggle and starts considering inequalities through a different stance.

During the journey between UFG and UnB, Joaze coordinated the Middle Passage Project: Qualifying Black Undergraduate Students for Academic Research at UFG,⁹ sponsored by the Ford Foundation in 2001. Other significant events for his journey are the sandwich Ph.D. with Ramón Grosfoguel at UCLA (Berkeley, EUA), famous for its engagement with anti-racist and feminist social activism, and the encounter with decolonial theory.

In the current context, he believes that, although it doesn't align with the idea of success, the conquest in democratic terms through affirmative actions is a noteworthy triumph for a country like Brazil. It is a policy that brings hope, in the sense that it starts shyly (UnB and UFG are pioneers) and expands until becoming law (Proposed Amendment to the Constitution, 2015). From the local Brazilian perspective, Joaze highlights that left-wing governments, within contradictions and limitations, did what none thought possible in previous governments (presidential mandates of Collor, Itamar, and FHC), for example, raising the minimum wage to US\$ 300. Thus, there are paths to explore!

⁹ **Original title, in Brazilian Portuguese:** Projeto Passagem do Meio: Qualificação de Alunos Negros de Graduação para Pesquisa Acadêmica na UFG *Revista UFG, Goiânia. 2024, v.24: e22.77250*



Joaze encourages us to believe that the conservative scenario will pass and that we don't need to feel down. "We didn't know that our democracy - our arrangements, were so fragile. It's an opportunity to think of a new utopia, a new horizon. He discloses the need to revisit the 20th-century utopia, socialism". In a general sense, according to him, the socialist utopia got stuck in the shackles of modernity, considering that capitalism's expansion was strictly economic and class struggle could solve it. Aníbal Quijano elucidates that decolonial contributions bring to light the racist, sexist, cartesian, euro-centered, classist, and heterosexist conceptions within it. Therefore, there was an ontological project, the zone of being and non-being (as Frantz Fanon explains), some are considered human and others less, or non-human. The Horizon is a new utopia that reconsiders the values of the modern age, including thinking power as "communal", in which people can make choices. Instead of an "avant-garde" leadership for the masses, a "rear-guard" leadership that promotes a horizontal relationship among people, a "shoulder-to-shoulder" connection.

Finally, we get to the last session of the year, with Cássia Virgínia Maciel's powerful and revigorating voice. Cássia graduated in Psychology from the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) and has specialized in people management in public service. Furthermore,

she holds a Master's Degree in Multicultural Ethnic and African Studies Program, "Post-Africa". She is the Pro-Rector for Affirmative Actions and Student Assistance at UFBA, and many of her contributions to our debate were connected to the entanglement between the effects of racism in subjectivity and the role of affirmative action policies.

Her self-consciousness started by reading *Black Skin, White Masks* by Frantz Fanon. Her family comes from a rural background, and many women from her family have been or currently are domestic workers - she is the first to enter university. In the 1970s, her suburban generation didn't know what the Federal University of Bahia was, "that beautiful building that is a palace," since, first, they learned what a private university was: the myth is that poor people do not study at Federal universities because "the tests are hard, it is necessary to speak English, study all day and not going to work, etc." Thirty years later, after studying Nursing, she started to study Psychology (while pregnant with twins!), already employed as a tenured administrative technician at UFBA. She learned about the university through the labor union's activism and consequently rose to management to "add more strength and follow-up." In her perspective, which stems from a journey marked by racism, affirmative actions come to alter this reality.

Concerning the major obstacles and what she envisions as a horizon, Cássia started with a comment about our project. According to her, we had the thoughtfulness to create a symbolic connective, which is contemporary, the invitation to build a bridge. She judges this element as dialogue, connected to affection and affirmative actions:

Today people have more convictions than doubts and are not inclined to listen, to dialogue over building common ground or collective efforts toward democracy. When I mention affection, I do not refer to romantic love (...), I think about revolutionary love from Paulo Freire and Fanon. When determining the path to pursue, we need to consider sensible and qualified hearing that offers everyone the capacity of self-recognition. People feel rather lonely, so I've been focusing on solidarity ties. That is anti-racist education. We live in a moment where, depending on categorization, certain people are not seen as human. We need to demolish the building and destroy the structure, as Fanon claims.

To answer the question of “how to advance alliances between Black and non-Black folk in the anti-racist struggle?”, Cássia ponders that the first step of the stairs we aim to break is achieving thorough humanity, where whiteness is not the standard of civility and humanity, and is not necessary to shout the obvious - that Black lives matter, and smash the heritage of colonization. Thus, we need to advance in problematizing privileges, establishing that racial

matters are not “a Black people issue,” but an issue of racial relationships intersected by class and gender within the capitalist production model. This accumulation regime doesn’t allow us to see who owns the large companies and banks, those who possess wealth at the expense of those who do not. It is a political struggle.

Considering affirmative actions, for example, from Magazine Luiza,¹⁰ she answers that “they are indeed important strategies to promote inclusion in a market-controlled environment (which can be connected to the interests of other groups, etc.), but they are not structural policies that will end racism.” The criticism of reverse racism no longer holds as spots occupied by historically discriminated groups do not harm privileged ones, “people know that.”

Year 2 - 2021

The project had a fresh start in the second year of the pandemic. Universities already had education, research, and extension activities partially structured in a recovery academic calendar. During the comeback, the university community, especially the students,

¹⁰ Magazine Luiza is a Brazilian multi-channel retail company selling electronics, home appliances, furniture, and more. It has physical stores and a large online platform.

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faced challenges accessing classes and remaining in the university due to the public emergency context. Although the first vaccines got closer and the epidemiologic reports displayed a reduction in contamination, the situation extended and contamination cases grew again. These events remained instigators during the live streamings, offering analysis considering the hardships battled by different fields (for example, scientific promotion, research, and public policies).

The guest for our first session was José Alexandre Felizola Diniz-Filho, chair professor at the Biological Sciences Institute from UFG and member of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences. In 2020, he gained notoriety by collaborating with research and promoting science and the studies and strategies to combat the pandemic. In his presentation, José Alexandre starts with the journey related to his interest in biology and, since the 1990s, in statistical analysis. These interests led him to significantly act in the Federal University of Goiás, in alignment with the post-graduate course's history at this university.

Through this journey, José Alexandre explains his position as a researcher during the pandemic, when examination models and data management became fundamental in contemplating containment policies and the disease's evolution, in Brazil and the local

surroundings of Goiás. In 2019, a year before the pandemic, the professor took part in organizing a workshop about Human Ecology on a large scale, which approached the increase in diseases and their spatial patterns. The data enabled interest in conducting new analyses of epistemological models considering the 2020 scenario.

In this context, the guest highlights how the pandemic sheds light on the politicization of science through denialism. The phenomenon results in the refusal of essential measures by the Federal government and blunt attacks:

Any scientific denialism, or anti-scientific notion, especially coming from the Federal Government was already starting in 2019, you mentioned the blog and I created it because of this, but during the pandemic, everything aggravated. (...) Tiago, specifically, became a target of rather unsettling attacks from people connected to the far-right wing or anti-scientific ideals. All of this leads us to think about it differently, we start reflecting on the role of science itself, what we should do as scientists, and what is our role.

When approaching how scientific and anti-scientific discourses currently design themselves, José Alexandre recovers aspects related to the nature of science, its exteriority, and objectivity. From his perspective, reaching common ground concerning scientific knowledge is necessary, because it establishes a degree of separation from

pseudoscientific knowledge and its disputes for scientific authority. In that sense, he mentioned that potential perspectives exist within the public university. Despite the multiple obstacles, in financial and political terms, universities set themselves as an important mitigation environment in the face of a social and sanitary collapse during the pandemic. Finally, he highlights that the leadership of researchers, the university community, and activists emphasized the significance of public universities and academia in supporting societal rights.

To continue the debate on public universities' significance for effective social policies, the second session in July 2021 invites Waldeir Rosa, a doctor in Anthropology. He teaches at the Federal University of Latin-American Integration (UNILA), focusing on studies of the African Diaspora in Latin America and the Caribbean. Moreover, the professor researches Afro-reparation policies and Afro-diasporic epistemologies, which enriched his participation when discussing education at UNILA and the University of the International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB)¹¹ - a similar project for Brazilian higher education with an international approach.

¹¹ **Original designations:** Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana (UNILA), Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (UNILAB).

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Waldeir highlights his proximity to Afro religions. Celebrations at sacred sites, called *terreiros*, and the Saint's families established in these locations are essential for developing his academic interests and comprehending resistance structures and challenges imposed by the Brazilian socio-political scenario responsible for the sanitary crisis. The professor also underlines how reparation policies for Afro-descendants advance in Latin America. Nonetheless, in Brazil, since 2019, these policies have been interrupted or have required a stronger social battle to be maintained. He also clarifies why "Afro-reparation policies" replaces "affirmative policies": the expression reflects the deep historicity of ethnic-racial relationships, revealing the damage resulting from the slave system and colonialism in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the necessary articulation between these policies, which cannot be considered independently.

In Brazil, Latin American integration is relevant in a geopolitical context where the intellectual and cultural debate still turns itself to Europe and the USA. Thus, "we have a university that confronts us with all this diversity and forces us to build alternative paths." The arising horizons are connected to the relationship between historicity, the cross-border epistemological project, and resistance mechanisms.

Consequently, the Brazilian representative democracy model is depleted by this conflict, enabling new institutional ways to battle - for example, collective candidature and political participation. Moreover, the remote education strategies imposed by the pandemic can be used to deepen the government's austerity policies, it also permits the birth of networks through virtual connection, exposing the collective battles' capability to resist. "And once this wave dies down, it is necessary to rebuild everything and, in that sense, we have the opportunity to contribute (...), reflect about the mistakes we made in the past and what we can reconstruct."

Keeping up the critical spirit regarding the moment experienced, we had the pleasure of talking with Dr. Valeska Zanello in our third session of 2021. She is a professor at the Clinical Psychology Department of UnB and her fields of study include mental health, illness, and gender studies and its subjective constitution. The professor is active on social media and a guest in multiple academic spaces. Beyond that, she reflects on affective devices, maternity, and other themes that engage a diverse audience. She justifies her motion between different knowledge fields through her academic instruction, which included a Doctorate in Philosophy of Language and Psychoanalysis, studies on the Socio-historical

Approach, and Anthropology. Furthermore, she is interested in scholarly research and asserts that “I didn’t search for the subjects of study, they found me.”

Valeska reflects on psychic illness, gender technologies, and racial and social matters, in addition to how this investigation can be useful in clinical treatment to comprehend processes that affect people in psychic suffering. She also engages in scientific promotion, facing the challenge of displaying accessible language without losing the complexity of scientific knowledge. The analysis proceeds by reflecting on how the Brazilian social and political crisis represents, from a psychoanalytic perspective, a comeback of conflicts denied in the country’s history that cannot be overlooked any longer. According to the researcher, this challenge often leads to a powerless feeling of hatred, which can be addressed through a still frequently uncomfortable debate in Brazil: “There is no way to think about democracy in our country without considering two fundamental structural acts of violence in our history, racism, and sexism; schools need racial and gender literacy.”

The erasure of insurgencies and rebellions in Brazilian history, especially those led by women, indigenous people, and the Black population, is recurring. From the researcher’s stance, the recovery of hatred as a mechanism of transforming indignation in

political activism, instead of becoming illness and social alienation, resides in these experiences.

The guest who finishes the season's session is Tatiana Dias Silva, a Doctor in Business from the University of Brasília and a researcher at the Institute of Applied Economics Research (IPEA).¹² Born in Salvador (Bahia), Tatiana defines herself as originating from the working class, a woman of multiple interests - Arts, publicity, theater, and literature - who transformed her restlessness in social research, enabling her circulation through different fields. She is dedicated to studying public policies, racial equality, and the world of labor. Tatiana highlights the new institutionalist approach to analyzing public policies and their impact on social inequality reproduced within them, because "even policies aimed at social matters end up creating unmet gaps, reinforcing stereotypes or limiting the participation of certain groups, or creating other issues."

By recovering the path of affirmative policies in Brazil but including transformation in the job market and the debate promoted by social movements and universities, Tatiana reflects on the opportunity to access these devices during the battle against social inequality and observing their systematization - they

¹² **Original designation, in Brazilian Portuguese:** Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (IPEA).

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manifest in subjects who inherit this historical journey. “It gives us a compromise but offers us the security of being in an environment built throughout time through deep reflection and donated lives of other people”. Mentioning the Black feminism theory by Patricia Hill Collins, the guest asserts that to have empowerment and face inequalities, we need to comprehend the “axes of oppression” and their operational methods, such as how public policies create barriers and difficulty.

Tatiana reminds us that, although fundamental, affirmative policies need to be seen as layers inside a structure founded on structural and institutional racism. This structure leads to inquiries about access to public spaces, organizational design, and how political content regarding such access reflects on society. From her perspective, the potential horizons are built on spaces for resistance and diffusion. Numerous of them are affiliated with research institutes and centers, developing proposals and analyses that enable us to advance in the future. Moreover, Tatiana mentions that affirmative policies don't originate from high-ranking governmental levels. Instead, they have been developed for an extended period, facing opposition until they could be implemented.

Year 3 - 2022 and early 2023

In 2022, we had the project's last season among devastating outcomes of the pandemic - over 700 thousand deaths, aggravated inequality, and hunger, among other casualties. The revitalization movement of in-person activities and larger crowds, including inside universities, occurred due to vaccination campaigns and epidemiological control policies. During the second semester, the tension from the presidential, federal, and state legislative elections brought disputes to a head, reflecting on past administrations but primarily focusing on future projects, priorities, and agendas for Brazil. Therefore, considering this context, the season is titled "Abysses and Horizons: Elections in Times of Crisis"¹³ with five new sessions.

The first episode invited Erika Kokay, a federal deputy for Brasília by the Workers' Party [Partidos dos Trabalhadores, PT]. The deputy perceives the under-representation of women in politics as a persistent and worrisome phenomenon, recognizing that female representation in political positions is still significantly small in Brazil. The lower representation is not restricted to elective titles, it extends to other decision-making spaces. Nonetheless, the few women elected are often overlooked for leadership and

¹³ **Original title:** *Abismos e Horizontes: eleições em tempos de crise.*

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distinguished positions, worsening gender inequality in this environment.

This inequality has profound effects on democracy and society. Immediately, gender diversity in authority spaces constitutes operations where the perspectives and needs of women are shown and considered in public policies. Under-representation limits advancements in equal rights and, in various historical periods, permits the threat of these rights:

I would say that we need to confront political under-representation but we also need to identify other domination formats (...) because discriminations are not isolated; they feed into each other because they mean combating a logic that humanity is one with various ways of being, loving, and thinking, but it is one and only. So, when you deny diversity, you also deny humanity itself."

From Erika's perspective, political participation does not occur solely during the electoral race through votes at the election. In addition, it fosters an educational process for battling discrimination in society, as long as diversity is represented and marginalized groups perceive the potential of taking advantage of their right to a political position.

In the second episode, we invite Cristiano Rodrigues, doctor in Sociology and professor at the Federal University of Minas Gerais. The professor dedicates himself to Afro-Latin American Studies and

political participation. For him, during its history, the Brazilian Black movement went through different interaction phases with political parties. Since the 1970s, there was a deliberate choice by its members to join certain parties, believing that it would allow them to influence the State from within and impact institutional politics in the following decades.

Since 2003, when the Workers' Party came into power at the federal level, there have been notable changes, especially regarding government positions and public policies regarding racial and gender issues. These conquests were majorly due to the articulation and battle of Black women for political policies, particularly through the creation of the Secretariats of Policies for Women and the Promotion of Racial Equality.

For Cristiano, we currently have better conditions to elect Black candidates than in the past. Regardless of access obstacles, public financial aid for campaigns lessens some disparities. In the context of a profound crisis of representative democracy, not restricted to Brazil, the researcher observes two main pathways: first, the discredit of politics in the face of popular demands; second, one that involves democratic innovation, exemplified by collective mandates, which could represent a re-enchantment of politics. Instead of denial, the political distance in people's lives can only

be solved by more politics: “How can we coexist with the plurality and political interests of a vast population?” The question remains...

In August 2022, at the beginning of the electoral race, *Dialogues* invited professor Jaqueline Gomes de Jesus, psychologist and lecturer at the Federal Institute of Rio de Janeiro (IFRJ). Jaqueline was the first administrator at the Quota System for Black Women and Men of the University of Brasília (UnB).¹⁴ From the researcher and activist perspective, transfeminism reflects upon actions and stances different from the traditional approach to gender, and this open door is an important step to comprehend and include the transsexual perspective in social battles, considering the feminist movement gained more participation in public debate in the last decades.

According to Jaqueline, trans representation also allows a transformation in masculinity standards. Trans men defy established gender norms, allowing a re-arrangement of these relations. The change can also positively influence society, identity construction, and the battle in authority spaces. The researcher recovers the importance of political representation from the LGBT1+ community, which still suffers various layers of exclusion so that their voices echo in society. In political

¹⁴ **Original designation:** Sistema de Cotas para Negras e Negros da Universidade de Brasília – UnB.

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representation, power can be redefined through other categories, making political decisions and actions more effective. Therefore, this agenda requires support, stable political formation, and mobilization so trans candidates can, for example, access and remain in party structures, guaranteeing that their needs and projects are fulfilled, and considered in electoral and governmental programs.

Researcher and activist Denise Mantovani marks our fourth encounter in 2022. Denise has expertise in different public positions and as a journalist in multiple communications fields. She is also a Doctor in the field of gender and politics, which leads her, in her words, to act in public communication, debating especially the matters of feminism, politics, and current challenges. One of the current significant issues she researches is the lack of recognition of structural matters contributing to gender inequality. She emphasizes that, even among right-wing and far-right-wing elected women deputies, there is a practice of denouncing violence against women without acknowledging patriarchal structure, sexist work division, and racism as fundamental factors that reproduce this inequality. For her, the challenge is language: instead of being scholarly, it needs to be welcoming.

What Denise points out is that communication for change needs to consider the multiple experiences of

women, particularly those that make each one vulnerable, hence, the various types of violence in daily life. Through this common axis, we need to embrace women as active feminist listening. However, Denise highlights that the primary goal is not “teaching” or “saving” someone, it is recognizing that this lesson is essential for advancing in resistance mobilization, even regarding women who currently find themselves in agendas contrary to the movement: “The challenge of communication is finding a welcoming language e that the knowledge we hold can be exchanged with the knowledge they have”.

The fifth and final episode of the season “Elections in Times of Crisis” happened in the third year of the pandemic, March 2023. The meeting analyzed institutional policies and the harsh electoral process, with the participation of Federal Deputy Sâmia Bomfim (PSOL) from São Paulo. The 33-year-old activist recognizes the abysses of the Brazilian political crisis and the opposition to the human rights agenda but is also optimistic concerning the election of new women for a fresh legislature: “Women with a lot of strength, and a lot of electoral expression are the main leaders of this dispute, this has a bigger role because they have more authority to dialogue with Brazilian women since Brazilian women have some resonance with them, they are women too.”

Moreover, Sâmia, who became a mother during the pandemic, reflects on the significant role that maternity can play when viewed from various perspectives influenced by this experience, from the obstacles working mothers face, gender roles established in the domestic environment, maternity leave, and the outsourcing of this care. This experience prompted Sâmia to draft the "Parenting Statute," a draft law aiming for equal parental care conditions for fathers and mothers. Nonetheless, the deputy emphasizes that the draft law does not reinforce old, unequal conceptions about family. Instead, it aims to combat these outdated views by expanding the notion of family and placing parental care on the public agenda as an important mechanism of feminist practice.

The deputy acknowledges that the obstacles are huge, especially when considering the socio-economic circumstances affecting women and the need to secure reproductive rights, including legal and safe abortion.: "I don't mean that it's impossible because a lot can happen, sometimes inconceivable politicians trigger intense and transformative political processes." Furthermore, Katia Karam, a live viewer, made a notable comment: "As a feminist mother and grandmother, I get extremely happy with this discussion and project". This conjunction of

backgrounds about maternity and women's fundamental rights fosters the connection of experiences.

Final Considerations

Beyond the enriching information we shared, we conclude that the online work expanded the attendance of the external public. It approximated the required 50% to classify an activity as a university extension. We used to consider in-person meetings a success when reaching 20 or 30 participants. We surpassed the challenge, as each activity of *Dialogues* gathered at least 180 participants from different locations, not restricted to the state of Goiás. Some sessions reached an audience of 300 views. Additionally, the project amplified the audience for *Ser-Tão*, positively impacting the adherence of new users on our social media, with 500 subscribers on YouTube and 3000 followers on Instagram and Facebook.

In 2023, the Research Center progressively reestablished in-person activities. Nothing guarantees that projects like *Dialogues* will be conditioned to remote activities in the future, however, it is undeniable that the lessons learned, harshly and abruptly, prompt reflections about the meaning of

in-person relationships in the physical world and where they can reach remotely.

Feminist studies find practice in the intersection between action and theory. Therefore, extension projects, with the permission to advance beyond and within the university's wall, are potentially transformative spaces. The openness of this experience to a bigger audience - who met it and got interested in watching and participating - is in accord with what Ana Costa and Clarice Pinheiro (2013, p. 619) called "making oneself understand" extension activities. That would be the north of translating and modeling the language of social, technical, and academic movements.

In the analyzed conjecture, we can only interpret the Brazilian context by considering the macro-political context. Our interview guest displayed their interdisciplinary analysis and, through each field of exercise, potential strategies to trigger change through resistance. This resistance did not weaken during the harsh impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic or the criminalization of battles related to race, gender, and social class. Fernando Seffner (2022) summarizes the process through the authoritarian attacks on education in schools. In that context, moral aspects align with the continuous growth of neoliberal ideology, which establishes the culture of individuality and, consequently, sacrifices the important

acknowledgment and alliances for differences (Brown, 2019).

Ultimately, initiatives such as Dialogues exhibit resilience during challenging political times. Regardless of persecution and real threats in the educational environment, the project produced solidarity and constructed hope. The project's complete live streams are available on our YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/@SerTaoUFG/streams>.

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