



## Global South in Uruguayan higher education: South American University Institute

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### ABSTRACT

In the case of Uruguay, as the University of the Republic constituted itself as the system of Higher Education, the main initiatives of internationalization are in some way linked to this institution. Since the year 2000, several successful internationalization programs have been implemented by the universities of the emerging private subsystem. Nevertheless, the international dimension was centered on the strengthening of relations with either other macro public universities, or the public and private universities of the developed world. The Global South perspective has not been explicitly present in the local Higher Education internationalization approaches, with the exception of the IUSUR Foundation, an emerging institution, member of the International Group of Studies and Research on Higher Education – GIEPES - coordinated by the University of Campinas -UNICAMP. In accordance with the above-stated elements, and based in documentary analysis and bibliographic revision, the present study aims to characterize the origin, process and results of the internationalization of IUSUR, not only as a central element of a regional development strategy but also as the basis of the institutional proposal.

### KEYWORDS

Internationalization. Higher education. Comparative education. International education. Global South. IUSUR

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## El Sur Global en la educación superior en Uruguay: la Fundación Instituto Universitario Sudamericano

### RESUMEN

En el caso de Uruguay, la Universidad de la República constituyó en sí misma el sistema de Educación Superior y las principales iniciativas de internacionalización están de algún modo vinculadas a ella. A partir del año 2000, algunas universidades del emergente subsistema privado desarrollaron asimismo exitosos programas de internacionalización. Sin embargo, la dimensión internacional se orientó principalmente al relacionamiento con otras macro universidades públicas, o con las universidades públicas y privadas del mundo desarrollado. La perspectiva del Sur Global no apareció explicitada en los enfoques locales de internacionalización de la Educación Superior con excepción de la Fundación IUSUR, institución emergente, miembro del Grupo Internacional de Estudios y Pesquisas sobre Educación Superior – GIEPES - coordinado por la Universidad de Campinas - UNICAMP. De acuerdo a lo antes señalado, y en base a análisis documental y revisión bibliográfica, se busca caracterizar el origen, el proceso y los resultados de la internacionalización de IUSUR, como un elemento central de una estrategia regional de desarrollo y que constituye la base misma del proyecto institucional.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Internacionalización. Educación superior. Educación comparada. Educación internacional. Sur Global. IUSUR.

## O Sul Global no ensino superior no Uruguai: a Fundação Instituto Universitário Sul Americano

### RESUMO

No caso do Uruguai, a Universidade da República constituiu-se o sistema de ensino superior e as principais iniciativas de internacionalização estão de alguma forma ligadas a ele. A partir do ano 2000, algumas universidades do subsistema privado emergente também desenvolveram programas de internacionalização bem-sucedidos. No entanto, a dimensão internacional foi orientada principalmente para o relacionamento com macro universidades públicas, ou com as universidades públicas e privadas do mundo desenvolvido. A perspectiva do Sul Global não aparece explícita nas abordagens locais de internacionalização do Ensino Superior, com exceção da Fundação IUSUR, instituição emergente, integrante do Grupo Internacional de Estudos e Pesquisas em Ensino Superior - GIEPES - coordenado pela Universidade de Campinas – UNICAMP. De acordo com a análise acima, com base na análise documental e na revisão bibliográfica, procura-se caracterizar a origem, processo e resultados da internacionalização da IUSUR como um elemento central de uma estratégia de desenvolvimento regional que está na base do projeto institucional

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Internacionalização. Ensino superior. Educação comparada. Educação internacional. Sul Global. IUSUR.

## Introduction

The South American University Institute is a non-profit foundation whose purpose is to develop the university functions of research, teaching and service to the social environment, innovation and internationalization<sup>1</sup>. Emerged in 2015, since then he has developed various academic activities<sup>2</sup>.

In this article, based on literature review and documentary observation, we propose to characterize the phenomenon of the internationalization of higher education globally and in Latin America, describe the institutional project and practice of the IUSUR Foundation in the dimension of internationalization, also identifying the challenges of the internationalization of higher education in the South American University Institute.

The institutional project seeks to build knowledge in a collaborative way with colleagues and academic spaces of other regions of the Global South, as an instrument of academic mobility, rediscovery of politics, culture, economy and civilization of other regions, and as an excellent opportunity to be present in the globalized context.

The project does not reject the scientific mainstream but proposes to re-interpret the academic and cooperation relations between the South and the North, in a global context that enables the construction of arenas, debates and mutually beneficial initiatives.

Among the internationalization experiences of the Foundation, the cooperation developed in the framework of an agreement with an Angolan tertiary institution for the postgraduate training of its professors has a relevant place. In the city of Lubango, in the South of Angola, a Master's program was developed, which involved the training of approximately fifty elementary, middle and high school teachers, of whom about thirty completed their studies in the foreseen time. The Master was developed between 2014 and 2017 and involved several trips by a multinational teaching team (teachers from Angola, Bolivia, Brazil and Uruguay).

The lines of work on internationalization proposed in the Five-Year Development Plan imply the following:

- Internationalization of university programs - modular, specialization and masters - in other countries of the developing world - initially in Angola, and probably in Equatorial Guinea.

<sup>1</sup> The foundations are governed by Uruguayan (Law No. 17,163) of foundations in relation to their legal status. In the case of a foundation with a university purpose, the regulatory framework given by Decree Law No. 15.661 and by Decree No. 104/2014 is applicable.

<sup>2</sup> Among them is the International Study and Research Group on Higher Education - GIEPES

- Internationalization and academic mobility through programs designed to develop the exchange of teachers and students.
- Convergence and South-South International cooperation. A network of strategic agreements in support of the main components and programs has been developed and will be consolidated in the next five years.

More specifically, it is expected to promote (2015-2016) the constitution of an *Afro-Latin American academic network and cooperation Programs with African universities*.

The idea is to bring together the universities that have teaching, research and extension programs, related to the Afro-descendant issue - and, more broadly, Afro-Latin American interculturality. The network could hold a biennial meeting in each of the two continents and seek funding for a first pilot action in research, teaching and extension.

### *Academic Units*

During the first five-year cycle, the Academic Units will be both Master's Coordination, dependent on the Academic Council and in charge, jointly, of the Vice-Rector for Academic Development and the Rector's Office.

During this period, there have been formed within said Vice-rectory, based on both Coordinations. two Departments with a disciplinary and interdisciplinary base.

- Department of Comparative and International Education.
- Department of Global and Regional Studies.

In addition, there will be a third unit: The Interdisciplinary Space, in charge of the organizing Rector. Eventually, Centers, Nuclei, and Research Programs may be created, as feasible and viable depending on the research projects under development in that period.

### *Interdisciplinary space*

The Interdisciplinary Space, has the purpose of promoting the interdisciplinary approach as a requirement of the complexity of the phenomena that society and the university must face. It consists of two central programs:

- Chair of Knowledge and University.

This will develop a program or central chair of Philosophy and University - core that recognizes the central place of philosophy in the university - in this case under the form of Philosophy and History of the University, and of Applied Ethics.

- Chair of Science, Technology and Society.

The second central chair of Science and Society, will aim to explore the relationships between the Science, Technology and Innovation system and society, in the Latin American tradition of CTS.

We assume internationalization as an agency rather than a structural concept, as a response organized by institutions (and systems) of higher education to the scenarios resulting from the transformation process of higher education, to the cultural changes linked to the emergence of the information society and the internet, accelerated in the framework of the contemporary fourth industrial revolution. If globalization (or mundialization) constitutes a cultural, economic, cultural and political structural phenomenon, of epochal character, built on previous waves of globalization, internationalization is a special type of response of academic institutions in this phase.

Internationalization is first and foremost a response of an actor, the result of its political-academic culture, its project, mission and goals and of a conceptual framework constructed in a territorial (normally, national) framework, and in a scientific, technological and determined cultural Internationalization can be expressly conceptualized and formulated in a strategic institutional project and in specific policies and plans, or outlined in an emergent way, based on the actions carried out.

The Institutional Project of IUSUR expressly includes the issues of globalization and internationalization and proposes the need to think about the university institution in the perspective of the implications and challenges that developing countries face in the new global world.

It is an attempt at institutional construction that proposes an epistemological and cognitive deconstruction of decolonial character. We try to reverse the conceptual linearity that supposes that our countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa and Asia - among other peripheries - should rotate as planets around the Euro-American academy and its research programs, as part of a constellation, dependent, in the order of the economic system and that of international political structures. Without prejudice to this decolonial orientation, part of the scientific knowledge (university), its construction, its criticism, its teaching, as a guiding value, independent of the geopolitics of knowledge. World science is built by men and women who make up everywhere, "invisible colleges" in which dialogue and scientific debate are the founding criteria.

The starting academic-political hypothesis of the institutional project is that the peripheral and emerging regions can rethink and revert the coloniality of the sciences, as well as any other coloniality. As mentioned above, this implies ascribing to a purely ideological perspective, which aims to implement academic research in terms of a political project -of some kind.

The IUSUR Foundation Project assumes the concept of Global South as the axis of its academic structures and development projects. Its lines of research, teaching and service to the environment are oriented to investigate quality education, comparative educational policies and teacher training, as well as global and regional studies, necessary to understand Latin American integration, and to promote the construction of a neo-Kantian global order, in which the development of Latin America and the Caribbean and other emerging regions is possible. It also proposes the strategic management of internationalization and the development of an international higher education in solidarity.

## Method

The objectives of the study are to present the case of an institution marked by a strong founding mandate of internationalization in the Global South, analyzing this case within the framework of the general tendencies of the internationalization of higher education.

For this, we rely on the following techniques: review of the academic literature in the area; and documentary analysis.

The main categories of analysis used are summarized in the conclusions.

The study is structured on the basis of the presentation of a theoretical framework, which identifies tendencies of internationalization in higher education, based on the literature review. In a next section, the results of the institutional response to a qualitative form on the internationalization dimension are analyzed. Finally, some conclusions are pointed out, which account for a singular case of incorporation of internationalization in the strategic design of the institution.

## Higher Education and Internationalization

Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean was established primarily through the action of the Crown and the Church, until the new national states throughout the nineteenth century, took over the university functions. During the twentieth century, different forms of institutional differentiation were registered, with the emergence of new Catholic universities, an elite private sector, a private demand absorption sector and also international institutions and academic networks that assumed a part of the internationalization of Higher Education in the region.

Due to its fundamentally state, sub-state or specialized base, in the smallest public universities and in the private ones of absorption of demand, internationalization is a late and historically almost non-existent feature in many institutions of Higher Education. However, public macro universities, private elite universities and / or linked to research, to some extent

Catholic, international institutions and academic networks, have a different orientation and predisposition to welcome and promote key aspects of internationalization.

In the case of Uruguay, the University of the Republic (UDELAR) constituted in itself the system of Higher Education and the main initiatives of internationalization are in some way linked to it. As of the year 2000, some universities of the emerging private subsystem also developed successful internationalization programs.

However, the international dimension was oriented mainly to the relationship with other macro public universities, or with public and private universities in the developed world. The perspective of the Global South did not appear explicit in the local approaches of internationalization of Higher Education, with the exception of the IUSUR Foundation, an emerging institution, member of the International Group of Studies and Research on Higher Education - GIEPES - coordinated by the University of Campinas -UNICAMP.

According to the aforementioned, and based on documentary analysis and bibliographic review, it seeks to characterize the origin, process and results of the internationalization of IUSUR, as a central element of a regional development strategy and that constitutes the basis itself of the institutional project.

In the perspective of this work, the internationalization of higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean is even prior to the globalization of the 1990s. The establishment of some international institutions, beginning in the 1950s, it constitutes a first phenomenon of internationalization, although the actors of this strategy are political-technical nuclei of governments (within the framework of the United Nations, and of UNESCO).

The internationalization of education can be conceived as developed in three phases. First, an internationalization developed from outside the region, from multilateral international frameworks, albeit with a certain participation of governments and with the adoption of these international institutions in the development strategy itself. This stage is achieved approximately between 1947 and 1968, with the creation of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), the Latin American Institute of Economic and Social Planning - ILPES- and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences -FLACSO-, among others. It is a complex internationalization, originating from global institutions, but mediated by regional decisions and by the will of the governments (which make up, for example, the FLACSO Assembly). This stage allows the institutionalization of the social sciences in Latin America and the Caribbean. A second stage, is developed with the renewal of regionalism, from the decade of the nineties, associated with integration processes such as MERCOSUR, the Andean Community of Nations or the Central American System. The experience of regional accreditation of university careers in the MERCOSUR, or the Association of Universities Group of Montevideo, could be an example of this second stage.

With the reformulation of approaches to integration -with the hand of a "post-hegemonic" or post-liberal agenda-in the first decades of the century, a third stage in internationalization is considered, characterized by its formal incorporation as a public policy (for example, in Brazil) and the emergence of new national institutions with a mission or

regional vocation (such as the cases of the Universidad de la Integración Latinoamericana - UNILA - and of the Luso Afro Brazilian University - UNILAB - in Brazil ). Throughout the three stages, important university networks also operate, such as CLACSO. These stages correspond to a global level with an increase in academic cooperation between states -in the first stage, in which certain initiatives of hegemonic internationalization, such as the Camelot Plan, also failed. In the second stage, there is an expansion of cooperation networks and the emergence of bi-regional instances of convergence in Higher Education, such as the Latin America - European Union Space (ALCUE). The third stage, contemporary, would correspond to the development of virtual higher education, the expansion of lucrative consortiums, the installation of foreign higher education institutions and campuses. At this stage, the big failed project is probably the expansion of higher education as a commercial service, which since the entry into force of the General Agreement on Trade in Services - General Agreement on Trade of Services - GATS, had an impact marginal. This does not mean that, beyond the GATS mechanisms, there are no important trends towards commercialization (only that they do not rest on state liberalization commitments).

Following Altbach and Knight (2007) we prefer to reserve the first term - globalization- to designate "the economic, political, social forces and other forces that are pushing 21st century higher education towards greater international participation." According to these authors, the process of globalization is often confused with internationalization.

In the case of globalization, it is therefore the development of the productive forces at a certain moment in the process of global capitalist accumulation, mediated by factors such as the integration of research, innovation and development; English as the lingua franca of the academy, the development of information and communication technologies, with its enormous potential for knowledge management, via data storage and e-learning, as well as cross-border programs. We are in this case before a strong dimension of structure.

The above-mentioned authors point out the risks of international higher education in a global context: "It often happens that developing countries must adjust to conditions generated by the institutions and powerful academic systems of Europe or North America."

On the other hand, the German researcher Teichler (2006, p.247) points out that the definitions of internationalization usually present it as: "the increase of cross-border activities mixed with a more or less marked persistence of national systems of higher education ".

For Teichler (2006, p.247), globalization would indicate a tendency to "assume that borders and national systems as such become blurred or may even disappear". Europeanization, on the other hand, would imply a tension or a mix of these conceptions in the European space.

Almost a decade later these definitions, the global scenario has not changed substantially, except for one aspect of enormous relevance: the emergence of the concept of



## Global South.

Global South is a concept that comes from the field of international trade where it was coined to indicate the strong presence of the great Asian countries in it, in the second half of the century, and especially in the context of the global economic crisis that affected especially to the developed countries.

However, the idea of Global South cannot be reduced to an exclusive commercial or financial content, without identifying it as a key feature of contemporary society, that is, as the highly relevant fact established by the incorporation of developing regions into the world. global governance - usually expressed by its large "core-states", or pivotal countries. Thus, for example, the emergence of the BRICS countries, with its Academic Forum and the Meeting of its Ministers of Science, Technology and Innovation, indicates that the geopolitics of knowledge is undergoing decisive changes (MARTÍNEZ LARRECHEA and CHIANCONE, 2015).

That is why internationalization, on the other hand, should be distinguished from globalization, as a specific response of countries and universities to global conditions. The concept of internationalization thus involves a relevant dimension of agency, recovering the autonomy and proactivity of the subjects that act in the face of globalization. (GARCÍA GUADILLA, 2010, KNIGHT, 2013, FERNÁNDEZ LAMARRA, ALBORNOZ, 2014).

García Guadilla (2010, p.39) considers that "Internationalization is currently the most efficient way to respond to globalization, but not all the dynamics of internationalization are dependent on globalization" and adds: "Globalization is not tied to the past, it is a force that can even be subversive and therefore can present different agendas."

The UNESCO World Education Conference (CMES, 2009) and the Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRES, 2008) have pointed out the importance of cooperative internationalization, insofar as cross-border educational services are subject at the request of evaluation of the educational offer.

A key aspect of the internationalization process -as it also happens at the level of the international system as a whole- is that of regionalization, which is expressed in various regions of the world through convergence processes. Among them, although with different degrees and styles of development, it is worth mentioning the MERCOSUR Education Sector, which has developed a successful initiative for accreditation of degree programs (ARCUSUR); and in Europe, the so-called Bologna Process, among other contemporary processes of high interest.

These experiences have, as a positive effect, the requirement of development of quality assurance systems. They also generate a political-cultural awareness tendentially open to the integration and coexistence of peoples, cultures and diverse values, contributing to

education for peace and international understanding.

In sum, an increasing number of the processes and fundamental dimensions of international higher education are susceptible to a reading and a significant reconstruction in terms of South-South cooperation, Latin American regional integration and South-South inter-regionalism.

As Altbach and Knight (2006, p.236) also expressed:

Our goal is to ensure that international higher education, personifies a force for the public good and not a simple means to obtain profits. We are at an international crossroads: the programs and practices that are emerging today will shape the realities of international higher education in the coming years.

In short, this concept of internationalization - a defining component of the Institutional Project of IUSUR - assumes from the university institution the need to think about the implications and challenges that developing countries face in the new global world, without leaving this response under the responsibility of other centers of thought and development.

The concept of internationalization is assumed in the institutional definition, as a tool to build a greater synergy between institutions and countries of the developing world, and to promote an active regional and international Latin American consciousness.

Finally, the objective is declared to contribute to the training of young Latin American academics and professionals with global awareness, not mediated only by the traditional dimension implicit in the North-South relationship, often with a format and implications of cultural and / or economic dependence.

## Dimensions of internationalization: Results

The data collection instrument of the participating institutions in the project on Internationalization of GIEPES includes a set of items of great relevance. In the case of the IUSUR Foundation, at an early stage of its institutional development, some of these items are not applicable. The following section reviews the main definitions of the institution in relation to the information requirement.

### *Concept of Internationalization and Self Support*

In the international mission of IUSUR, the concept of internationalization is clearly stated: "To develop classical university functions, initially in the area of social and human sciences; as well as innovation and South-South cooperation, especially at the level of postgraduate training, with a focus on the new contexts of regionalization, internationalization and globalization of higher education, and with special commitment to academic

development - and social- of the emerging societies of the global South, exploring the use of information and communication technologies, in order to reach various educational spaces ".

### *Internationalization as an Item of the Pedagogical Project of the Institution*

Internationalization is, definitely, a founding concept of the institutional project of IUSUR and also of its pedagogical project. The emphasis is multidimensional: epistemological, theoretical, institutional and political. It is based on the fact that in the globalized world, institutions and countries -especially those of the South- have a certain degree of autonomy, which is expressed in their ability to formulate an international strategy focused not on global determinants, but on the central countries, only, but also in the priorities, needs and interests of the southern regions. In the context of the conditions created by a knowledge society of a global nature, the societies of the South must make a special effort to coordinate and strengthen their institutional platforms of articulation and convergence.

This perspective is clearly distinguished from the dependent or adaptive internationalization to the conditions of distribution of knowledge that result from the hegemonic configuration of the most developed systems and countries; but it is also clearly distinguished from the simple reactive, denouncing look, as dependent as the first one that renounces a regional project, to projects of convergence of the global south, to the possibility of formulating policies, from the Institutions and the countries of the South.

The Institution has an Internationalization Plan, in which the aforementioned concepts are formulated:

### *Priority Areas of Knowledge in the Internationalization Plan*

The areas in which IUSUR initially works are: Education and Global and Regional Studies, in charge of the respective Departments. In the Interdisciplinary Space, it is committed to raise key issues of Geopolitics of Knowledge and Development of autonomous perspectives in Science, Technology and Innovation.

### *Action Areas*

Research, teaching, service to the social environment, internationalization, innovation.

### *Countries Considered Priority*

Countries of Latin America and Latin America, BRICS Countries, Countries of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries, CPLP, African Countries.

### *Agreements Developed by IUSUR*

They include agreements with the following foreign institutions:

- National Autonomous University of Mexico - Regional Center for Multidisciplinary Research - CRIM, Campus of Morelos, Cuernavaca. Mexico.
- National University of Tres de Febrero -UNTREF- Argentina.
- Regional Integrated University of Alto Uruguai e as Missoes -URI, RS, Brazil.
- Higher Education Institute -ISE- (Ministry of Education), Asunción, Paraguay.
- Latin American University of Bolivia, ULAT, Cochabamba, Bolivia.
- Higher Evangelical Institute of Lubango - ISPEL, Huila, Angola.
- National University of Equatorial Guinea - UNGE.
- Faculty of Law of the South of Minas - MSDS.

IUSUR has prioritized up to the present the networks of researchers, as well as the realization of (and participation in) international events. In a second instance, it is proposed to develop a master's program based on student and teacher mobility.

The site of the institution is: [www.iusur.edu.uy](http://www.iusur.edu.uy) (in Spanish, Portuguese and English).

The Internationalization Financing Plan has not been formulated yet, so, at this stage, it is based on resources that the participating institutions can manage ad hoc.

### *Internationalization Management and activities*

The management of internationalization is concentrated in the highest institutional level, the Rector. It is currently focusing on conventions, research networks, international events and will focus next year on student and teacher mobility.

### *Jobs or vacancies*

In terms of scholarship policy, work is in the creation of a fund that finances at least ten percent of the participants from abroad. As for the vacancies, or places, there are no limits for foreign students, because the focus is primarily regional.

## Final Thoughts and Conclusions

The academic and institutional project of the IUSUR Foundation is centrally characterized by objectives that exceed the national perspective, to assume the challenge of regional and global processes, both as an object of research and teaching, and as an institutional development environment.

To the classic university functions, there are added non-traditional functions, quasi-functions, central in the project of institutional development, such as Innovation and Internationalization.

The concept of innovation, which could be interpreted as an economic-commercial function, is conceptualized in an integral sense, implying innovations related to human and social development.

The main categories of analysis reviewed in this case are as follows:

- Competitive and/or cooperative internationalization.
- Margin of Autonomy, as the set of cultural, conceptual and institutional potentialities, which allow countries and institutions to formulate internationalization strategies.
- Internationalization dependent or adaptive, or independent and creative, to the conditions of knowledge distribution (as a result of the values adopted by an institution in the first two dimensions). In the case studied, we assume a creative internationalization, guided by a project not only adapting to global or hegemonic academic conditions, but also creating conditions.

In this sense, the case studied is located in the maximization of the margin of autonomy and proactive internationalization, centered in a regional project, and in projects of convergence of the global South, that is, reaffirms the possibility of formulating policies, from academic institutions and scientists from the countries of the South.

It has been discussed whether internationalization constitutes a "new function" of higher education. If we consider that the university was born cosmopolitan and underlies knowledge itself, its raw material, a potentially global distribution and expansion logic, it does not seem that internationalization constitutes a university function and, more clearly, a strategy, a culture, a promotion of transnational cooperation, even if we refer to this adjective to processes of internationalization of solidarity.

However, in the case of the IUSUR Foundation, internationalization would not only be a strategy, a cultural pre-orientation, but an epistemological perspective that points to internationalization as a mission itself.

Two institutional programs express this emphasis on internationalization at the level of academic activities.

The first is the Alberto Methol Ferré Chair of Interregionalism, which is a program of the Department of Global and Regional Studies, aimed at researching the new mega regional and interregional processes, especially those taking place in Asia Pacific, -configuring the international system.

The second program is the Higher Education Journal of Global South -ISSN 2393 6789, a free and open digital publication, published in the Ahead of Print and peer-refereed system, as a vehicle for reflection on the field of the policies.

The internationalization of higher education is a global trend that has not yet ended and is multidimensional. It involves characteristics of institutions but should also involve national higher education policies.

It includes academic mobility, regional convergence policies, mutual trust agreements, shared programs, internationalization of the curriculum (linked to so-called internationalization at home), research and service programs to the environment, work on (and the resolution of global or regional problems, as well as the design of institutions and processes projected to regional or interregional spaces, the establishment of international campuses, the development of institutional types and university models whose academic and territorial space of reference is also in this case, the Global South.

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