AIBR
Revista de Antropología Iberoamericana
www.aibr.org
Volume 15
Number 2
May - August 2020
Pp. 247 - 270

Madrid: Antropólogos Iberoamericanos en Red.
ISSN: 1695-9752
E-ISSN: 1578-9705

Inhabiting Research in the Neoliberal and Eurocentral University: Collaborative Ethnography as a Bet for the Common and Political Subjectivation

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Submitted: March 02, 2018
Accepted: December 10, 2018
DOI: 10.11156/aibr.150204e

ABSTRACT
In this paper, we discuss the transformations undergone by the academic institution at global and European level, arguing that contemporary University is both neoliberal and eurocentric. First, we highlight the changes that have affected research practice, conceived as an increasingly "fast", individualist and depoliticized activity; the role (and the subjectivity) of the researcher, constantly pushed to accumulate academic merits and achieve "excellence" and "impact"; and the growing precaritization of both working and life conditions. Then, drawing on our experience of collaborative ethnography with "Stop Evictions Granada-15M" (Spain), we propose possible "lines of flight" from this situation. Based on our fieldwork, we theorize collaborative ethnography as a way to decolonize research practices. We stress its potential to produce collective knowledge and promote (re)politicization processes and claim that collaboration can help overcome the (currently hegemonic) individualistic and depoliticizing logics in Academia.

KEY WORDS
Neoliberal University, decoloniality, collaborative ethnography, collective knowledge, (re) politicization.

HABITAR LA INVESTIGACIÓN EN LA UNIVERSIDAD NEOLIBERAL Y EUROCENTRADA: LA ETNOGRAFÍA COLABORATIVA COMO APUESTA POR LO COMÚN Y LA SUBJETIVACIÓN POLÍTICA

RESUMEN
En este artículo, primero recorremos las transformaciones que han afectado a la institución académica a nivel global y europeo, concluyendo que la Universidad actual es neoliberal y eurocentrada. Resaltamos los cambios acontecidos en la investigación —que se vuelve cada vez más «rápida», individualista y despolitizada—, en los procesos de subjetivación del personal investigador —que constantemente necesita acumular méritos curriculares y alcanzar «excelencia» e «impacto»— y señalamos la precarización de las condiciones laborales y de vida. Posteriormente, proponemos posibles líneas de fuga a partir de nuestra experiencia de etnografía colaborativa junto con «Stop Desahucios Granada-15M». A través de los ejemplos discutidos, argumentamos que esta práctica de campo puede ayudar a descolonizar las formas de hacer investigación y resaltamos su potencial para producir saberes colectivos e impulsar procesos de subjetivación política. Concluimos que la investigación colaborativa constituye un potente revulsivo para contrarrestar las lógicas individualistas y despolitizadoras hegemónicas.

PALABRAS CLAVE
Universidad neoliberal, descolonialidad, etnografía colaborativa, saber (es) común(es), subjetivación política.

1. Introduction

This article has two objectives: first, we want to outline the main problems that affect the production of knowledge in the contemporary university, focusing on the most situated, involved and activist research practices. Then, we will discuss possible ways to overcome these difficulties, based on a concrete field experience in which a group of people have been engaged since December 2015[1]: this is the process of co-research with "Stop Evictions Granada-15M" (Spanish context), a collective that fights for the right to housing by stopping evictions, supporting families in debt due to mortgage or rental problems, and forcing banks and institutions to negotiate and promote legislative changes[2]. Providing examples of this experience, we will show how we are trying to "cross" the complex scenario that surrounds us, looking for lines of flight from the constraints of the current academic institution — with a particular approach from social anthropology. All this with two clarifications: first, our criticism of the neoliberal University is articulated from an internal position to it: it should not be read, therefore, as a moralistic condemnation, but as a question raised from the practice of epistemological-political reflexivity starting with ourselves[3]. Second: we do not intend to provide universal solutions, but, on the contrary, we want to contribute with embodied reflections from our specific context. First, we will discuss the tendencies of the current University — which we will define as neoliberal and Eurocentric — being the context-institution where we work. After mapping some of the tensions that run through it, we will conceptualize collaborative ethnography — which we also call *co-labor* — enunciating some of the possible axes, frameworks, understanding them as an attempt to decolonize social research. Next, we will devote special attention to two of the four proposed axes — overcoming the individualistic research model and the depoliti-

1. The research is part of the project "Emerging processes and agencies of the common: praxis of collaborative social research and new forms of political subjectivation," I+D+i Projects (Call 2014) of the state program for the promotion of scientific and technical research of excellence, Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of the Government of Spain (Reference: CSO2014-56960-P). Although only two people sign the article, it is nourished by a collective co-research process together with the rest of the team, made up of: Antonia Olmos Alcaraz, Ariana Sánchez Cota, Rocío García Soto and Borja Íñigo Fernández Alberdi, as well as many colleagues from Stop Evictions-15M Granada (https://afectadosporlahipotecagranada.com/) of the Zaidín and Centro Assemblies.

2. Access to decent housing is a structural problem in the Spanish context, originated by the proprietary and speculative approach adopted by public administrations for decades; however, it has intensified since the beginning of the 2007 crisis.

3. And without losing sight of our relatively privileged condition, embodied by each one from its intersection between class, gender, "race"/ethnicity, and other positionalities.

cized knowledge encouraged by the neoliberal University — in addition to mentioning the relevance of placing care and emotions at the center and the proposal to deploy methodological pluriverses. We think that collaborative ethnography can contribute much with respect to all the previous axes, although, for reasons of space, we will focus on the first two. In a final section, we will specify the discussion by providing examples from our co-research and we will present some of the overflows that we have tried to practice, avoiding the most evident tendencies of the neoliberal University and making visible the answers that we are giving it from collaborative ethnography. Lastly, we will conclude by recapping the main issues.

2. Where we are writing from: the neoliberal and Eurocentric University

"Neoliberal University," "Business University" or "Academic Capitalism" are just some of the terms generally used to describe the changes that have affected the university institution in the last three decades. All these expressions refer to a central change for said institution: "[…] its incorporation into the business and commercial circuits of today's capitalist society" (Galcerán, 2010: 15). The process began in the late 1970s and intensified two decades later: in the context of the "global knowledge economy," the latter went from being considered an instrumental factor for economic development to becoming a central element within the logic of capitalist valorization. In other words, knowledge was becoming a commodity (Wright and Rabo, 2010: 2-3). This process, far from being inevitable, was imposed through institutional reforms and specific legislative interventions (Lander, 2005: 37-38)[4]. Thus, public funds for teaching and research were reduced (Shore, 2010: 15) — favoring the penetration of private and commercial interests — and restrictive laws on intellectual property and patents were passed, limiting access to knowledge. These reforms allowed the implementation of a "global education market," as required by the World Bank (Galcerán, 2010: 20).

Faced with the leadership of the process by American, British, and Australian universities (Wright and Rabo, 2010: 4), numerous European governments signed the Bologna Declaration (1999), which initiated intergovernmental cooperation with a view to harmonizing national laws

4. The very notion of "knowledge society," transmitting a pacified and technocratic imaginary of "technical change management," facilitated the naturalization of certain political decision-making (Serrano and Crespo, 2002: 192).

in education and established the European Higher Education Area — followed a year after by the European Research Area. The stated objective of these measures was "[…] to prepare for the transition to a knowledge-based economy and society" (European Council, 2000). In the Spanish context — from which we write — the neoliberal University was implemented through the Organic Law of Universities (L.O. 6/2001) and its subsequent reforms, which transformed the secondary education system and fragmented the conditions of teaching, research, administration and service personnel[5]. These provisions, even characterized by a rhetoric of "openness to society," understood it in the terms of a "company" or a "market" (Montalba Ocaña, 2015: 93), promoting "[...] an understanding of science exclusively in terms of profit, understood in macroeconomic terms, which warns of a type of scientific reductionism where the economy — and an economy of a certain type — is the one that ultimately has the evaluation criteria of the scientific company" (Eizagirre, 2016: 825). These transformations were part of the emergence of the "new public management," that is, the extension to the state administration of organizational forms and business management logic. From a commercial rationality, the values of competition, profitability and financial efficiency were praised. For its implementation, "governing by numbers" practices were deployed (Shore and Wright, 2015) aimed at measuring, evaluating, and monitoring the performance of the multiple agents involved in the administration of the social sphere and determining the criteria for their "optimal" functioning. It was the triumph of the "audit culture." In its transfer to the Academy, this practice regime materialized in the proliferation of indicators, *rankings*, comparative evaluations and other calculation practices (Shore, 2010: 15-16) focused on measuring "academic performance" and stimulating its improvement through the competition. From this perspective, "it is no longer necessary to privatize universities, they only need to function as companies" (Ferreiro Baamonde, 2010: 120). New "expert knowledge" — such as bibliometric disciplines — and new actors — assessing agencies of all kinds — appeared in this scenario (Shore, 2010). We want to highlight three consequences, brought about by these transformations, in the research models, the processes of subjectivation of the research staff and their labor-existential condition:

5. The reforms met with resistance from student movements, although they managed to seduce sectors of the teaching and research staff through the instrumental reappropriation of criticisms of the self-referentiality, bureaucracy and inbreeding of the academic institution — the famous metaphor of the "ivory tower" — originally emerged in the student movements of previous decades (Gómez and Jódar, 2013: 91; Risager and Thorup, 2016: 12).

— The implementation of the neoliberal University has profoundly accelerated the times of research (and teaching), favoring "short-term" studies, profitable in a short time and with an easily measurable impact (Escobar, 2007: 55; Greenwood, 2012: 118). For the new productivist logics, time is a capital that cannot be wasted: thus, the Humboldtian University model (Risager and Thorup, 2016: 20), focused on "basic, blue skies" research and not influenced by the urgency to achieve short-term results has been replaced by a paradigm in which scientific products are subordinated to "[…] criteria and ranking that mainly value what is quantifiable, exhibitable and marketable" (Colectivo Indocentia, 2016). In this context, dizzying rates of production of articles and communications are promoted, facilitating the writing of "rehashed" and "quasi-photocopying" texts of each other (Díez Gutiérrez, 2016) and the use of "craftiness and tricks" of all types — from the falsification of results in the "hard" sciences, to the excess of "self-quotes," "self-plagiarism," "citation networks," "citation wars," etc. (Colectivo Indocentia, 2016; Díez Gutiérrez, 2016)[6]. The amount of "documents," "certificates" and "forms" that must be signed, filled out, and accumulated in order to accredit merits, access calls or obtain positive evaluations is increasing: despite the anti-bureaucratic rhetoric that characterizes the speeches of the new public management, the bureaucracy is not reduced: rather, the neoliberal University redraws its functions and puts it at the service of its evaluation logics and calculation practices, without making it more transparent (Alonso and Fernández Rodríguez, 2016; Barnés, 2015; Chomsky, 2013; Irigoyen, 2011: 41; Shore, 2010).

— Notions such as "excellence," "quality," "responsibility," "entrepreneurial spirit," understood as goals to be achieved by research staff, have been disseminated and standardized. These concepts have a certain seductive polysemy, referring to different meanings depending on who pronounces them (Wright and Rabo, 2010: 6). However, in the hegemonic sense that has been taking shape, they basically point to the bibliometric impact of a scientific product — which "will only be excellent if it is cited countless times" (Alinovi, 2014: 12) — or to the capacity of a research to generate economic wealth in the short term (Shore, 2010: 15-16). Beyond the semantic nuances, it is worth noting what these concepts "[...] allow to do" (Colectivo Indocentia, 2016):

6. Another example of these trends is what we could call "projectitis": given the growing lack of public resources and the consequent need to find grants by participating in complex and extremely competitive national/European/international convocations, the writing of *ad hoc* projects multiplies, serially and continuously (Blommaert, 2015; Migliaccio, 2016). Given the low success rate (sometimes less than 1%), doubts have been raised about the waste of energy, time and money that this implies, when said resources could be dedicated directly to basic research (Blommaert, 2015).

first of all, their normalization helps to naturalize the "need to compete" (Colectivo Indocentia, 2016). This has contributed to strongly shaping the research subjectivities, helping to produce "[...] a subject that internalizes that the permanent evaluation is the condition for the realization of their project" (Irigoyen, 2011: 42). In the case of the Spanish University, most of the evaluation procedures are voluntary[7]: no one is obliged to undergo them, but (almost) everyone does, being the only way to obtain accreditation, salary increases and better working conditions (Gómez and Jódar, 2013). Thus, "the new forms of neoliberal government modify our subjectivities: we become competitive, active, versatile and flexible researchers," 'entrepreneurs of ourselves.' "The 'excellent teachers' work only by and for themselves. We incorporate the cost-benefit calculation not only when planning a research project, but also when managing our relationships" (Colectivo Indocentia, 2016). All this generates a growing "resentment" (Galcerán, 2010: 18), "rivalries" (Montalba Ocaña, 2015; Shore, 2010: 25), fosters a culture "of mistrust" (Halffman and Radder, 2015: 167) and "performance" (Shore, 2010: 27) and a situation of "chronic anxiety" and "stress" (Gill, 2015: 50).

— Scientific hyperproductivity ends up invading and blurring the border between leisure time and working hours (Colectivo Indocentia, 2016; Gómez and Jódar, 2013: 92-93). This is the consequence of more transcendent changes related to post-Fordist society, particularly accentuated in the context of "cognitive work" (Berardi, 2003: 16) of which the University is a paradigmatic expression. Without attempting to address a general discussion, we highlight that "[…] one of the most notable elements of the new scenarios is the precariousness of work and employment, which has stretched to affect the whole of life […] blurring the clear-cut boundaries that separated training cycles from work performance, working time from non-working time, or consumption from production" (Lara and Álvarez, 2009: 109-112). The widespread insecurity and instability allow us to speak of *precariousness* as a condition of life, which crosses both the "(re)productive" sphere and the processes of subjectivation of individuals. This paradigm has had a strong impact on the materiality of research (and teaching) practices: to limit ourselves to the Spanish University, an "excessive" use of precarious contracts is highlighted, above the legally foreseen threshold of 40% (Pérez Rastrilla, 2017). A recent study carried out at the Complutense University of Madrid points to a worrying scenario of widespread precariousness, characterized by low

7. Obviously, it is a very relative "voluntariness," since the constraints generated by not submitting to the evaluation processes end up reducing, if not blocking, the possibilities of advancing in the career or even stabilizing the working conditions themselves — especially in the case of the younger research staff.

wages with few guarantees, an exaggerated workload and the extreme fragility — if not non-existence — of stable job and life prospects for the young academics (Castillo and Moré, 2017). All this ends up influencing the forms, times and even the specific designs of the implemented projects, pushing us to highlight the precarious evolution of the research itself. At this point, we clarify that the previously existing University does not constitute for us an idealized model of reference. Far from romantic nostalgia, we recognize that the university institution has always played a crucial role in the reproduction of the social system (Galcerán, 2010: 14), naturalizing, promoting and legitimizing hegemonic knowledge and powers — without prejudice to the numerous and laudable exceptions. In particular, the fact that it was "public" and "state-based" institution did not imply that it was at the service of collective goods or the "common," but rather it has implied its identification with the nation-state — the central institution of the modern/colonial world system — its rhetoric of inclusion/exclusion and its interests. Furthermore, the modern university institution constituted from the beginning a crucial spearhead for the triumph of the Eurocentric Modernity project, and was gradually shaped as a "temple of knowledge," an institution generating supposedly universal truths (Escobar, 2007: 51), enunciated from the allegedly neutral and selfless "zero-point *hubris*" (Castro-Gómez, 2005) and valid in all times and places. It became the privileged space for "discovery" and the dissemination of scientific, rational and objective knowledge (Lander, 2005: 4), while other knowledge was delegitimized as "mythical," "irrational" or "emotional" and relegated to a position of non-truth, whether it was experiential knowledge attributed to the "common people" — branded as mere "superstitions" — or the worldviews of indigenous peoples considered alien to European civilization and its "mission" — unfortunately, anthropology has not been alien to this process. To limit ourselves to the social sciences, these have been Eurocentric since the constitution of their disciplines, not only because they originated in Western countries such as France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy and the United States (Wallerstein, 1997: 97), but because "[…] they arose in response to European problems at a time in history when Europe dominated the entire world-system" (Wallerstein, 1997: 98). In short, the university institution has always been structured by the "coloniality of knowledge," this being a central dimension of the modern-colonial project that began to take root in the 15th century (Castro-Gómez, 2005; Lander, 2000). To this must be added the recent transformations in a neoliberal sense, and it is from the set of these articulations between coloniality of knowledge and neoliberalism that our urgency descends not only to question the commercialized and competi-

tive knowledge of the "audit culture," but also for challenging the set of epistemological hierarchies and historical silencing, advocating a broader process of decolonization of knowledges that can only begin with the way(s) in which these are generated.

3. Decolonize research: collaborative ethnography as *co-labor*

In recent decades there has been a debate on the decolonial turn and the need to decolonize the social sciences, making a commitment to overcome the extractive principle that has characterized them and paying special attention to the epistemological and theoretical dimensions. Asking ourselves for what, for whom, and how we produce knowledge from the social sciences invites us to pay attention to the coloniality of knowledge and to contrast the historical tendency of the social sciences to make places of enunciation invisible. The criticism of the scientific canon (neutral and objective) has been widely debated, especially from feminist contexts, claiming the centrality of "situated knowledge" (Haraway, 1991), the "politics of location" (Rich, 1986) or the "incardination as positionality" (Braidotti, 2004). From the context of social anthropology, in 1971 Rodolfo Stavenhagen was already writing about how to decolonize the social sciences and raised the need to speak of "activist observation" or "militant observation" (1971: 51), as opposed to the classic conception of "participant observation." Undoubtedly, the *corpopolitics* of knowledge that has been vindicated from the decolonial approach (AAVV, 2015; Castro-Gómez and Grosfoguel, 2007; Leyva, Burguete and Speed, 2008; Lugones, 2008; Smith, 1999; Walsh, Schiwy and Castro-Gómez, 2002), as well as Boaventura de Sousa Santos' proposal of the *epistemologies of the South* (2009), allow us to rethink the foundations that have sustained the universal scientistic project to try to abandon "epistemological extractivism" (Grosfoguel, 2016) and walk towards a methodological-political questioning of the forms of research.

From our experience, we understand collaborative or co-labor ethnography as one of the possible ways of landing, from concrete practice, other ways of inhabiting research[8]. What are some of its main contributions? It implies recognizing other *knowledges-doings*, looking for other ways that incorporate the centrality of the group in front of the individual as the protagonist of the research (co-research), collective protagonists who can deploy affective spaces for listening and dialogues (overcoming

8. We speak of "inhabiting research" because we situate ourselves from a research context that challenges us and runs through us, an "embodied ethnography" (Esteban, 2004).

the eternal dichotomy "rationality-feelings") and thus go beyond the monological dynamics supported by the sole and exclusive authority of "expert knowledge," denying other possible ways of explaining and (re)presenting the day-to-day of the research. Trying to answer the question: "In a world saturated with colonial relations, to what extent is a decolonized research method possible?" (Hale, 2011: 493), we will present some of the steps we are taking in a particular attempt to decolonize research[9]. Without attempting to answer it in absolute terms, but from the research processes that we have been inhabiting, we provide four possible scaffolds for collaborative ethnography: i) overcoming the individual ethnographic model by activating research practices of the common; ii) understanding political subjectivation as part of the co-research process; iii) placing care and emotions at the center and iv) deploying methodological pluriverses, reformulating and overflowing research methods. Since in the following section we will deal with the first two axes, in the following lines we will present some reflections on the third and fourth[10].

— From the autoethnographic works of numerous feminists (Behar, 1996; Gregorio Gil, 2006; Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990) we have learned the need to incorporate feelings, emotions, affections and care in our research. We assume that collaborative ethnography is an evidently situated and embodied work that constitutes an ecosystem of affective relationships, where the vulnerabilities of our political bodies (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987) are thought of as potentialities that can act as sounding boards within and outside the group. In our case, it is also the micropolitical processes of Stop Evictions Granada-15M that lead us to this. In

9. Since 2009, a group of people linked to the University of Granada have organized seminars, conferences, and conversations on the decolonial view in the university context. The conference, "Dialogues between Social Sciences and Social Movements. Looks, Questions, (Dis)encounters," funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation (CSO2009-07790-E), the Own Research Plan of the University of Granada (2009) and the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Business of the Junta de Andalucía (2009). In March 2011, we organized the workshop, "Tools for participatory methodologies: uses, applications, and strategies," in which more than fifteen collectives and associations from the city of Granada participated. As a result of all this collaborative process, in 2012 we published the book, *Tentativas, Contagios, Desbordes. Territorios del Pensamiento*, published by the University of Granada (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267510017_Tentativas_contagios_desbordes_Territorios_del_pensamiento). In March 2014, we organized from the Instituent Knowledges Network (Ins-Knows Network) and thanks to the support of the Department of Social Anthropology, the Department of Contemporary History, the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature, and the Migration Institute of the University of Granada, a discussion on the decolonization of knowledge (http://antropologia.ugr.es/pages/tablon/*/noticias/conversatorio-la-descolonizacion-del-conocimiento-dialogos-transdisciplinares).

10. We have dealt in more depth with the issue of care-emotions and methodological pluriversalism in Olmos Alcaraz, Cota, Álvarez Veinguer and Sebastiani (2018).

the collective, collective care practices are of relevant importance: from the moment a person attends the group, both the collective counseling carried out in the assemblies and the smaller support groups constituted for each case — helping in the processing of papers, the negotiation with the banks, organizing protest actions, etc. — are directed toward a "politicization of suffering" (Fernández Savater, 2008). The stigma for having lost a home is turned into a political issue, individual feelings of "failure" initially experienced are relativized, and sometimes self-empowerment is generated through social struggle. This example rescues the *political* centrality of feelings and emotions and supports our commitment to carry out a "somatic and vulnerable" analysis (Esteban, 2015).

— In this process, we are learning that research questions arise from daily experiences with the collective. Therefore, we have deployed dialogic and horizontal forms of listening, generating creative and plural co-labor devices. Faced with extractivist methodologies, which tend to predefine research techniques to later make the group "fit" within it, we have chosen to reverse the roles and adapt the latter to the group. Far from putting a design or a work plan a priori beforehand, we have tried to accommodate to the group — with its possibilities, desires, dispositions, times, preferences, potentialities, and vulnerabilities — prioritizing those moments in which the group expressed its willingness to participate in the process and make decisions. Theoretical-analytical questions have been built on the fly, not simply because of a certain unpredictability common to all ethnographic research, but because of our deliberate attempt to cede ethnographic authority and collectively construct the "what" and "hows" of research. We call this *methodological pluriversality* and we consider that it should be a central aspect of collaborative research, allowing us to imagine other ways of listening and talking, with the horizon of generating "knowledge on the move" (Haber, 2011).

Let us now address the other two axes mentioned: co-labor as a way to activate the common and processes of political subjectivation[11].

3.1. Claiming the common in enclosure contexts

A research focused on processes rather than products, on collaboration rather than competition, focused on pluriversalism rather than methodological individualism, faces many difficulties in the context of the neoliberal and Eurocentric University. For example, in a text on action research also applicable to our case, Greenwood points out some points of

11. Both issues are intertwined and cannot be separated except in abstract terms.

tension inherent to this practice: its holistic, anti- or transdisciplinary vocation, the epistemological relevance accorded to non-academic local actors, its irreducibility to an evaluation from quantitative parameters and the search for forms of collective authorship (2012: 121-127).

In order to deepen the discussion, we will address the underlying tensions in the relationship between the neoliberal University and the knowledge commons (Hess and Ostrom, 2016) — since collaborative ethnography, as we will show, can be understood as a useful tool for the constitution of the common (Cota, Álvarez Veinguer, Olmos Alcaraz, Sebastiani, García Soto and Fernández Alberdi, 2017). To begin with, there is a "fence" at the University around *access* to common knowledge, due to the quasi-monopoly held by companies such as *Thomson Reuters* or *Elsevier* in the market for scientific publications. The researchers, first, are forced to publish the results of their research — often carried out in public structures — in journals belonging to these publishers, so that later on, universities can regain access rights to the articles resulting from their work, generating a second transfer to the private economy and assuming exorbitant expenses for the public (Bermejo-Barrera, 2014; Díez Gutiérrez, 2016).

Secondly, the fence is placed on the collective *construction* of knowledge: the prevailing research logic, despite its opening rhetoric, disqualifies the participation (as equals) of subordinate actors in academic research and fosters a separation between "subjects" and "objects" of study. In many conventional research projects, the populations studied do not even have access to the knowledge produced about them (Manzano-Arrondo, 2015: 209). Even worse: in this scenario, the epistemological hierarchy between "expert knowledge" — scientific and supposedly objective — and "non-expert knowledge" — popular or belonging to actors with low social status — only deepens. In fact, given the hegemony of the "culture of impact and citation" (Díez Gutiérrez, 2016), the fact of collectively sharing or producing knowledge together with "non-expert" actors, belonging to marginalized populations or coming from non-accredited social worlds to produce "academic surplus value," it is not profitable for the university institution. This "indicator fetishism" has led to the transformation of scientific activity, since "they ignore and destroy the variety of knowledge forms and practices in various fields of study. That what is not measurable and comparable, does not count, is a waste of energy and should therefore be destroyed" (Halffman and Radder, 2015: 167, own translation). In addition, the logic of "fast times" implies that everything that is done beyond the institutional requirements of "impact" and "excellence," everything that goes beyond the dimension of "research on" to become "research with," by not having a direct impact on the *curriculum vitae*

ends up being considered a waste of time. This has concrete effects on the practice of fieldwork: if at first all qualitative research is open to dynamic and changing scenarios that poorly lend themselves to the drafting of closed projects or to a "linear" implementation of them, in the case of certain collaborative and implied research, this tension becomes even greater, since the times of the research process are not even fully controlled by the "academic" team, and sometimes depend on factors totally external to the logic of the University (Greenwood, 2012: 127-128). Thus, the more choral and collaborative an ethnography becomes, the tougher the tensions and incompatibilities will be with respect to the timing required for academic "productivity." Just when more scientific productivity is required of researchers, practices are promoted that reduce the time dedicated to field work and increase the time required for academic-bureaucratic management (Barnés, 2015). If, therefore, operant logics discourage the production of common knowledge together with "marginalized" or "counter-hegemonic" actors, on the other hand, universities have not stopped signing cooperation agreements in research with other types of actors, often protected by copyright and in support of private interests (cases of large companies) or powerful state institutions — these are considered depositories of the general interests of society[12]. In general terms, it is possible to affirm that in the neoliberal University, the production of knowledge is understood as "[…] a means of valuing oneself and one's own 'ridiculum vitae' apart from the social value of knowledge as a common good" (Colectivo Indocentia, 2017).

Faced with this scenario of the tyranny of individuality, more than a decade ago, Vasco proposed "to collect the concepts of life" (2002) as a possible way to reconnect anthropological work and the struggles of indigenous movements: "a contrary way of looking at things requires transcending individuality, breaking with the fiction of the subject and eliminating the idea that the subject of knowledge is the ethnographer. In fact, the subject must be joint, social, made up of the ethnographer, who already carries on their back the weight of the relations of their society that determine them, and the indigenous people" (Vasco, 2002: 694)[13]. This proposal, along with other works carried out in the 90s in Colombia, was the origin of what years later Rappaport (2007) would call "collaborative ethnography," where the anthropologist is one of the group, and the collaboration goes through all phases of research (Arribas Lozano, 2014; Dietz and Álvarez Veinguer, 2014; Rappaport, 2007). These contributions

12. Case of the research carried out in collaboration between the University of Granada and the Spanish Army (Centro Mixto Ugr-Madoc, 2017).
13. For an analysis of Vasco's work, see Vasco (2007).

have proposed to go beyond the individual work of the ethnographer to give centrality to the group — an aspect that, without a doubt, is in direct contradiction with the current demands and logic of the neoliberal University. In general terms, collaboration is posed as a response to the problem of the "individual project model" (Collier, 2007), which necessarily links academic production with individual elements of fieldwork and writing, is associated with dense descriptions and virtuous and elegant interpretations that are considered the hallmark of a good job. Hence, experimentation with forms of writing and fieldwork styles is privileged and breaking with existing norms is valued, favoring that the contributions associated with certain authors frequently adopt the form of "brand" concepts (Collier, 2007: 55). Faced with this avant-garde model, we think that overcoming and transcending the overvaluation of the individual figure of the ethnographer can undoubtedly contribute to activating an exchange and an ecology of knowledge to learn new ways of inhabiting the productions of meaning that are crossed by the instituting logic of the common. It is a question, then, of betting on the figure of the anonymous academic who knows how to dissolve together with the group, capable of making their knowledge available, without seeking recognition and profits but to build, dialogue, disassemble and transform in a collective manner, building spaces where we have time to listen to one another, tell and share. From our co-research, an example of this is the process that has taken us from the initial implementation of some "listening devices" to the realization of a *transmedia*[14] audiovisual narrative project in which we are currently working. In summary: at first, we promoted the implement-ation of "discussion groups" together with a Stop Evictions assembly — the one in the Zaidín neighborhood — and interviews in the other — the Centro Assembly[15]. Due to space limitations, we cannot stop to analyze the content of the different "discussion groups," but we can analyze their form: before beginning to debate, we collectively reached some operating agreements that were collected and posted in the meeting room. These agreements were summarized as: 1) we are here to debate, analyze and reflect on our discourses and practices to strengthen our movement; 2) it is our own voice and our lived experiences that have value. Speak respectfully and understand that there is another point of view; 3) leave

14. The transmedia project began in October 2017 and is in its early stages when we wrote this article.

15. Since November 2015, we have been participating in two assemblies of the movement in the city of Granada: the first is located in the southern part, in the popular and working-class neighborhood of Zaidín, while the second, even being in the Central area, includes in its area of intervention other popular or impoverished parts of the city. For more information: https://afectadosporlahipotecagranada.com.

the cell phone on silence. Enter and exit without disturbing; 4) feel as free as possible to express our opinion. Listen to one another.

Agreeing on the basic rules of operation (co-production of rules) before starting to debate, it might seem like an insignificant and purely organizational gesture. However, it is one of the central elements to internalize and share the "rules of the game" that we were establishing, and consequently making them our own to manage the listening space we wanted to build (a fairly common practice within assembly spaces and collectives and yet rare in most ethnographic research). It is a way of activating agency processes where the group assumes and internalizes the shared responsibility of the construction of listening spaces. As opposed to the more traditional techniques where form, content and timing are imposed, we have understood that the "discussion groups," as well as any other device for the production of meaning that is agreed to deploy, must operate from the principles of listening, horizontality and the utmost respect. The versatility and flexibility of adapting to the group, and not the other way around, has allowed us to respond and adapt to the conditions of each group. The objective of these "techniques," however, was not to generate knowledge around theoretical dilemmas previously defined by the "research team": on the contrary, it was about using them "instrumentally" to bring out the "whats" in a choral way, based on the needs felt by the group. Those of us associated with the university were not exclusively "observers" of the group, or moderators in the sense of "making people talk," or experts on the subject as assumed in other research techniques. Like the rest of the group members, we participated in the discussions when we felt that we had something to contribute and share. Only later, and based on what had emerged, did we elaborate the proposal to build a plurality of audiovisual narratives (transmedia project) to publicize the reality of Stop Evictions Granada-15M, enhance its public profile and promote its ability to weave alliances with other actors. But this whole process was built and negotiated continuously and collectively. The construction of this transmedia project not only goes beyond the individual logic of research but is even counterproductive from a "productivist" and "fast-time" perspective. We could have devoted ourselves solely to analyzing and publishing fragments "extracted" from our discussion groups and interviews, reaching a greater academic impact, but that would have meant establishing a relationship between "research team" and "activist group" in terms of "subject" vs. "object." Instead, we chose to use the materials produced "internally" as tools to start a collective process, define common interests, and respond to needs felt and raised by the group itself. This is an example of how, in the face of extractivist techniques that vam-

pirize the knowledge of the subjects who participate in the research, it is possible to propose other objectives and purposes: not to extract and dispossess, but to give, share, and relearn. From this point of view, this co-labor is allowing us to transcend the individual dimension, activating the production of meaning in a collective way through the construction of the common (Cota *et.al.*, 2017)[16].

3.2. Processes of political subjectivation in contexts of depoliticization

Some scholars have spoken of "neoliberal science" (Lander, 2005) or "neoliberalized knowledge" (Brown, 2011) to indicate the type of knowledge promoted by the current University model. In particular, these aspects have been highlighted:

— "Immediate" knowledge is produced and easily transferable to contexts of technological application (Escobar, 2007: 53-55). *Just-in-time* and *ready-for-use* knowledge whose fragmented, specialized and compartmentalized nature is usually of no use beyond the restricted scope for which they are created. It is a paradigm that is not only "short-term," but also "technocratic," which makes it very difficult to finance those research projects that are more socially committed, whose results are not visible in the short term, nor are they easily valued by "objective" standards.

— Neopositivist, scientific, and quantitative paradigms prevail (Ceglowski, Bacigalupa and Peck, 2011). De-politicized and allegedly "neutral" knowledge is produced which, not by hiding its place of enunciation (its "whys" and "for whats"), ceases to have it. Studies carried out in universities of the global "North" prevail (Galcerán, 2010: 15), validated from self-referential criteria of excellence (Lander, 2005: 50) and almost always communicated in English (Díez Gutiérrez, 2016; Galcerán, 2010: 15). And all this further underpins the coloniality of knowledge already present in the traditional University.

— Without now debating the modern separation between "hard" sciences and social and human sciences (Wallerstein, 1997: 112), undoubtedly the former — in particular the "life sciences" — are clearly privileged (Escobar, 2007: 55; Galcerán, 2010: 16); the latter, as they are not so

16. Due to space problems, we will not be able to explain in detail the collaborative process that we are carrying out. We recommend reading the work of Ariana Sánchez Cota and Antonia Olmos Alcaraz in this same monograph, because they are part of the same team and develop in greater depth some of the questions that are outlined here schematically or in a way that could seem "programmatic."

easily profitable, in some of their most anti-positivist aspects even come to be defined as "unscientific" (Brown, 2011: 117).

— The procedural aspects — measures, indicators, impact evaluations — are prioritized (Manzano-Arrondo, 2015: 202) without reflecting on the non-neutrality of these and their implications. These devices end up influencing the choice of research topics, categories of analysis, methodologies, dissemination formats — preferring the scientific article format to the others (Manzano-Arrondo, 2015: 206) — writing styles and even the languages for writing scientific projects and texts[17].

However, what we find interesting about our co-labor experience is not so much the political objectives pursued — which we share and promote as activists — but the methodological procedures deployed, insofar as they help to activate collective (re)politicization processes. Faced with the established depoliticization inside and outside the university, in the discussion groups held, the partners shared that the first time they attended a Stop Eviction assembly, the most recurrent feelings were fear, loneliness, abandonment and vulnerability. Frustration in the face of failure, the complex due to the inability to keep up the payments, shame and social pressure for "what they will say" were repeated in the first experiences in the face of the threat of eviction. However, meeting other people with shared life trajectories allowed the activation of processes of assemblage where the individual who initially only wanted not to lose their home was traversed and overwhelmed by a collective intelligence (a common doing) that would overflow and reverse in all the daily actions of the movement, by means of the frictions, the experiences and the affections that construct the coinvolvement. Not only does one learn to manage and solve the specific problems of how to face a situation of loneliness and abandonment in the face of the impossibility of dealing with an acquired mortgage or not being able to pay the rent: gradually, the day to day becomes politicized because the first thing that is lost is fear, feeling accompanied along the way. Without wanting to idealize the process of assembling, which obviously also has its tensions

17. Case of the Italian anthropologist Roberta Chiroli, whose doctoral thesis is an ethnography of the "No Tav" movement that opposes high-speed trains in Val di Susa, in Piedmont (Chiroli, 2017). Roberta was charged and finally sentenced to two months in prison, for having carried out a participant observation during a demonstration that ended with chaos. Although she was not involved in the events at any time, the judge considered her "morally responsible" for having described those events using the first-person plural (Giambartolomei, 2016). The fact that a judge can establish themselves as an epistemological authority and issue sentences based on her own notion of research is very worrying to us and points to the emergence of a paradigm of "obedient research" (Colectivo Indocentia, 2016).

and fissures, the group, collectively, unfolds beyond individualities. One learns to take the floor and negotiate with the banks, each one becomes an expert in how to proceed, surfing the system's pitfalls, and becoming an expert, recognized, and valued within the group. People become desire machines that take to the streets, sing, dance, and fight in a daily life where politics and its grammar is already different: not only do they take care of themselves and fight not to lose their homes, but they support a movement that vindicates the right of every person to decent housing. The change is substantial: from the individual motive to the collective cause. There is a reappropriation of public space, one learns to fill out briefs, to fight in court, and to converse as equals with lawyers and attorneys. A creative overflow (which does not operate in the traditional ways of doing of the avant-garde left parties), which goes beyond formal politics because the protagonists, the messages and the forms are different. A politics of bonds is inhabited (Segato, 2016) crossed by the relational, communicative, and care dimensions. Other languages and ways of relating are generated that were not previously practiced and whose existence was unknown. It is a doing-inhabiting, which before did not challenge them and was not part of their day to day. The crisis and the experience of collectively managing the problems related to housing in Stop Evictions, have generated agency dynamics that become a process of political subjectivation (Tassin, 2012). In the new subject-to-subject dialogue, they are central actors who redefine representations of the possible. One does things that they did not know one could/could not do, one destabilizes power hierarchies by defining and recognizing who can or cannot do research, who can or cannot produce knowledge. In other words, they not only become valid interlocutors for banks — because here there are no intermediaries or expert and specialized agents with technical knowledge outside the movement — but they also position themselves as leading actors to produce knowledge from and about their movement. But something similar happens to the members of the "research team": on the exciting journey of learning and unlearning through co-research, we are no longer the same as two years ago. We, the members of the research team, collectively participate in the production of meaning and in the questioning of ethnographic authority and its privileged place of enunciation, and many roles that we had previously learned are blurred or even disappear. So, the action of thinking about ourselves, knowing ourselves, living and sharing the daily emergencies of the movement while we construct the research, is also a process of political subjectivation, through which we become other subjectivities throughout the co-research process.

4. Some closing lines…

> Commitment is the willingness to allow oneself to be compromised, to be put in a compromise due to an unforeseen problem that assails us and challenges us. Thus, the commitment is both active and passive, determined and receptive, free and coerced (Garcés, 2011).

In this article, first, we have reviewed the conditions of the contemporary academic institution, defining it as a neoliberal and Eurocentric University. From our specific context, we have highlighted that current trends transform the timing and subjectivities of research, subjecting them to criteria of productivity and individualism, generating depoliticized knowledge and making working and living conditions more precarious. Subsequently, we have conceptualized collaborative ethnography as an attempt to decolonize research practices, highlighting its potential to activate the instituting logics of the common and promote processes of political subjectivation, as well as underlining its capacity to put a value on the caring/emotional/affective dimension and to establish listening devices that indiscipline methodologies, generating more horizontal research processes. We have particularly discussed the first two aspects, providing examples of our co-research, and putting them in dialogue with the scenarios assumed by our membership in the academic institution, highlighting tensions and difficulties. In this regard, we insist: although we do not claim to provide "solutions" on a large scale, we consider it fundamental to continue asking ourselves — each from the specific contexts of their academic work — about possible ways to question the more individualistic and depoliticizing tendencies of the neoliberal University. We add that this questioning, in our view, should occur not only at the theoretical and discursive level, but also in the field of methodological choices that affect the daily life of field work. It is true that the general context is tendentially negative, but there are also important useful margins of action. In fact, today's University is still characterized by the co-presence of ambivalent, even "schizophrenic" discourses, logics, and practices (Shore, 2010: 21). It is therefore a contradictory space, where alternative possibilities and potential lines of flight may have been reduced, but they still exist. For example, with respect to the common, we are witnessing the prominence of some universities that promote the use of *free software* — even if it is to "rationalize costs" — and encourage their researchers to put in open source the *pre-print* versions of their articles — even if it is to increase the chances of being cited and rising in the international rankings — (Hess and Ostrom, 2016: 34). At the level of collective action, there are more and more consistent criti-

cisms of this model of University — the case of the proposals that advocate a "slow" University, an expression based on the title of a recently published volume (Berg and Seeber, 2016). Given the precariousness, there are attempts at self-organization by the research staff — the case of the "PrecAnthro" meeting, organized during the EASA Congress in Milan (2016), which has seen the participation of more than 150 anthropologists and has established the bases for the construction of a transnational network (AllegraLab, 2016). Lastly, within ethnographic practice, committed experiences emerge from different locations that question and challenge the Eurocentric narrative of modernity, as well as the extractivist logics of their knowledge. As stated in this monograph, multiple experiences resonate from different spatial-temporal coordinates that allow us to continue tracking different ways of doing/inhabiting within and against the neoliberal and Eurocentric University.

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