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Capabilities for epistemic liberation: the case of hermeneutical insurrection of the Network of Community Researchers in Medellin, Colombia

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ABSTRACT

Community leaders in Colombia have historically suffered processes of microaggressions and intimidation that threaten the free exercise of their voice in the processes of production of knowledge and in the participation of the planning of their territories. In this article, we explore the case study of the Network of Community Researchers (NCR), also known in Spanish as *Red de Investigadores Comunitarios*, promoted by the University of Antioquia, Colombia. The NCR is a commitment to the co-production of knowledge about human security from below between community researchers and academics. This article analyses the contribution of the NCR to the human security of Medellin and a specific collection of capabilities for epistemic liberation of community researchers: the capability to be recognised as a producer of valid knowledge, to do through communicative openness, to learn from collective knowledge and to transform through collective action. The expansion of these four capabilities evidence processes of resistance and hermeneutic insurrection of some community leaders and activists who participate in the NCR. The analysis shows the contribution of the NCR to facilitate and generate a safe space in which community researchers communicate knowledge and practices and share experiences, risks, struggles, fears and collective dreams of transformation.

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1. Introduction

A territory of contradictions, Medellin is one of the most innovative cities (Copaja-Alegre and Esponda-Alva 2019) and, at the same time, one of the more unequal in Latin America, with a score of 0.52 on the Gini index in 2017 (Medellin Como Vamos 2018). It is a city that, on the one hand, stands out for its technological infrastructures around mobility and digital communication and, on the other, is characterised by violence, armed conflict

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and urban segregation (Drummond, Dizgun, and Keeling 2012). For Álvarez Castaño (2011), a very high percentage of the population of Medellín has their freedoms of social and political participation reduced or threatened, since they cannot choose the kind of life they value due to the historical processes of social exclusion.

Fricker (2015) and Medina (2017) remind us that these historically oppressed people and populations are also victims of hermeneutical injustices. According to Medina (2017) these injustices are violence that contributes to marginalisation and hermeneutical death, that is, to the reduction or loss of the capabilities to have a voice, and to interpret and share meanings about their lives and about territories they inhabit. From a critical perspective, the right to be different and participate in city decision-making were raised by Harvey (2000) as key guarantees to deepen and broaden the scope of human rights. Harvey (2000) raises the need to recognise the multiple diversities (identity and sociocultural) of the working classes, in addition to recognising that class as carriers of knowledge, ideals and aspirations about the city they inhabit. He argues that the right to the city does not arise from the academy, but 'from the streets, from the neighbourhoods, as a cry for help from oppressed people in desperate times' (Harvey 2013, 9). For Harvey (2013) the right to the city is 'much more than an individual or collective right of access to the resources that it stores or protects; it is a right to change and reinvent the city according to our wishes' (p.19).

In Medellín, Colombia, the defence and enforceability of these human rights are the daily struggle of many activists and community leaders who inhabit the slopes of the city (Abello-Colak et al. 2014). The slopes are territories occupied mainly by informal settlements of populations displaced by the armed conflict in Colombia. In these territories, and due to the State's lack of interest in responding to the needs of these populations, their inhabitants 'were developing forms of organisation that allowed them to improve their living conditions (...) by paving streets and improving the access to water' (Abello-Colak et al. 2014, 155). According to the authors, these populations not only seek to improve material conditions, but also to reaffirm the ties of solidarity, community values and political influence to demand from the State the minimum guarantees of habitability in these territories. However, and despite the Peace Agreement signed in November 2016, more than 900 activists and community leaders have been murdered in Colombia due to their fight for the defence of human rights (Indepaz 2022).

In this article, we explore the case study of the Network of Community Researchers (NCR), also known in Spanish as *Red de Investigadores Comunitarios*, promoted by the Medellín Human Security Observatory (MHSO), attached to the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the University of Antioquia, Colombia. This network emerged in 2016 as a commitment to the co-production of knowledge between the University and society, this is, between community researchers (activists and community leaders) and academics based on the *human security from below* approach (Zuluaga et al. 2017). This theoretical-methodological approach proposes an alternative to the hegemonic perspective of citizen security used by the municipal administration in the city of Medellín.

In the following section, we outline the contributions of Medina (2017) around the processes of marginalisation, resistance and hermeneutic insurrection and we define what we understand about capabilities for epistemic liberation from previous work (Leivas et al. 2020; Leivas et al. 2022). Subsequently, based on the NCR case study, we explore the expansion of the four capabilities for epistemic liberation in the people who participate

in the network. These capabilities are: the capability to be recognised as a producer of valid knowledge, the capability to do through communicative openness, the capability to learn from collective knowledge and the capability to transform through collective action. On the other hand, obstacles (microaggressions and intimidation) that occur in institutional and interpersonal dynamics that threaten and/or prevent the free exercise of these capabilities are also identified. Finally, we conclude this work by collecting some contributions from the NCR that can guide future experiences of co-production of knowledge and citizen participation in public policies.

2. From hermeneutical marginalisation to epistemic liberation

According to Fricker (2007), certain social groups suffer injustices and inequalities that contribute to hermeneutic marginalisation. She defines hermeneutical marginalisation as 'an unequal hermeneutical participation with respect to some significant areas of social experience' (Fricker 2007, 153). For Fricker (2015) these injustices limit and hinder the capability for epistemic contribution. This capability is understood as the opportunity to contribute to the production of shared knowledge (Fricker 2015). The capability for epistemic contribution is formulated by Fricker based on the contributions of the list of capabilities proposed by Nussbaum (1988). In this sense, she highlights that 'if there is such a universal list to be had, then Epistemic Contribution merits a place on it.' (Fricker 2015, 6). Based on her contributions, we understand that hermeneutic marginalisation prevents these people from generating meanings and interpretations so that they can be integrated into shared knowledge. In different of her works, Fricker analyses threats, frustrations or epistemic failures that occur in communicative interactions that cause three types of epistemic injustice: deliberate, testimonial and hermeneutic (Fricker 2007; 2015). For Fricker (2015), hermeneutic injustice does not generate individual responsibilities, but rather unintentional epistemic errors that are caused by structural problems derived from the absence of collective hermeneutic resources. However, she emphasises that these hermeneutic injustices can be mitigated by cultivating virtuous listening and the exercise of hermeneutic charity of recipients, including a series of proactive attitudes that must be developed in communicative spaces (Fricker 2015).

From a critical perspective to Fricker's contributions, Medina (2017) recalls that these injustices do not occur only in communicative interactions between sender and receiver, but are structural and historical, generating individual and collective responsibilities. Medina emphasises that these people and populations suffer expressive and interpretive oppression derived from hermeneutical injustices: 'Hermeneutical injustice is the phenomenon that occurs when the intelligibility of communicators is unfairly constrained or undermined, when their meaning-making capabilities encounter unfair obstacles' (Medina 2017, 41). Medina classifies these obstacles according to the types of dynamics in which they arise, distinguishing between structural or institutional dynamics and personal dynamics. He understands that these injustices are committed structurally or institutionally when the conditions used 'prevent the use of certain hermeneutical resources and expressive styles, or simply when [...] they favour certain communities and practices harming others' (Medina 2017, 46). An example he uses is questionnaires, when they do not collect gender diversity and/or carry out erroneous characterisations. In this regard, Medina (2017) considers that these errors can contribute to strengthening certain identity

prejudices and social stereotypes of historically marginalised populations. Regarding those injustices that occur in and through interpersonal dynamics, Medina (2017) highlights that these function as intimidations that question the intelligibility of a person (capability for testimony), exerting unfair pressures (hermeneutical injustices) on creative capabilities and exchange of meaning. For Medina (2011), these injustices are forms of violence that translates into intimidation and hermeneutical microaggressions that, produced over time, silence people, generating hermeneutical marginalisation and threatening the capability for epistemic contribution. According to the philosopher, these threats and violence to the capability for epistemic contribution can lead to hermeneutical death. According to Medina (2017), these obstacles (institutional and interpersonal) threaten the free exercise of voice and participation, producing hermeneutical death. Hermeneutical death would occur in cases in 'which a subject completely loses her voice and standing as a meaning-making subject, under conditions of extreme epistemic oppressions in which one's status as a subject of knowledge and understanding is barely recognised' (Medina 2017, 47). In order to avoid the hermeneutical death of these populations, Medina (2017) proposes encouraging more liberating climates and dynamics, accompanied by communicative movements that facilitate paths and common forms of resistance in daily communication. For the philosopher, hermeneutical insurrection represents 'forms of disobedience to and revolt against expressive/interpretative norms and expectations in order to pave the way to a new hermeneutical order' (Medina 2017, 48).

With the aim of moving towards a fairer hermeneutical order, Leivas et al. (2020, 2022) propose four capabilities for epistemic liberation that can be expanded in the processes of co-production of knowledge. The four capabilities for epistemic liberation are the capability to be, the capability to do, the capability to learn, and the capability to transform. These capabilities are inspired by the work 'Pedagogy of the oppressed' by Freire (1970) and from the Capabilities Approach proposed by Amartya Sen (1979, 1999). This approach focuses on people's capabilities or real opportunities to achieve the things they have reason to value (Sen 1979).

In this article we use the four capabilities for epistemic liberation proposed by Leivas et al. (2020, 2022) to analyse the case of NCR. The *capability to be* is 'the opportunity to recognise oneself as being with experiences, knowledge and capabilities [...] as being interdependent and with historicity, [...] as part of the whole, of the problems, but also the solutions' (Leivas et al. 2020, 94). The *capability to do* is understood as 'the opportunity to participate in processes of co-production of knowledge and communicate knowledge and experiences' (Leivas et al. 2020, 94). The *capability to learn* is 'the opportunity to put into practice the dialogue of knowledge to decode knowledge, learn from the community and re-encode knowledge from shared reasoning' (Leivas et al. 2020, 94). For the authors, the transition between these three capabilities (to be, to do and to learn) enhances the fourth capability: the *capability to transform through collective action* (Leivas et al. 2020). This capability is understood as putting into practice the knowledge of shared reasoning through collective action.

In the next section we will analyse the experience of the NCR and its contributions to the expansion of capabilities for epistemic liberation in the community researchers who participate, as well as the forms of hermeneutical resistance that can contribute to the hermeneutical insurrection. On the other hand, the hermeneutical microaggressions

and intimidations that hinder and threaten the free exercise of these capabilities and that can contribute to processes of silencing and hermeneutical death will also be analysed.

3. The case study of the Network of Community Researchers (NCR)

In this article we explore the experience of the NCR as a case study that will allow us to analyse its contribution to the expansion of capabilities for epistemic liberation among community researchers (hereinafter CRs) participating in the network. Using a qualitative approach, this research aims to answer the following questions: Does participation in the NCR contribute to the expansion of capabilities for epistemic liberation and human security in Medellín? Is the NCR a space for the co-production of knowledge between the University and society that promotes processes of hermeneutical insurrection? What threats and hermeneutical injustices do community researchers face?

Taking into account and recognising that the term *research* is associated with colonialism and European imperialism (Smith 1999), in this research experience we have assumed the role of a researcher-facilitator that aims to raise the voices, experiences, knowledge and struggles shared by the CRs that make up the NCR. This role is based on a relationship of trust and horizontality with the people who participate in the NCR, based on active listening in the interviews carried out, participant observation in the meetings and the facilitation of a participatory workshop on social mapping. In this regard, we propose a qualitative study from a critical and humanistic perspective, understanding it as 'a situated activity that places the observer in the world' and that 'involves the use and collection of a variety of empirical materials' (Denzin and Lincoln 2012, 48–49).

In total, eight interviews were conducted: three with academic researchers linked to the MHSO and five in-depth interviews with CRs participating in the NCR (four women and one man). The results will be presented from the discourse analysis of the people interviewed. In order to protect the security of these people and territories, the results of the interviews will be categorised with the initials CR, making reference to community researchers accompanied by a number that is linear in terms of the order in which the interviews were conducted. In the next section we will examine the results that characterise the NCR experience, as well as its contribution to the human security of Medellín and to the capabilities of epistemic liberation of community researchers.

3.1. Towards the human security of Medellín

The NCR arose in 2016 from the project 'Network of Community Researchers: Knowledge, Empowerment and Mobilisation around Human Security' promoted by the MHSO currently attached to the Institute of Regional Studies – INER – of the University of Antioquia (Zuluaga et al. 2017). This network is made up of academic researchers and CRs, leaders, and human rights activists who inhabit the most unequal slopes of Medellín's neighbourhoods.

On a methodological level, the NCR relies on the *human security from below* approach proposed by the MHSO that 'combines elements of participatory action research and the epistemology of the South, merging the dialogue of knowledge learned in the academic field and popular knowledge' (Abello-Colak et al. 2014, 36). The meetings consisted of

holding training sessions and context analysis sessions from the dialogue of knowledge and exchanges of experiences between academic researchers and community organisations, leaders and human rights activists from the city of Medellín. According to the NCR, the dialogue of knowledge 'is a methodology in which different types of knowledge are interrelated with the intention of recognising and understanding each other. Dialogue implies the recognition of the other as a different subject, with diverse knowledge and positions, based on the promotion of freedom and autonomy' (Zuluaga et al. 2017, 6).

On a theoretical level, the NCR shares the *human security approach* proposed by United Nations Development Programme (1994), which questions security approaches focused on the protection of the territorial borders of the nation-state, on police control and repression, on weapons and war, understanding human security as a concern for life and human dignity. However, the public policies of the city of Medellín, as well as the Comprehensive Plan for Citizen Security and Coexistence of the Metropolitan Area of Valle de Aburrá, are positioned with a focus on citizen security (Gallego, Leyva, and Mesa 2018). According to the publication *Citizen Security from Citizen Governance. The case of Valle de Aburrá* prepared by the EAFIT University (Gallego, Leyva, and Mesa 2018), hired by the Mayor's Office of Medellín:

'The multidimensionality of human security far exceeds the scope of metropolitan crime and violence management, making it difficult to clearly establish an achievable and concrete planning process, as well as the design of targeted public policies. Citizen security, on the contrary, offers a more precise framework of action in which the organisations in charge of dealing with the problems of crime and violence in urban areas can easily concur; a framework that also coincides with the guidelines of the country's security and justice agencies' (Gallego, Leyva, and Mesa 2018, 41).

Such institutional positioning shows that current public policies at the local and national level are focused on containing, repressing and protecting its citizens from violence and crime. Having said this, we consider that these political strategies are supported by the discourse of fear and coexistence and by strategies of police control and military repression that make the lives and real needs of the most vulnerable populations invisible. For this reason, we understand that the approach taken by the Medellín Mayor's Office, and that persists despite the peace agreement made by the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), not only contributes to exacerbating historical social injustices, but also accelerates the processes of marginalisation and hermeneutical death of those people and populations that inhabit the most silenced territories of the city.

We understand that community researchers (CRs) are historically marginalised, excluded and silenced in the processes of production of knowledge and in public policies in the territories they inhabit. For this reason, we consider that the NCR engages in activity of hermeneutical insurrection. Below are some of the definitions of CRs on what they understand by human security based on the interviews carried out:

'[La seguridad humana] son otros matices distintos a lo que tiene que ver con la seguridad armada y militarista (...) se preocupa más con el bienestar de la persona y del ser humano, de modo que la persona o una colectividad pueda estar totalmente segura sin que le falte absolutamente nada' ([Human security] concerns other nuances aside from those to do with armed and militaristic security [...] it is more concerned with the well-

being of the person and the human being, so that the person or a community can be totally safe without lacking anything at all) (CR3).

'(...) la seguridad no es solamente tener policías ahí en cada esquina, sino tener una seguridad alimentaria, seguridad social, económica, en la salud y una seguridad en torno a la familia que es lo principal' (Security is not only having policemen there on every corner, but also having food security, social security, economic, health and security around the family, that is the main thing) (CR1).

'[La seguridad humana es] algo que impregna el ser, porque las cosas no se pueden vivir desde una palabra solamente, desde un escrito, sino que es como una traer, hacer, sentir, hacia el corazón, hacia una mente que le dé a una, una forma de vivir plenamente' ([human security] is something that permeates the being, because things cannot be lived by a word only, from a text, rather it is like a way of bringing, doing, feeling, towards the heart, towards a mind that gives one a way of living fully) (CR2).

From such discourses, it is clear how community researchers expand the definition of human security proposed by the UNDP. We understand that the NCR proposes an approach that is people-centred (from all territories), universal (for all human beings), comprehensive (multidimensional) and interdependent (from bodies to the planet). In this sense, CR5 highlights that human security is the opportunity to '*brindar seguridad a los demás (...) a nivel personal, humanidad y comunidad*' (to provide security to others [...] at a personal, human and community level) (CR5), placing emphasis on care and mutual support as essential conditions for the sustainability of the planet, from a local and global perspective.

Taking into account the context of violence and inequality suffered by these territories and the most vulnerable populations (women, children, LGTBI, youths, Afro-descendants, etc.), we are interested in understanding how the NCR enhances the four capabilities for epistemic liberation of the community researchers. In the following sections we will study each one of them in depth.

3.2. Capability to be recognised as a producer of valid knowledge

From the discourses we consider that the capability to be recognised as a producer of valid knowledge is strengthened within the framework of the NCR. Below we will analyse some testimonials from CR2 and CR4 that confirm this finding:

'(...) nosotros no debemos de considerarnos, ni debemos permitir que nos vean como estos enlaces (...) si la academia tiene sus investigadores, la comunidad también tiene sus investigadores (...) nosotras investigamos las 24 horas. El académico investiga en un proyecto o en un proceso investigativo. Nosotros habitamos las 24 horas el territorio' ([...] we should not consider ourselves, nor should we allow them to see us as these links (enlaces) [...] if the academy has its researchers, the community also has its researchers [...] we investigate 24 h a day. The academic investigates in a project or in a research process. We inhabit the territory 24 h a day) (CR4).

The discourse of CR4 reveals the struggle for the recognition of her knowledge and practices as valuable knowledge. In this line:

'(...) sin dejar de lado mis raíces. Yo diría que el investigador comunitario es como ese foco grande, donde aquí te conviertes en líder, en donde aquí te conviertes en activista, en donde acá te conviertes en defensor de derechos humanos, en donde acá te conviertes en un

planeador del territorio, ser investigador comunitario es como ese eje de lo que tú visiones (...) ese aportador de la transformación de una sociedad. Porque primero tenemos que empezar a transformarnos interiormente, para ya luego empezar a transformar el otro' ([...] without neglecting my roots, I would say that the community researcher is like that big focus, where here you become a leader, where here you become an activist, where here you become a human rights defender, where here you become a planner of the territory, being a Community Researcher is like this linchpin of what you see [...] this contributor to the transformation of a society. Because first we have to begin to transform ourselves internally, and then begin to transform the other) (CR4).

For CR4, being a CR consists of putting into action her knowledge about the territory (as a leader, activist, defender and planner) at the disposal of the common good, from the co-production of knowledge for social transformation. She emphasises that this transformation proceeds from the individual to the collective, and from collective knowledge to individuality. However, CR4 recognises that her participation in different spaces (organisational and institutional) has been diminished precisely because she is a community leader. She mentions she has suffered persecution and threats for being a community leader in a territory dominated by drug trafficking. This situation, she explains, has forced her to leave the territory to protect her family, putting her community participation at risk. In this regard, she denounces the stigmatisation that community leaders are experiencing:

'(...) por el ser activistas, el ser defensor de los derechos humanos, el ser líder, llame como se llame, pero que tiene una convicción que no le deja vivir tranquilo (...) estamos en una sociedad en donde la indiferencia nos está matando (...) en que el que tiene más, quiere tener más y quitarle al que tiene poco' ([...] for being activists, being a defender of human rights, being a leader, call it what you like, but someone that has a conviction that doesn't allow them to live in peace [...] we are in a society where indifference is killing us [...] in which whoever has more, wants to have more and take away from the one who has little) (CR4).

Regarding relations with the University, CR4 denounces the historical instrumentalisation they suffer at the hands of academia and public institutions in the production of knowledge:

'Nosotros no podíamos considerarnos ni enlaces, porque así era, nos denominaban la institucionalidad, las fundaciones, la misma universidad, las corporaciones' (We couldn't even consider ourselves links, but that's how it was, that's what they called us — the institutions, the foundations, the University itself, the corporations) (CR4).

She affirms that this instrumentalisation has been accompanied and sustained by a popular imagination that the University will provide solutions to the problem of the territories '*(...) porque esa también es una de las cosas que las comunidades hemos descuidado mucho. Y es que creemos que cuando la universidad va con un proyecto, me va a salvar*' ([...] because that is also one of the things that the communities have neglected a lot. It's that we think when the University goes with a project, it will save me) (CR4). The situation described invites us to rethink the historical relationships between the University and society, as well as the possible hermeneutical injustices that occur at a historical level in the institutional and interpersonal dynamics together with the most vulnerable populations and territories.

On the other hand, CR2 underlines the importance of being recognised as a CR in other spaces of participation and production of knowledge: '*Una cosa que me dijeron a mí, otros*

actores de la Universidad de Antioquia ‘¿Usted es investigadora comunitaria? Y es que usted es profesional?’ Sí, yo soy profesional. Yo lo que hago lo hago muy bien y hago un análisis muy respetuoso. De lo que veo y de lo que oigo’ (One thing that other actors from the University of Antioquia asked me: ‘Are you a community researcher? And does that mean you are a professional?’ Yes, I am a professional. What I do I do very well and I perform a very respectful analysis. Of what I see and what I hear) (CR2). As we can see, the implementation of this capability allows her to recognise herself as a subject that produces valid knowledge, as a community researcher, which contributes to reinforcing her self-esteem and self-concept, legitimising her voice and participation in other spaces beyond the NCR. It also highlights that the spaces for participation provided by the NCR enhance the knowledge of others, empathising and sharing knowledge and experiences about life in the territories they inhabit:

‘(...) hacemos como esta conexión humana del sentir, mirar, me ha estado pasando eso, estaba enferma, imagínate que he perdido mi bebé o cualquier cosa, pero es importante para ir reconociendo que es para una o para la otra en su forma de ser y de actuar’ ([...] we make like this human connection of feeling, looking, this has been happening to me, I was sick, imagine that I have lost my baby or whatever, but it is important to start recognising what is for one person or another in their way of being and acting) (CR2).

She considers that her participation in the NCR has strengthened her capability for resilience in the face of microaggressions and oppressions: ‘*Tratamos de ver esa resiliencia en ellos y yo trato de acogerme también a como a ser resiliente de todas estas situaciones que una siente (...) Yo todos los días digo yo soy capaz*’ (We try to see that resilience in them and I also try to embrace how to be resilient in all these situations that one feels [...] every day I say I am capable) (CR2). She also values the NCR as a school space for collective participation, which strengthens inclusive and caring communication:

‘(...) uno sabe donde trabaja lo individual y donde trabaja lo colectivo (...) como trabajar en grupo, hablar un mismo idioma, como poder alcanzar a visibilizar tantas situaciones que vivimos las mujeres, no dejando de lado como también este relacionamiento con los hombres (...) Porque a pesar de que todo el enfoque de género, que es lo que yo más predico en mis discursos (...) no puedo dejar de reconocer que somos un ser, hombre y mujer, que estamos en la lucha’ ([...] One knows where the individual works and where the collective works [...] how to work in a group, speak the same language, how to be able to make visible so many situations that women experience, without leaving aside this relationship with men [...] Because despite the whole gender approach, which is what I preach the most in my speeches [...] I cannot help but recognise that we are one being, man and woman, that we are in the struggle) (CR2).

From her discourse, CR2 emphasises the importance of recognising oneself (with expressive and interpretive capabilities) and recognising the others (their knowledge) as part of the whole, not only of the problems (colonial, patriarchal and capitalist society), but also of the solutions (social justice, sustainability, etc.). Taking into account these discourses, we consider that this capability is enhanced by the participation in the NCR, allowing them to recognise themselves and be recognised as a community researcher, who inhabits vulnerable territories and shares their knowledge and experiences for social transformation, having a voice in spaces for participation and production of knowledge.

3.3. Capability to do through communicative openness

We believe that the capability to be recognised as a producer of valid knowledge is enhanced by the capability to do through communicative openness with the academy and with other community organisations and different vulnerable populations and territories. For CR4, participation in the NCR was the opportunity to have:

‘(...) un equipo muy nutrido, con diferentes saberes, con diferentes posiciones, pero con algo que siempre, siempre, he resaltado y he rescatado, que es el respeto por lo que pensaba el otro. Pero como por medio de este respecto, yo también tenía en cuenta su posición’ ([...] a very large team, with different knowledge areas, with different positions, but with something that I have always, always, stressed and raised, which is respect for what the other thinks. But through this respect, I also took into account their position) (CR4).

CR4 highlights the NCR spaces as the opportunity to share and exchange experiences and recognise the position of others from the free exercise of their expressive and interpretive capabilities. In this sense, CR1 values his participation in the NCR as the opportunity to exchange knowledge and practices in the fight for human rights, specifically of the Afro-descendant population, but also to share:

‘(...) las situaciones que vivimos cada uno en nuestros contextos. De cómo podríamos hacer frente a estas situaciones o a las frustraciones que nos generan ciertas cosas. De las tristezas también que nos generan ciertas cosas y también compartimos algunos sueños, como podríamos proyectarnos y todo esto, ayudarnos’ ([...] the situations that we experience in our contexts. Or how we could cope with these situations or with the frustrations that certain things generate in us. Of the sadness also that certain things generate in us and we also share some dreams, how we could project ourselves and help each other) (CR1).

From his speech, it is evident that the NCR, in addition to being a space to communicate knowledge and practices, is also valued as a space to share experiences, risks, struggles, fears and collective dreams of transformation. In this sense, the NCR stands out:

‘(...) como un trabajo en red muy potente, muy poderoso. Más cuando hay organizaciones de varios puntos de la ciudad. Entonces yo creí que esta era una buena estrategia y una buena manera de trabajar por la ciudad’ ([...] as a very strong, very powerful network. More when there are organisations from various parts of the city. So, I believed that this was a good strategy and a good way of working for the city) (CR1).

On the other hand, CR2 values the communicative openness in the NCR as an opportunity to accompany the design and planning of municipal public policies in the different territories ‘(...) cómo están trabajando en su territorio, cómo lo están haciendo, ahorita mismo con la actualización del PDL (Plan de Desarrollo Local) de la comuna, mirar estas necesidades de las diferentes poblaciones. Mirar dónde están, cómo están’ ([...] how they are working in their territory, how they are doing it, right now with the update of the LDP (Local Development Plan) of the commune, to look at the needs of the different populations. See where they are, how they are) (CR2). CR4 remembers that her participation in the first project led by the MHSO was the opportunity to transform it into a collective process of production of knowledge, highlighting her expansion of the capability to do through communicative openness:

‘(...) para mí este proyecto se convirtió en un proceso (...) meses de debate, digamos lo técnico comunitario, que me han criticado mucho. (...) seis meses donde nos preguntábamos

como vamos abordar nosotros este tema de la seguridad comunitaria en cada uno de esos grupos poblacionales, estos objetivos' (For me, this project became a process [...] months of debate, let's say the technical community, have criticised me a lot. [...] Six months where we wondered how we were going to address this issue of community security in each of these population groups, these objectives) (CR4).

According to her statement, these spaces and knowledge have not only served to provide feedback on the MHSO's work plans, but also allowed her to expand her participation in other international academic projects and experiences. In this aspect, CR4 values the experience in the NCR as an opportunity to put into practice the capability to do through communicative openness and the community. CR4 indicates, '*(...) fue algo muy bonito, donde conjugamos el diálogo de saberes, la coproducción de conocimiento, las metodologías desde abajo, o sea, diferentes definiciones frente a este trabajo comunitario'* ([...] it was something very beautiful, where we combined the dialogue of knowledge, the co-production of knowledge, the methodologies from below, that is, different definitions of this community work) (CR4).

However, this capability can be hampered or threatened by interpersonal dynamics and structural and institutional conditions that prevent the free exercise of being and participating in the production of knowledge. According to CR1, the intense agenda of institutional participation and the personalisation of leadership in community organisations are obstacles to the capability to do and participate in the NCR:

'(...) es una cuestión que yo diría de ciudad. Por ejemplo, yo al principio (...) no podía venir. Entonces yo decía a los compañeros y me decían es que no, es que es usted que está allí, pero venga yo estoy por la organización, no personalice el asunto. Y eso pasa con muchas organizaciones. Si no puede ir cierta persona, entonces no está la organización' ([...] It is a question, I would say, of the city. For example, at the beginning [...] I couldn't come. So, I said to my colleagues and they told me no, it's you who's there, but come on, I'm here for the organisation, don't personalise the matter. And this happens with many organisations. If a certain person can't go, then the organisation isn't there) (CR1).

CR1 emphasises that these obstacles are due to structural and institutional conditions that contribute to interpersonal dynamics that can impede or hinder the communication and dissemination of knowledge to the community. This personification of participation can contribute to the silencing and hermeneutical death of the collective knowledge of these territories and populations, taking into account the situation of vulnerability and the risks to which they are subjected as community leaders and activists.

This vulnerability is also evidenced from CR4's discourse, highlighting that '*(...) la planeación es necesaria, pero muchas veces la planeación se convierte en frustración, cuando una no tiene la forma de asumirla'* ([...] planning is necessary, but planning often turns into frustration, when one does not have the means to carry it out) (CR4), referring to microaggressions and hermeneutical, physical and psychological intimidations that she has suffered and experienced in the territory she inhabited. As we can see, hermeneutical injustices are added to social injustices and inequalities, increasing the risks and vulnerabilities of these people, who suffer attacks and intimidation by the police presence and by armed groups, due to the role they assume in their territories as leaders, activists and CRs. Despite being aware of such risks and threats to participation and their life, CR4 emphasises that her role as a CR '*(...) es seguir apostando en el tema de las garantías de la no repetición (...) soy consciente que estamos en el conflicto (...) pero si nosotros no*

ponemos esto en voz de todas las víctimas eso se va a seguir repitiendo' ([...] is to continue being committed to the issue of guaranteeing non-repetition [...] I am aware that we are in the conflict [...] but if we do not do this in the name of all the victims, it will continue to be repeated) (CR4).

On the other hand, CR2 highlights the importance of the community in the spaces for participation provided by public institutions and denounces the microaggressions and hermeneutical intimidations that she suffers in interpersonal dynamics and by the institutional conditions that hinder her voice and prevent her from exercising her capacity to do through communicative openness and collectively:

'(...) para ese trabajo es importante el colectivo (...) porque hay veces que yo me siento sola y digo yo sola es que no puedo (...) y siempre es una política de la parte gubernamental, siempre dicen: si usted viene aquí sola, no hace nada. Si usted viene aquí con un colectivo, aquí de pronto se le medio escuchamos. Sabemos que estas son las políticas de la parte gubernamental y que el estado es así' ([...] For this work the collective is important [...] because there are times when I feel alone and I say I alone cannot do it [...] and it is always a policy of the government side, they always say: if you come here alone, it does nothing. If you come here with a group, here suddenly we are half listening to you. We know that this is the policy of the government side and that the state is like that) (CR2).

Her speech reflects that these intimidations and microaggressions restrict her participation and contribute to silencing. These intimidations are also produced by addressing gender issues in participation spaces at the community level:

'(...) cuando me escuchan hablar así, se enfurecen. Yo no veo que de malo estoy diciendo con lo que hoy estoy nombrando, para que enfurezca algunas personas. A veces me ponen entre la espada y la pared' ([...] when they hear me speak like this, they get angry. I do not see what's bad about what I'm saying, what I am saying today, to make some people angry. Sometimes they put me between a rock and a hard place) (CR2).

Taking into account such a context of vulnerability, we consider that these hermeneutical intimidations occur in interpersonal dynamics due to prejudices against her as a woman and an activist in the defence of women in the territory. These oppressions are accompanied by physical attacks and intimidation, further increasing the risks to which activist women are exposed. This sum of oppressions and violations of their capability to do through a communicative and collective openness contributes to the hermeneutical and physical death of leaders and activists, threatening and weakening the struggles of community organisations and the resilience of the most marginalised territories.

In light of this evidence, we can affirm that participation in the NCR strengthens the resilience and hermeneutical resistance capabilities of CRs in the face of these microaggressions and intimidations. The fact of participating and belonging to a group, the NCR, empowers the CRs to recognise themselves and be recognised as producing subjects of valid and valuable knowledge. From their speeches, we consider that the NCR is a safe space that allows them to strengthen the capability to do through communicative openness. Legitimated by the shared identity as CRs, these people share their knowledge and experiences about the territories with academia and public institutions in order to spread their voice and join forces in the search to transform the territories.

3.4. Capability to learn from collective knowledge

Participation in the NCR enhances the capability to learn from collective knowledge, as CR2 states:

'Allí nos vamos reconociendo, vamos reconociendo la colectividad, vamos dejando temores, vamos dejando vacíos, vamos dejando miedos, vamos dejando muchas cosas. Y eso es lo que hoy me tiene aquí como tan fuerte' (There we get to recognise ourselves, we get to recognise the community, we're leaving behind anxieties, we're leaving behind emptiness, we are leaving behind fears, we're leaving behind many things. And that is what makes me so strong here today) (CR2).

According to CR1, his participation in the NCR allows him:

'(...) no solo mirar o entender la dinámica de un solo territorio, sino que al conocer estas miradas de los demás, uno ve que ciertos territorios están interconectados y que ciertas dinámicas tienen relación. Y que digamos Medellín es una complejidad que se vive desde lo local, desde estos micro espacios desde las comunas, pero que también tiene relación con todo lo que sucede en la ciudad. Y al estar digamos tan cerca, compartiendo, de una cierta forma es conocer con más profundidad esto' ([...] not only to look at or understand the dynamics of a single territory, but to discover the views of others, one sees that certain territories are interconnected and that certain dynamics are related. And let's say Medellín is a complexity that is experienced from the local, from these micro spaces from the slopes, but which is also related to everything that happens in the city. And being so close, let's say, sharing, in some way it's understanding this in more depth) (CR1).

CR1 values participation in the NCR as the opportunity to become aware at an individual and collective level about the structural problems that the different territories of the city live and share. On the other hand, CR4 values her participation in the NCR as an opportunity to move towards the co-production of knowledge between the academy and the communities about human security of the territories. She characterises her role as community researcher as an interaction with the community:

'(...) nosotras, así como investigamos hacemos el trabajo de campo, día a día. (...) esa interacción con la comunidad y con el investigador comunitario, no era trabajo de campo, era interacción comunitaria. Donde estábamos interactuando la academia o el profesional con una comunidad, acompañado de un investigador comunitario, que ya no era ni líder ni enlace' ([...] we, just as we investigate, we do fieldwork, day to day. [...] That interaction with the community and with the community researcher was not fieldwork, it was community interaction ... where we were interacting the academy or the professional with a community, accompanied by a community researcher, who was no longer a leader or liaison" (CR4).

This speech highlights her process of resistance and hermeneutical insurrection, by facing the risks and microaggressions she suffers as a leader and activist and by claiming her own ways of understanding, doing and producing knowledge as a CR. From this perspective, we consider that participation in the NCR is in itself a form of hermeneutical resistance that can contribute to strengthening the processes of hermeneutical insurrection of the CRs, with the University of Antioquia being an ally, specifically the MHSO. However, the experience of the NCR shows that it is only a first seed to transform the relationships and processes of co-production of knowledge between the university and society.

CR2 maintains that one of her main motivations is the '[...] búsqueda de poder poner la voz en algún espacio, mi conocimiento, mi talento y dimensionar todo este tipo de

problemáticas que las mujeres tenemos' ([...] search to be able to put my voice in some space, my knowledge, my talent and evaluate all these type of problems that women have) (CR2). What she values most about the NCR are the people and the lessons learned in terms its ability to denounce and its social impact:

'(...) el saber que hay unas cuantas personas en el grupo que están todo el tiempo (...) cuando recojo mi reconocimiento (...) me pongo a pensar en lo todo que he aprendido, que tanto he llevado, que exijo. Porque no es tanto quejarse sino también reclamar y exigir' ([...] knowing that there are a few people in the group who are there all the time [...] when I receive recognition [...] I start to think about everything I have learned, how much I have done, what I demand. Because it is not so much complaining but also calling for change and making demands) (CR2).

We understand that the co-production of knowledge together with the communities and the diversity of knowledge and territorial contexts are activations for networking and for the search for the common good: '(...) *no solamente sería la voz de las víctimas enfocadas al tema de la seguridad humana, sino qué vamos a hablar el tema de seguridad humana desde mujeres, desde jóvenes, desde niños, o sea (...) seguir apostando a los procesos sociales*' ([...] it would not only be the voice of the targeted victims to the issue of human security, but rather that we are going to talk about the issue of human security from [the perspective of] women, young people, children, that is [...] to continue being committed to social processes) (CR4). In this regard, she understands her participation in community organisations and in planning spaces as:

'(...) escenarios en los cuales digamos tenemos que aprovecharlos nosotros como ciudadanía, para poder sentar nuestra voz de inconformidad (...) con una propuesta y yo siento que tiene y que debe de ser el tema de la planeación del territorio concertada con la comunidad, concertada con quienes las hemos realizado durante muchos años' ([...] escenarios in which, let's say, we as citizens have to take advantage of them, in order to establish our voice of disagreement [...] with a purpose, and I feel that it has to be and should be the subject of planning the territory in agreement with the community, with those of us who have been conducting them for many years) (CR4).

However, CR4 recounts her re-victimisation process caused by her second forced displacement, generated by the threats, violence and violations received at the hands of armed groups that are present in the commune where she was trained as an activist and community leader:

'(...) lo más duro ha sido tener que salir de allá, un territorio que me permitió vivir, soñar, volver a construir. Un territorio que volví a nacer. (...) Entregué a la comuna 11 años de los 18 años que llevo aquí en Medellín como víctima. [de desplazamiento forzado] (...) eso fue otra vez como volver a arrancar algo que yo ya lo había construido' ([...] the hardest thing has been having to leave there, a territory that allowed me to live, dream, and build again. A territory where I was reborn. [...] I gave the commune 11 years of the 18 years that I have been here in Medellín as a victim [of forced displacement] [...] that was like restarting something that I had already built all over again) (CR4).

CR4 argues that these microaggressions affect her beyond herself individually 'no solamente me afectó a mí, sino que afectó mi familia. No solo fue ese daño material, el tener que dejar mi casa que con tanto esfuerzo había construido, sino también derrumbar estos sueños a ellas' (not only did it affect me, but it also affected my family. It was not only that material damage, having to leave my house that I had built with so much

effort, but also demolishing these dreams for them) (CR4). She refers to the fact that her daughters have also been victims of these microaggressions and physical and hermeneutical intimidations, since they have been forced to give up their studies, as well as the mutual support networks that they had forged in the commune, in order to protect and defend their own lives.

Based on their speeches and experiences, we consider that the NCR enhances the capability to learn from the other, from other territories, which contributes to the co-production of knowledge between academia and communities, specifically with CRs. This knowledge is the result of collective knowledge, of putting into practice their interpretative and expressive capabilities in the search for human security in the territories they inhabit. In this case, the Human Security Observatory of the University of Antioquia is an ally that can contribute to strengthening the processes of resistance and hermeneutical insurrection of CRs, supporting and facilitating the co-production and dissemination of knowledge about the most vulnerable and silenced territories and populations in the city of Medellín.

3.5. Capability to transform through collective action

We understand that the NCR contributes to the expansion of the four capabilities for epistemic liberation of the CRs, since it is an opportunity to put into action the knowledge of collective knowledge for social transformation (awareness). In this regard, CR3 explains in detail that, despite her previous experiences in the defence of human rights, it was from her participation in the NCR that she became aware of the capability to transform the city from: *'(...) nunca me había metido, así como tan directamente a decir, bueno, hay que cambiar esta realidad de la ciudad comencemos por esta comuna. Pues desde este proceso he venido como pensando cosas en estas situaciones'* ([...] I had never been involved, as well as so directly to say, well, we must change this reality of the city, let's start with this commune. Well, from this process I have come to think about things in these situations) (CR3). This speech shows that participation in the NCR enhanced awareness of her political and epistemic agency.

On the other hand, CR4 argues that one of the contributions of the NCR that she values the most is the multiplication of knowledge about human security of the territories, as well as the strengthening of the NCR around community research:

'(...) ese conocimiento que hemos podido adquirir nosotros cuando participamos de ese proceso sobre la seguridad comunitaria (...) tener más aliados que se estén pensando no solamente el tema del concepto de la seguridad humana, sino también como pensarnos el tema investigativo' (That knowledge that we have been able to acquire when we participate in this process about community security [...] to have more allies who are thinking not only about the concept of human security, but also how to think about the investigative aspect) (CR4).

CR4 thus highlights the two contributions of the NCR to the production of knowledge about human security of the Medellín territories: the theoretical and methodological deepening of community research and its potential as a network to strengthen the community fabric in the struggle for social transformation. She examines the importance of carrying out community research processes from a horizontal relationship, in hand with the community and the academy, proposing three lines of action:

'(...) uno es el monitoreo, yo monitorear esta investigación que estoy haciendo. El otro es de intervención, como intervengo yo frente a este problema que estoy atacando. Y la otra es el de seguimiento, como conjugamos estas tres líneas: el monitoreo, la intervención y el seguimiento' ([...] one is monitoring, I monitor this research that I am doing. The other is intervention, as I intervene in the face of this problem that I am attacking. And the other is follow-up, how we combine these three lines: monitoring, intervention and follow-up) (CR4).

From this quote it is evident her hermeneutical insurrection process, since CR4 makes methodological contributions to community research into the production of knowledge about human security of the city. However, in the period in which the interviews were conducted, the NCR was going through a process of disbanding and weakening, not only due to lack of funding but also due to obstacles to self-management. In this regard, she argues that *'las cosas no se pueden nombrar sin antes concertar'* (things cannot be named without first agreeing) (CR4), referring to the fact that the project was a crucial boost for the NCR, but that it has not been accompanied by reflections and deliberations regarding its objectives, commitments and collective actions.

Regarding the role of the University, CR1 emphasises its importance for the economic and social sustainability of the NCR *'(...) la universidad debe mantener esta red unida, porque es puente, donde llegan los proyectos y reforzarla más'* ([...] the University must keep this network together, because it is a bridge, where projects arrive and reinforce it more) (CR1). Along these lines, but understanding it as a collective action and struggle, CR2 details the importance of continuing to strengthen and expand participation in the NCR to advance the fight for human security in the city and territories:

'Porque podemos ver las políticas, podemos ver la base comunitaria, podemos ver que hay personas que nos podemos apoyar con todo este trabajo, que no es de uno, ni de dos si no de muchos (...) si nosotros podemos, conocer, aprender y fortalecer estas otras personas también lo pueden hacer. Yo quisiera que en cada comuna se hiciera un grupo, que no fuera un solo representando' (Because we can see the policies, we can see the community base, we can see that there are people who can support each other with all this work, which is not from one person, or two, but many [...] if we can understand, learn, and get stronger, then these other people can too. I would like a group to be formed in each commune, so it wasn't just one person representing it) (CR2).

The story shows her motivations for expanding the action of the NCR, extending participation to other territories and populations. She also highlights the role of the University and good practices such as the NCR to face microaggressions and social and hermeneutical injustices:

'Pues la universidad que nos sigue tomando como referente para este acompañamiento, que esto es completamente importante, porque si no nos dejan solas o solos en el territorio y jamás vuelven a aparecer (...) este es el empuje y la energía. Entonces, un reconocimiento importante para la universidad, más porque la universidad también hace parte del movimiento organizado' (Well, the University continues taking us as a reference for this accompaniment, that this is hugely important, because if not, they leave us alone in the territory and they never appear again [...] this is the drive and energy. So, an important recognition is for the University, especially because the University is also part of the organised movement) (CR2).

From such discourses and reflections, we understand that the role of the University is crucial in promoting processes of hermeneutical insurrection and the epistemic liberation

of CRs. This could be articulated by facilitating scenarios of participation and funding processes of co-production of knowledge between CRs and academics. As has been evidenced throughout the article, these practices can foster the expansion and strengthening of the capabilities for epistemic liberation. Thus, it can be said that participation in the NCR is an opportunity to co-produce situated knowledge about human security on the slopes of Medellín and transform them through collective action. However, it is important to note that the NCR, despite providing learning and challenges to improve co-production of knowledge practices between the university and society, is still a marginal experience within the University of Antioquia and contemporary universities.

4. Conclusions

This article elaborates on the experience of the NCR as a process for the co-production of knowledge between the University and society that promotes the expansion of capabilities for epistemic liberation in the community researchers who participate. From the analysis, the expansion of four capabilities for epistemic liberation is evidenced.

The *capability to be recognised as a producer of valid knowledge* invites us to rehumanise ourselves as beings and to recover our subjectivities (knowledge and experiences) in the processes of the production of knowledge about the different territories we inhabit. We believe that this capability enhances individual and collective awareness of oppressions and injustices (social, hermeneutical, epistemic and environmental) suffered by the most historically vulnerable people and populations, from a local and global perspective.

The *capability to do through communicative openness* is characterised by the freedom to communicate (expressively and interpretively), establish horizontal relationships, reflect critically and participate in an inclusive and careful way in communicative interactions. This capability is enhanced by the recognition of the intentionality of all people and their capabilities to produce knowledge about the territories they inhabit, as well as by the use of participatory methodologies, the dialogue of knowledge and the exchange of experiences. The expansion of this capability enhances individual and collective awareness of the connections between the problems and potentialities of the different territories of the city of Medellín. In this regard, we consider that the participation in the NCR triggers and strengthens processes of hermeneutical insurrection of community researchers, generating forms of individual and collective resistance to the risks and micro-aggressions suffered by being leaders and activists. Despite the historical instrumentalisation and the hermeneutical intimidation suffered by these people in the spaces of citizen participation and in the processes of production of knowledge together with academia and the municipal administration, community researchers raise their voices and fight for the recognition of their knowledge and practices. This struggle is based on the demand for the recognition of their knowledge, ways of understanding development and security and producing knowledge about human security of the territories they inhabit.

The *capability to learn from collective knowledge* is understood as the opportunity to actively participate in the processes of co-production of knowledge about the territories we inhabit and learn from collective knowledge, from other people and from and with the

local reality. We understand that putting this capability into practice contributes to a critical awareness of reality, enabling the recognition of the capability to transform it through collective action. Participation in the NCR from the dialogue of knowledge contributes to moving towards more symmetrical and inclusive relationships between the University and society. We consider the NCR to be an example of the struggle to confront and overcome the hermeneutical injustices inherited from the historical relations of power and oppression between expert knowledge and experiential knowledge. The analysis makes evident the contribution of the NCR to facilitate and generate a safe space in which community researchers communicate knowledge and practices and share experiences, risks, struggles, fears and collective dreams of transformation. This is produced by the recognition of the knowledge and practices of community researchers as unique and valuable knowledge for the social transformation of the territories through collective action.

The transition between these three capabilities (to be, to do and to learn) enhances the fourth capability: the *capability to transform through collective action*, allowing the knowledge of shared reasoning to be put into practice through collective action and facilitating awareness-raising processes. We understand awareness as the opportunity to participate in the development of actions and products that capture the diversity of voices, knowledge and practices, from the co-production of proposals that seek to address social and environmental problems at a local and global level. In short, we consider that the expansion of these four capabilities for epistemic liberation evidence processes of hermeneutic insurrection of some community leaders and activists who participate in the NCR. This hermeneutic insurrection is evidenced from the theoretical and methodological contributions of the NCR regarding human security from below. In this regard, the NCR allows the multiplication and liberation of knowledge about human security of the territories not only among the people who participate but also in the entire society, at the local and global. As beings producing meaning and meanings, community researchers enrich the human security approach proposed by UNDP. Based on their experiences in the territories, they propose a conception of human security that is people centred (from all territories), universal (for all human beings), integral (multidimensional) and interdependent (from bodies to the planet). The co-production of interpretive materials from such an approach can contribute to generating alternative references in terms of alternative ways of understanding development and security, in addition to making visible the importance of the role of community researchers as contributors to the transformation of the territories they inhabit.

We understand that the challenge, as stated by Medina (2017), is to go beyond hermeneutical charity and contribute to the transformation of institutions. This change requires ensuring the free exercise of the capabilities for epistemic liberation and promoting processes of hermeneutical insurrection that allow movement to a more just hermeneutical order.

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