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Participatory and Collaborative Ethnographies: Research Horizons to Democratize Knowledge

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to explore participatory and collaborative ethnography as an investigative and action strategy for working in the classroom and with rural communities, giving an account of other ways of being in the territories, and creating alternative horizons of investigative endeavors. The first objective focused on identifying theoretical, methodological, and critical bets regarding multiple forms of knowledge. The second was to demonstrate experiences from the community and academy connection, referring to classroom exercises, research, and social extension from the place of living. The theoretical references are grounded in the indigenous knowledge of the communities, which has facilitated collaboration and dialogue [1–4]. Methodologically, common pathways were established, wherein participation, horizontal dialogues, and quotidian experiences formed the foundation for intersubjective relationships. The findings contribute to the consolidation of pedagogical practices that contribute to the democratization of research and training. The novelty of the study was to recognize the knowledge woven from communities and their families to re-signify the role of universities in formative, collaborative, and democratic research. Given the recommendations, it is necessary to open other ways of approaching communities based on situated methodologies that contribute to the generation of social policies co-



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created in common spaces within the framework of social appropriation and open science.

Keywords: participatory-collaborative ethnography; flavors; democratizing knowledge; contemporary social work

参与式和协作式民族志：知识民主化的研究视野

摘要: 本研究的目的是探索参与式和协作式民族志作为一种调查和行动策略，用于在课堂和农村社区开展工作，描述在该地区的其他生活方式，并创造调查工作的替代视野。第一个目标侧重于确定关于多种知识形式的理论、方法和关键赌注。第二个目标是展示社区和学院联系的经验，参考课堂练习、研究和来自居住地的社会扩展。理论参考以社区的本土知识为基础，促进了合作和对话[1-4]。在方法论上，建立了共同的途径，其中参与、横向对话和日常经验构成了主体间关系的基础。研究结果有助于巩固教学实践，从而促进研究和培训的民主化。这项研究的新颖之处在于认识到来自社区及其家庭的知识，重新定义了大学在形成性、协作性和民主性研究中的作用。根据这些建议，有必要开辟其他基于情境方法的社区接触方式，以促进在社会占用和开放科学框架内于共同空间共同制定的社会政策。

关键词: 参与式协作民族志；风味；民主化知识；当代社会工作

1. Introduction

1.1. Pursuing the Decolonization of Knowledge

Democratizing knowledge necessitates a critical examination of the modernity/coloniality project, aiming to deconstruct structures under which structural, systematic violence of "being, knowledge and power" operates [5]: a framework of rationality that supports various forms of domination, marginality, subalternity and assumes modes of social and cultural control [6]. "The subject has been reduced to its instrumentalization, detached and separated from its being, understood from the duty to be or to do, the why, seen from the point of view of production, of utility." This phenomenon has had direct implications for the production of knowledge, research, and training processes, which have prioritized science, exteriority, and individualism. "Epistemic racism, Islamophobia and colonial social sciences" function within a "modern capitalist/patriarchal/colonial westernized/Christianized world system" [7].

Boaventura De Sousa Santos also problematizes this issue, exposing the fragilities of the present, modernity as an unfulfilled promise, in the face of the collapse of the pillars of Western civilization, the colonization of emancipation, knowledge as regulation (excess of scientificity), and an increasingly widening abyss between the north and south. Complexities arise in his essays when confronting disciplines, theories, and methodologies that, as he aptly observes, fail to adequately account for contemporary circumstances,

coupled with skepticism regarding processes of social transformation.

The theme of indecision permeates his entire body of work, accompanied by a sense of indolence and personal and collective abandonment. These sentiments are evident in the intellectual's publications, such as "Milenio Huérfano" [8], "Critique of indolent reason" [3], and "From the hand of Alicia" [9]. Through these works, he addresses the challenges in constructing theories and critical social sciences and the detrimental consequences that the project of modernity has imposed upon the world and nature; in this regard, he gives an account of the perplexities of current times. Among them are the centrality of the economy, the confirmation of processes such as transnationalization, the deep socio-political ruptures, and the neoliberalism-democracy link.

Stemming from this profound sense of uncertainty, in the face of that indolent reason – Western modern knowledge – and apathetic stance, he conducts a comprehensive analysis of the project of modernity. In opposition to this project, he posits that "modernity in its capitalist version is based on two systems of hierarchical belonging: the system of inequality, which denies the principle of equality, and the system of exclusion, which denies the principle of recognition of difference" [9]. It refers to how modernity and its promises generate a strong cut of reality, transforming progress into accumulation, commodification of life, violent cultural homogenization and deterritorialization of knowledge, and scenarios that translate into

regulated emancipation.

The incorporation of alternative epistemologies in response to practices associated with hegemonic perspectives, Western rationality, systematicity, and reproduction constitutes a significant contemporary challenge for universities and, more broadly, institutions engaged in educational processes across various levels.

Without engaging in denialism regarding the contributions of science, this approach seeks to establish a dialogue and generate reflective processes concerning the forms of knowledge construction. The aim is to create scenarios of social and cognitive justice and democratization by contemplating the exchange of experiences, the encounter between cultures, and fieldwork. This is based on the continuous engagement with individuals as cultural geo-units and as critical devices against established monocultures.

The transition from monocultures to ecologies is supported by its paradigmatic commitment "from an indolent reason to a cosmopolitan reason," under which de Sousa Santos [10] has an explicit epistemological, methodological, and political purpose. This purpose is related to revaluing knowledge and recognizing experiences, which is significant insofar as it facilitates collective action, collaborative work, and intercultural translation. This approach is underpinned by the concept of "ecologies of knowledge," which is not anti-science. In the face of persistent hierarchies, classification, inferiority, sexism, and racism, it seeks knowledge under the principles of "co-presence, diversity, and incompleteness" [10].

The above is also problematic from the "decolonial turn," an epistemological issue that scholars in different parts of the world deal with, which forms the core angle of discussion by Castro-Gómez [11], based on a critique of reason. This is based on the work of Latin American scholars such as Haraway and Pitarch [12] and Braidotti [13], who question the Western project of modernity and propose ethics in their writing, and the work of feminist philosophers and theorists who challenge the dominant discourses in the social sciences and humanities. These epistemological perspectives contribute to challenging traditional ways of knowledge production and teaching in the social sciences. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to present the experiences and methodological approaches that, as professors in the Social Work program at the University of Quindío, we have encountered in our teaching, research, and community engagement, with a particular focus on participatory ethnographic methods. The project is based on a collaborative and intercultural approach, which was developed through work with different rural communities in the Quindío region of Colombia.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Ethnography as a Research and Training Horizon

This section explores ethnography as a methodological and action strategy for academic and rural communities, a commitment linked to contemporary social work in aspects such as dignity, human rights, equity, strengthening of social networks, social transformation, participation, and democracy.

Anthropology in the 19th and 20th centuries evolved into a mechanism through which colonial powers generated knowledge about their subjugated populations, facilitating processes of cultural imposition, acculturation, and extermination. This development enabled the acquisition of knowledge about the "other" to serve not only scientific purposes but also to support forms of domination, acculturation processes, and cultural changes. These practices necessitated robust theoretical foundations to justify extermination and obscure the recognition of diverse cultures. Cultural and anthropological studies conducted in service of colonialism portrayed the "other" as inferior or, at best, uncivilized; in this way, the relevance of Western political, economic, cultural, and religious models in pursuit of development could be justified. Thus, the idea of progress and structuralist or functionalist theories [14, 15] showed European civilization as the pinnacle of the pyramid. In this way, the colonies were presented with the concept of emulating their colonizers, contingent upon their adaptation to imposed expectations (through the mechanisms of warfare, religious conversion, or capitalist expansion). This process was fundamentally supported by an educational system that sought to homogenize through the imposition of the colonizers' historical narratives, belief systems, moral frameworks, cultural values, and traditions, among other elements. Thus, anthropology contributed to the expansion of Western colonialism and its perpetuation in the work carried out in Colombia and Latin America.

Following Uribe [1], anthropology and ethnography in their historical development have served as instruments for the domination and exploitation of populations, particularly indigenous peoples and individuals of African descent. The process of studying, describing, and investigating the worlds of these groups, while producing scientific knowledge about them, has been identified as a means of homogenization. These disciplines were not employed to highlight differences or diversities, but rather to generate strategies for domination and cultural destruction. This approach was in service of Western knowledge for domination and colonization, as Garduño [16] aptly demonstrates. Garduño posits that the Conquest of America involved knowing, loving, and destroying, asserting that a conquered world is a

destroyed world. The objective was to understand the other to dismantle their cultural world and potential alternatives, with a particular focus on eradicating their beliefs to facilitate homogenization. This was achieved through religious incorporation and manipulation of beliefs and fears. Consequently, ethnography evolved into another mechanism of domination, wherein the other was reduced to a mere object of knowledge, subject to scientific extractivism, yielding crucial information to support the capitalist model.

The twists that ethnography has historically entailed as a system of oppression today allow it to be understood as a joint possibility for the academy and communities, which positions other comprehensive places for ethnography from collaboration, horizontality, and reflexivity. An illustrative example of this transition is the case of Uribe [1] and his ethnographic research with the Guambianos. This work originated from the concept of "between us" and emerged from the necessity to develop methodological approaches that establish connections with the territories.

It is imperative to acknowledge, as Uribe [1] asserts, that science and its production of knowledge are not ends in themselves but rather means and instruments to transform the potential realities of each community. In the specific context of rural communities, this premise serves as one of the foundational points of this investigative endeavor. The second aspect involves a shift in the relationship from object-subject and subject-object to subject-subject, thereby emphasizing the importance of reflecting on how, where, why, and for what purpose one acquires knowledge. Of paramount importance is the consideration of with whom and where this knowledge is acquired. Consequently, knowledge is constructed collaboratively through interpretation, reflection, and critique, which are experientially integrated within social realities. As such, approaches derived from participatory and collaborative ethnography generate distinct dynamics in investigative processes, necessitating a joint construction that combines multiple descriptive perspectives created in everyday life, lived experiences, and sensitive living as a form of cultural enunciation.

The interest in investigating from the perspective of territory, communities, and rural families is predicated on limited investigative approaches that focus on these entities and the traditional methods of examining them. Ethnography necessitates a path of parity in which work is reciprocal. According to Uribe [1], the optimal method to understand another is to coexist with them; consequently, ruptures are created from and with the other, in a conjunction where they recognize one as distinct, yet simultaneously incorporate them into an issue that enables us to create scenarios of alterity and otherness. Consequently, this investigative endeavor involved engaging with various rural communities in

the department of Quindío, facilitating the recognition and sharing of their quotidian experiences, spaces, narratives, knowledge, flavors, and wisdom.

To achieve this, other forms of ethnographic research were employed, both participatory and collaborative. The first type involves members of the group being studied, who act not only as informants [17], but also as temporary ethnographers [2]. This creates a collaborative process that fosters egalitarian relations based on respect and recognition of knowledge. Horizontal exchange, sensory description, and reflection on the lived world of participants are all incorporated into the process, creating a holistic understanding of their surroundings and sense of self. This exercise aims to make rural areas more visible and accessible.

Another significant consideration in this construction is the recognition that, fundamentally, all individuals possess the capacity for ethnographic inquiry and knowledge production. This perspective acknowledges the value of diverse forms of knowledge and the contributions of all participants in the process [2]. Such an approach fosters equality, promotes a decolonizing perspective, and challenges established civilizational notions through the collective production of knowledge. The ultimate objective is to ensure that these ethnographies transcend mere dialogue to become polyphonic, incorporating the voices of the subjects under study [18].

Rural communities should be recognized as autonomous entities that contribute to the formation of meaning and identity. This recognition fosters a relational connection that incorporates the perspectives of those engaged in the process, cultivating commitments rooted in harmony and trust (*rapport*), which promote egalitarian relationships. This approach aligns with Cornejo and Rufer's [19] concept of horizontality, a methodological framework for social sciences and humanities that emphasizes the importance of politicizing the act of listening in knowledge production. As they assert, there exists "a need to equalize the terms of dialogue between researchers and researched and a condition that is already known to be irresolvable, agonistic, processual."

The production of knowledge necessitated recognition of diversities for homogenization or, in the case of African Americans, for their assimilation and consequent ignorance (*invisibilization*) to foster the belief that they had achieved equality; this approach served as the most effective means to negate their differences. As Harris [20] asserts, the *etic* perspective, characterized by objectivity and the researcher's elevated position above the subjects of study, is prioritized in the production of scientific knowledge within a model of inequality that hierarchizes knowledge and its production. Conversely, the *emic* perspective, encompassing subjectivity, participant

viewpoints, cultural identity, and indigenous knowledge, is marginalized, disregarded, and excluded from knowledge construction.

For this reason, we aim to demonstrate through the identification of diverse experiences that it is imperative to adopt alternative research paradigms in the social and human sciences, originating from and in collaboration with communities, to progress toward epistemic justice. To achieve this objective, we employ participatory methodologies that create opportunities for populations to immerse themselves in their own culture, thereby elucidating their customs, oral traditions, and indigenous knowledge. This approach facilitates social appropriation as a mechanism for the democratization of knowledge [21].

3. Methodology

3.1. Situated and Contextual Methodologies

Democratizing knowledge entails a pedagogical-political project constructed within contexts of alterity, through communal discourse, equitable interactions, and pluralistic recognition. This approach facilitates critical analysis of reality and the generation of intentional actions to transform it. Consequently, the populace engages, participates in, and influences the production of knowledge, which manifests as transformative and emancipatory political action [22].

In this context, methodological commitment, as delineated, is predicated on immersion and recognition within the research environment, engaging in open and collaborative dialogue with diverse communities. Participatory and collaborative ethnography emerges as a field of reflexivity from investigative practice, for which fieldwork constitutes one of the essential elements in comprehending sociocultural reality through observation, reconstruction, and detailed, problematized understanding. As Cáceres [23] articulates, "the ethnographer is, therefore, a writer, a creator of images who illuminates the pathways beyond the apparent."

The criteria that support the investigation of this object of study are associated with the necessity to explore, from the classroom and from our role as educators, novel approaches for engaging communities and influencing social innovation processes as a collaborative and ethical methodology from academia. This necessitates the transformation of students in relation to themselves and in contexts of alterity, enabling them to acquire theoretical, methodological, and pragmatic, but most importantly, human tools for social praxis. Concurrently, this approach has political implications insofar as it facilitates the generation of collective actions based on the needs and potentials of territories to effect social transformation.

The construction of a common path from the ethnographic classroom involves various stages, as

illustrated in Figure 1.

1. *Previous stages:*

- Recognition of the context
- Reading of background material
- First engagement with communities through training, research, and outreach processes, which originates from the classroom, through collaboration between the academic spaces of urban-rural seminars and seminars on Colombian issues, sociocultural anthropology, ethnopedagogy, sociopolitical discussions, Latin American history, and social movements.

2. *From university to territories:* commitment in line with the "Public Policy for the Social Appropriation of Knowledge 2021" and the National Open Science Policy in Colombia [24], which are the result of the ongoing debate on the gaps created by scientific production, its information access policies, and the participation and impact of research on territories. These policies are positioned as processes that contribute to democratizing knowledge based on a collaborative and democratic model, with principles such as "openness, collaboration, and participation and the concept of knowledge as a shared good" [25].

In light of these principles, declared by the Minciencias, and the investigative journey woven in an expanded classroom, we sought to make a change in the way we generate counter-hegemonic methodological approaches that enable a democratic connection with different communities and relationships with others.

3. *Collaborative pathways:* Rask was based on a participatory and collaborative approach to ethnography, which is developed through principles such as trust and recognition of others and through being with others. This approach enables the sharing of journeys that contribute to joint knowledge construction.

4. *Intercultural dialogue:* Intercultural narratives arise from ethnographic research and transform into joint, supportive, and reciprocal dialogue from a horizontal perspective. These dialogues of knowledge and memory enable recognition of the words and voices of others, blending knowledge and perspectives in favor of democratic understanding, an academic process that is nurtured in training.

5. *Collective construction and knowledge:* aesthetic commitment to collaborative construction. Symbolically significant and culturally meaningful marks are revealed in classroom settings through aesthetic expression.

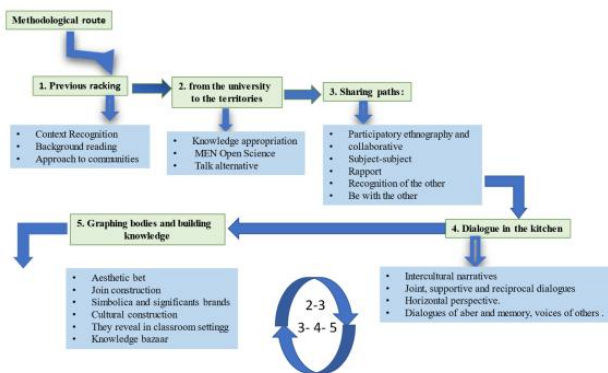


Figure 1. Methodological approach [22]

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Knowledge Backpack

Research is conducted collaboratively, integrating knowledge, learning, uncertainties, certainties, affections, and connections. This approach is committed to a way of living and knowing that involves coexisting with others, existing for others, and depending on interpersonal relationships, where worlds that transcend bodies, minds, and feelings are cultivated in the enunciation of being. Based on the described methodology, the previous transfers facilitated the recognition of the context and the initial approach to communities through classroom processes. These processes are formative and translate into a connection with research and social extension, serving as missionary axes of the university.

Therefore, in this section, this initial approach is considered, and the concept of a "backpack of knowledge" is utilized as an analogy. This backpack represents a cultural artifact of certain Colombian ethnic groups, woven with cotton or vegetable fibers, among other materials. Within this warp and weft, knowledge, identity, and symbolism are interconnected, uniting the essence of one's being with references to the diverse elements present in the world. It is a repository of knowledge that emerges from collective weaving and is associated with the methodology derived from experiential learning, involving simultaneous interaction with others, neither preceding nor following, but concurrent. This process originates in both rural and urban settings. In this context, there exist perspectives that dichotomize rural and urban environments, wherein rural areas are perceived as precarious, impoverished, inferior, and untamed. These two realities are evident in the experiences of those who transition from urban to rural settings to discover and acknowledge the knowledge of others. The initial profound impression of rural areas often pertains to the landscapes, natural elements, and territorial inhabitation, which serve as the foundation for alternative modes of observation and constitute a means to engage in dialogue with rural communities.

This inquiry facilitates an approach through regional

flavors as an ethnographic method of sensitive observation, wherein they constitute a component of shared taste and offer alternatives for engaging in daily life, participating in it, and simultaneously generating diverse synergies. The key aspect involves active participation in everyday life, sharing through food, cultivating knowledge through culinary practices, establishing trust, exploring, and engaging the senses. The classroom exercises are methodologically supported by the ethnographic perspective as a strategy that ultimately links flavor as a form of knowledge. This knowledge manifests itself as an alternative of equality and is shared within the cultural framework that constitutes each student's background.

Conscious and multiple observations constitute the foundation of colonial dispossession. Applying senses that transcend the perception of history as marked and configured within hegemonic paradigms of scientific, cultural, historical, and colonial knowledge serves to stimulate a shift in consciousness for the researcher. This approach offers an alternative method to overcome the tendency of subjects to judge the reality of others without direct experience. This perspective is predicated on the premise that decolonizing knowledge necessitates the recognition of others' knowledge systems and a critical deconstruction of established epistemological frameworks [22].

Observation commences with the documentation of diverse manifestations of others' lives (narratives, descriptions, graphics, images, sounds, flavors, odors, experiences, etc.); specifically, observing entails inhabiting, experiencing, perceiving, traversing, and exploring the territories and their communities in their quotidian existence. Moreover, it involves collaboratively writing with these communities, which not only generates knowledge but also prompts introspection regarding both the observed subject and observer as a socio-natural-cultural entity. This process involves systematization in training, wherein continuous monitoring is conducted through multidirectional polyphonic interlocution.

The other question is what should be recorded in the context. This is answered by considering the full range of observable elements, which include space, climate, communities, plans as cartographic representations that extend beyond physical space, social relationships, and situations. Their narratives and perceptions form a continuous dialogic fabric. Another aspect is how to record these elements. For this, an essential element is the experiential journal, in which the recording is in line with a descriptive and sensitive approach to what was experienced. This double approach is important for those recording the information. In this sense, it serves as a tool for continuous reflection, follow-up, and monitoring of experiences during observation and description moments.

4.2. Pedagogical Practices, Formative Research, and Social Extension

From the interaction between academic spaces characteristic of the Social Work program at the University of Quindío, as outlined in the methodology, the comprehension and critical analysis of social realities within the context are fostered, focusing on diversities, identities, territory, conflict, recognition, and peace. This is complemented by continuous engagement with various grassroots organizations, associations, and social groups, enabling the construction of knowledge based on recognition and respect. This approach aligns with Walsh's [4] assertion that "people, from their other worlds and practices, which they manage to establish despite and within the fissures of the dominant structure-system-logic, do indeed progress and advance." Consequently, the academic endeavors proposed in the classroom, social extension activities, and contextual studies, including ethnography, draw upon research by Ojeda et al. [26], who, through critical socio-spatial investigation, propose a methodological approach "to analyze and enhance the ways in which, through everyday life, hegemonic geographies of power are destabilized." This framework facilitates the development of alternative methodologies for formative social research and knowledge production.

The convergence of knowledge and disciplines in collaborative endeavors not only fosters interdisciplinary work but also creates a platform for students to engage in introspection. This process enables them to critically examine their cultural contexts and identity formations through participatory and collaborative ethnographic approaches. Such methodologies illuminate the potential of research grounded in everyday experiences. Students are thus motivated to explore both rural and urban settings, documenting nuanced, situated experiences of coexistence, observation, and interpersonal interactions. These intercultural narratives facilitate the synthesis of knowledge, exchange of cultural experiences, and the interweaving of aesthetics through culturally significant symbolic elements. This framework necessitates an ethical imperative to advance research, awareness, and democratization processes—an objective achievable only through investigation from a marginal perspective.

Investigating from the periphery and margins, as various thinkers have suggested, implies ongoing work with people, establishing participatory, dialogical, supportive, and reflective scenarios, and generating situated pragmatic and political solutions to witness our realities and preserve collective memory, which is linked to the path followed by various social educators. Among them, Torres [27] built collective knowledge through edge research, supported by critical and ethically-political methodologies. This does not mean delegitimizing the advances of science. Contrary to

this, it is recognizing popular knowledge from non-disciplined areas, assuming pluralism as a principle, and empowering subjects.

These pedagogical practices woven from the classroom are linked to research and extension exercises, seedbeds, degree work, and systematization processes, enabling a connection with the territories that destabilize those places assumed to be neutral. One of the significant experiences is related to the possibility of sharing paths with different rural communities, particularly with women, from participatory and collaborative ethnography that accounts for their struggles and resistance around culture, here we position ourselves from critical interculturality with the axiological categories of "cry and sow" exposed by Walsh [4].

From the experiences situated in rural areas, resistance, mobilization, power dynamics, and micro-powers that persist in the territories, structural, systematic, racist, and classist violence are recognized, as well as the prevalence of patriarchal forms and heteronormative constructs, along with emerging non-normative masculinities and femininities. In this context, transformations are evident in traditions, particularly in the roles assumed by women beyond those traditionally associated with domestic duties such as tending to the hearth, gathering and preparing food, caregiving, home maintenance, and decoration. These evolving roles now encompass production, transformation, commerce, negotiation, and interaction in spaces of masculine power currently occupied by women. Additionally, women continue to fulfill roles in education (enculturation), family and community care, subsistence, and re-existence.

The aforementioned facilitated a closer examination of the violence, land alienation, and conflict, which are current issues in the Quindiano territory. One of the significant approaches pertains to the paucity of information regarding rural women's participation in collective strategies, effectively following the path taken by Flores and Porta [28], anthropologists and pioneers in studies on rural women. They acknowledge scenarios of abuse, domination, and the persistence of patriarchal structures and female-headed households, where women have been both actors and victims of violence. Through ethnographic research and experiential documentation, it becomes evident how this social phenomenon intersects with the life narratives of women in rural areas, including how many of them initiate migratory processes toward this region of the country due to displacement and conflict.

The research elucidates certain associative processes wherein culture, productivity, preservation of local seeds, and commitment to agroecology intersect; nevertheless, this intersection engenders significant challenges, including the complexity of collaborating on shared objectives, the presence of multinational corporations in the region, land concentration and

utilization, and various processes of deterritorialization.

5. Conclusions

This section presents proposals that intersect to address the issues delineated in the paper. The first proposal is closely related to the curricular aspects, the intercultural connection, and inter-multidisciplinary work, particularly within the field of social work. The second proposal emphasizes the necessity of conducting research and training using situated methodologies and contextual approaches, with the objective of decolonizing knowledge production methods. Finally, the implementation of didactic strategies is proposed to engage the classroom from a peripheral perspective, utilizing practical counterhegemonic pedagogies.

In our journey as teachers, we find a need to transform the way we configure the curriculum, considering the importance of linking interculturality from research, training, and social extension to contribute to educational models that recognize diverse forms for the construction of knowledge, converse with other knowledge, and destabilize the systematic and hierarchical transmission that characterizes educational institutions. For example, the University of Quindío accommodates more than 50% of students from various regions of Colombia; over 600 municipalities are represented within the alma mater, encompassing diverse cultural environments, including a significant number of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities. Rural areas are also represented; however, there are very few programs that incorporate courses dedicated to preserving this cultural knowledge. This phenomenon could be termed "academic acculturation," which demonstrates the persistence of epistemological, methodological, and programmatic biases that perpetuate epistemic racism.

While representative groups exist, significant progress remains to be made from a curricular perspective to challenge the modern/colonial institutional models prevalent in universities. The methodological approaches presented and the contextualized pedagogical practices narrated from experiential perspectives constitute proposals that aim to recognize differences. Furthermore, these approaches offer alternatives for self-awareness of identity elements that emphasize and facilitate solidarity spaces to share, address exclusion, and contribute to diversities.

In this regard, the Social Work program at the University of Quindío has a strong commitment to interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary work, bringing together fields such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, economics, and geography, among others. This approach not only makes the program stand out from others, but also contributes to the training of future professionals. It enables research and

intervention efforts, critical reflection on the realities of society, and the development of a "professional praxis" that promotes justice, peace, human dignity, and human rights for families. This commitment is clearly reflected in recent curriculum changes that focus on core skills and promote collaboration between academic institutions, teachers, students, and organizations working on contemporary issues.

Anthropology, relevant to this paper, relates to knowledge and involves a horizontal dialogue that connects with social work for the benefit of human dignity, rights, equity, strengthened social networks, social transformation, participation, and democracy. This is achieved through anthropology based on and in collaboration with others, where classrooms and academic spaces serve as platforms for conscious, ongoing ethnographic and autoethnographic research in the field, leading to the creation of multiple pathways in which identities, knowledge, customs, traditions, and natural, cultural, and bio-cultural heritage are expressed as sources of self-discovery and means of demonstrating diversity within a classroom environment that promotes equality and recognition among peers.

Given this context, the presence of diverse academic chairs represents a spectrum of possibilities for the education of future professionals, which is manifested in various pedagogical approaches and has, to date, facilitated the establishment of a research trajectory focusing on diversity, education, and culture. This trajectory reflects an ongoing endeavor to transform the curriculum, which has subsequently generated investigative and extension processes, pedagogies, and decolonial practices that, in connection with the local environment, aim to progress toward social and cognitive equity.

The interdisciplinary nature of social work education is exemplified in various institutions across the Coffee Axis-Colombia region, including the University of Caldas, University of Valle, and Free University. These institutions integrate disciplines such as cultural anthropology, sociology, economics, and psychology into their curricula, facilitating the application of theoretical frameworks that enable comprehensive understanding in intervention practices. A review of the literature reveals scholarly contributions by Gómez-Hernández [29], Garcés Montoya et al. [30], and Del Prado and Rivero [31], which underscore critical social perspectives within the profession discipline. These works advocate decolonial research, intercultural dialogue, participatory community processes, and negotiation based on stakeholders' interests to establish emerging and supportive epistemic domains. There is a dearth of scientific literature on participatory and collaborative ethnography specifically tailored to social work. This study, therefore, contributes to the enhancement of pedagogical, investigative, and intervention processes

for students by positioning ethnography as a methodological approach and aligning it with cultural studies.

The decolonization of knowledge necessitates the creation and implementation of didactic strategies that challenge instrumentalization and the use of knowledge as a tool for power and domination, while recognizing diverse perspectives [32]. This approach aligns with Quintar's [33] concept of "non-parametral didactics," which emphasizes creativity, sensory engagement, autonomy, and contextual relevance in teaching practices. Furthermore, Santos [10] proposes an "ecology of knowledge as counter epistemology," wherein various forms of knowledge intersect and interact, acknowledging the coexistence of knowledge and ignorance. This framework does not aim to discredit scientific knowledge but rather to explore pluralistic approaches, viewing knowledge as a form of intervention and expanding its testimonial nature. The ultimate goal is to progress toward multi-university knowledge, guiding "a creative, democratic, and emancipatory reform of universities." These critical aspects of education should be reflected in the learning outcomes of programs offered at the University of Quindío.

Confronted with the novelty of the study, these pedagogical practices informed by research have facilitated the disruption of colonial paradigms and structures within academic environments through diverse approaches to engaging with students, communities, and territories and generating dialogues from experiential perspectives. These proposals aim to acknowledge differences and provide alternatives for self-exploration of identity elements that emphasize and create spaces of solidarity for sharing, counteracting exclusion, and contributing to educational domains from diverse perspectives.

Regarding the recommendations, it is essential to consider curricular alternatives, recognizing that the academy does not conform to colonial classroom structures but must explore its role in the territories and influence the resolution and transformation of social issues. Concurrently, formative research scenarios are bidirectional based on contexts of alterity. It is also imperative to systematize the experiences from the classroom, research, and processes of social appropriation of knowledge that have been conducted in the Social Work program of the University of Quindío in classroom environments, nurseries, academic practices, and seminars. This aligns with the educational aims and objectives set forth by the National Council for Education in Social Work, which in its most recent publication discusses the epistemological, methodological, and ontological foundations, training objectives, and curricular management within the framework of social justice, democratization, and emancipation.

Declarations

Author Contributions

Conceptualization, L.C.C.H.; methodology, L.I.Q.U.; validation, L.C.C.H.; formal analysis, L.I.Q.U.; investigation, L.I.Q.U.; resources, L.C.C.H.; writing—original draft preparation, all authors contributed equally; writing—review and editing, L.C.C.H. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this manuscript. In addition, the ethical issues, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publication and/or submission, and redundancies have been completely observed by the authors.

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