MYTHS AND REALITIES OF SOCIAL RESEARCH

MITOS Y REALIDADES DE LA INVESTIGACIÓN SOCIAL

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Editorial

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Introducción: From the experience and in the context of the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios - UNIMINUTO, we share from our institution some reflections on myths and realities about social research. We always intend to establish collective learning paths that allow and dynamize the flow of knowledge, experiences, good practices, and aspects of improvement that lead to more participatory and relevant research that contributes to the people's sustainable integral development, communities, and territories.

In this regard, over the last decades and in different fields of action, the visibility, and protagonism of the participants in a territory, in a research process, have enriched and dynamized the method and, of course, the results achieved. Educational communities (students, professors, and graduates) and multiple individuals who participate in a particular context have facilitated the mobilization not only of ideas or processes but also of knowledge. That leads to research with experiential characteristics and significant workflow processes. They add value and co-creation of ideas and initiatives that consolidate scientific and social communities, effective results in the development of individuals, and the empowerment of territorial skills.

Nevertheless, despite the progress achieved that has blur, even eliminate, some lines between disciplines, it is required to motivate a greater flow of interaction that allows all participants to rediscover themselves as social beings requiring others not to fall into scientific solipsism that do not provide answers or clarify the complexities of life that this common home presents us. That is presented in the same tune by Pope Francis, in the Encyclical Laudato Sí, 2015.

In this way, and being a praxeological call (Juliao, 2013), from any area of knowledge and with greater interdisciplinary views, there is an activity that involves understanding diverse aspects such as public policy. That is because we cannot be away from it, from what happens for the simple reason of knowing that the public is what belongs to everyone; what is yours is mine. Therefore, if we have the possibility of sharing or making these scientific advances visible in this number (The scientific journal "Apuntes de Economía y Sociedad" of the Universidad Autónoma de León, Managua, Nicaragua), it is because we recognize that we perform in a shared environment. A place where the welfare of people is everyone's responsibility since we ensure the effective management of public policy and the impact of science on the good life. In this sense, we must reach levels of understanding of situations and realities around personal evaluation. At the end of the training programs, they can take state tests to validate competencies; that is to say: What do I do? How did I learn? What is good for me? What did I learn? and something important: based on what we have experienced, what is good for us as a society? among others.

These are questions and results that establish a perspective that, in our daily chores, establishes key conditions for the work teams and researchers and frames the exercise in a permanent cycle. This cycle integrates, from the management, key elements for the process such as evaluation, learning, transformation, and action. They lead the diverse participants that share an increasingly wider territory to reach an understanding of politics and the public, as a daily exercise. That is to think about everybody's needs and give a route of solutions to the development of strong, integrating, and participative research processes. That can be defined as a comprehensive action that must integrate professions-disciplines- and collective efforts. It is because the problems and challenges must be solved not only through innovative, modern, and efficient public management, but also through co-creation processes and collaborative work in front of a population or a territorial need. They must be solved from the features and diversity to generate relevant and optimal solutions.

Thus, in a framework of diversity, analysis, and collective construction, and emphasis on the educational system, even in controlled environments such as the classroom, singular features, particular aspects and marked differences are perceived and evidenced, even in shared environments. Therefore, more participatory research that integrates participants in the territory, gives opportunities to populations in this XXI century. In this context, educational institutions have the task of forming global, creative, innovative, and capable citizens, who manage to articulate the method, reality, and projection.

Therefore, the challenge is to develop methods and processes that motivate and dynamize the participation of the diverse participants that share the places that delimit the research environment. That is carried out with tools and dialogues that, from a perspective of observation and analysis, turn research into an activity of vital importance. It Is also enjoyable for everyone, allowing to evidence a characterization of people, communities, and territories; it establishes dynamics to recognize what is expected from the research process?

Immersed in this context of increasingly participatory research, three research myths and their respective realities are presented to reveal the epistemic and cultural ruptures that arise therein to open the frontiers of collective work.

The first myth and its reality are the belief that knowledge is segmented and comes in compartments that we name sciences or disciplines. That is the knowledge that comes from an administrative professional who carries out research around this discipline, the engineer and researcher, or the doctor and researcher in medicine. That myth was broken some years ago because today we work in interdisciplinary ways because nobody knows, or better, nobody can respond to human, social, and territorial problems from a single perspective or a single point of view. That is when the limits of the sciences/disciplines begin to be broken. The researcher really needs other professions, other perspectives, and realities because different contexts and environments are required to complement the one that each one has got from their education and experience. This is what brings into play the multiple competences.

One possibility to move from myth to reality can be seen from the question How to further develop the activity of greater cohesion among the members of a territory? This question, in turn, generates several lines of reflection related to categories, variables, and components around population, aspects and their needs, traits, and diversities. If we look at a territory such as Pasca, a town founded by Juan de Céspedes Ruiz, with 12 thousand inhabitants, located 3 hours driving south from Bogotá. In this municipality of the Sumapaz Province, department of Cundinamarca, a golden raft, a reference of the Colombian heritage, was found. Around this relic, numerous vestiges of an ancestral culture of the country were discovered. Today, based on what UNIMINUTO has been doing from the concept of Bogotá Region, we seek, under the mantle of documentation, systematization and visibility, a participatory method of research enhanced with models already developed from the stewardship of the UNIMINUTO Parque Científico de Innovación Social and UNIMINUTO university in Bogotá. It is a method, such as the concept of Community Green Businesses, Engineers to your Territory, STEM, bio factories, community psychosocial laboratory, INTELAB Intelligent Territories' laboratory, among other actions. They allow and motivate the integration of dialogues between academia and communities (Martínez, Morales, & Gómez, 2018).

The second myth and its sense of reality is research as a way of scientific extractivism. Formerly, under the criterion of objectivity, some scientific approaches found in communities, an important niche to conduct research and extract data, would then be processed in research centers, without acknowledgment of the source. Under this principle of independence, objectivity, or mitigation of subjectivity, is achieved with the isolation of the subjects. That is, in the system of relationships between communities, scientific communities, and data, a membrane is established between the subjects, data, and the context to recognize the truth that supports the results of the research. This understanding has been in place for many

decades because, in reality, imaginaries were created around the way in which science should be done, in the distance of subjectivity. It is as if the subject did not have a fundamental role in the construction of science; as if their intervention would contaminate it and would take away its veracity.

To contextually recognize an activity of extractivism, it is important to recall some processes of information gathering. The research teams would join the communities. Somehow, they would find a relationship with a member who would open the door and introduce them to the other members of society or of the research framework. There, the information-gathering process begins by means of different instruments, such as interviews, field diaries, and surveys, among others. The information is documented to the maximum, then the teams leave the territories.

It turns out to be a way of extractivism, because this knowledge is already extracted from the community as it belonged to it; therefore, the practice should be with the community, in the territory. According to the above, they should also be in the different processes of elaboration of the products-fruits that emerge from there. For example, they should be in books as co-authors, as co-creators of these forms of making the cultures known.

Society has created a coalition that nowadays does not try to do knowledge activism, and data extractivism. Currently, it tries to do an activity of co-construction of knowledge, around the social appropriation of knowledge; how individuals and society feel proud to work with universities and research groups. That is because they recognize themselves as protagonists of the system that promotes the transformations of societies and subjects.

A third myth and reality are found in the understanding of a science that is only produced in large laboratories by recognized scientists. In general, the research that we know or have in the mind of the white-coat researcher has been positioned through imaginaries elaborated through films, newspapers or news, among others. They present anonymous research, in places that are neutral. As M. Augé (1998) states, some "non-places", or "places of transience". They do not have the possibility of generating data, because of their existential lightness; that is, they appear and disappear quickly without conditions of self-organization.

Of course, there is also white-coat research. The universities provide opportunities for postgraduate studies (master's and doctoral degrees) in other countries. There, professors have the possibility of recognizing structures with production lines. There are researchers in white coats, in places where they must wear masks, caps and white coats. That is because there are research projects that meet certain health conditions or work with risk components. This type of clothing minimizes exposure to the danger of contaminating samples or affecting people.

There are mixed feelings of appreciation for either of these two ways of approaching reality, of scrutinizing and providing solutions to the problems that each one has posed; these give them their raison d'être. The myth lies in the reduction of scientific understanding, in the very limited ways they have of approaching scientific thought. There is a way to avoid falling into the temptation of reductionism by not generating bias in the day to day, in the profession, in research. So, we do not lose contact with the community, and this relationship energizes human, social and technical development, placing it in a current context. In a certain way, it is to be interacting living in a much more modernized, more digitalized professional world. As Morin points out, that allows us to reflect on how it is being developed, and how knowledge becomes an archipelago in an ocean of knowledge.

So, we are invited to generate a collective conscience to establish paradigmatic ruptures that have been building myths in research. Currently, social research and social innovation, in its evolution, participatively build new paradigms and allow us to see them cohabit -without detriment of research much closer to society, to people, in the evolution of life. That is because it has to do with daily life, with what can happen at a given moment; it happens because of being chaotic living beings in their maximum complexity.

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