



## Producing Knowledge (Despite the Storm)

### Produciendo conocimiento (a pesar de la tormenta)

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#### Abstract

The institutional production of interdisciplinary knowledge very frequently encounters bureaucratic barriers that transform academic life into a steeplechase. Producing interdisciplinary legal knowledge is even more difficult and has been the keynote of the path followed by the Graduate Program in Sociology and Law (PPGSD) of Fluminense Federal University (UFF). This article proposes a revision of its educational path, examining the changes in the research agenda over two decades and its impact on the creation of new university cadres. In the end, the challenge remains the same: to expand the possibilities of insertion of graduates in a dogmatic and disciplinary world, which resists interdisciplinary knowledge.

**Keywords:** *Sociology and Law; Interdisciplinary; Institutional production; Postgraduate.*

#### Resumen

La producción institucional del conocimiento interdisciplinario muy frecuentemente encuentra barreras burocráticas que transforman la vida académica en una carrera de obstáculos. Producir conocimiento jurídico interdisciplinario es aún más difícil y ha sido la tónica de la trayectoria del Programa de Posgrado en Sociología y Derecho (PPGSD) de la Universidad Federal Fluminense (UFF). Este artículo propone una revisión de su recorrido docente, examinando los cambios de agenda de investigación a lo largo de dos décadas y su impacto en la formación de nuevos cuadros universitarios. Al final, el desafío sigue siendo el mismo: ampliar las posibilidades de inserción de los egresados en un mundo dogmático y disciplinario, que resiste al conocimiento interdisciplinario.

**Palabras clave:** *Sociología y Derecho; Interdisciplinar; Producción institucional; Posgrado.*

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No meeting goes without saying some thoughts on the Graduate Program in Sociology and Law (PPGSD) of the Fluminense Federal University (UFF). Word goes around that it is a program characterized by its singularity; the unique and misunderstood nature of a program that rows against the hegemonic current of disciplinary canons, as it intends to produce knowledge in an interdisciplinary way. This is an image that defines the discourse of its faculty members, dominates the imaginary of its students, and permeates the reminiscences of its graduate students. The specificity of our academic production is the essence of the difference that we strive for and that sets us outside the quantitative metric that rules the formal world of knowledge production in universities.

This particular nature of the program was not, however, present in the process of creating the PPGSD, whose origin lay essentially in the shortage of qualified professors in the two university units that we were then trying to bring together. While for the Faculty of Law the lack of personnel did not even allow them to aspire to the long-awaited postgraduate program, in the Faculty of Sociology the problem consisted of finding a niche that would justify the opening of one more academic offer within an area already densely populated by other programs in the city of Rio de Janeiro. The rapprochement between the units solved both problems but lacked an institutional gateway for being accredited before the government accreditation agency, i.e., the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes, in its acronym in Portuguese).

While we could claim to be a sociology of law program, neither the sociology committee nor the law committee were open to our application. For the former, we were a disguised law program, while for the latter, a program with too many sociologists. We took time to find a solution, to justify the academic proposal and the program that, after two decades of activity, would become a paradigmatic example of the difficulties faced by an academic practice that calls itself interdisciplinary.

In fact, even during its creation in December 1997, when the project was examined for its improvement by Luiz Edson Fachin, it was pointed out that it was not enough to define the profile of the program and reflect the direction that it wanted to take. Moreover, the mere meeting of the scientific fields of law and sociology, which had been deeply valued in its origins was deemed insufficient.

In reality, what was suggested was the existence of “a serious problem represented by a juxtaposition of knowledge, without dialogue”. A possible refinement of the academic proposal may have solved the problem identified by Fachin; however, it did not eliminate the many obstacles faced for its accreditation. In this sense, the visits of consultants appointed by Capes revealed divergences between the disciplinary perspectives of law and sociology, whose meeting in an interdisciplinary program was viewed with great suspicion. This would explain the

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emphasis given by professors Luis Werneck Vianna and Willis Santiago Guerra Filho, in their report on their visit to the program in October 1998, where they analyzed the “viability of the project under examination, especially what regards the development of a new conception of research work, combining the traditions of sociology and law. In short, what seemed most productive to the commission is the isolation of a field of research that would mobilize theoretical and analytical resources from both sociology and law, directing the perspective of interdisciplinarity to the specific field of empirical research.”

In other words, in the eyes of the two consultants, the potential of the project did not lie in producing a new field of knowledge, but in carrying out concrete empirical research that mobilized theoretical contributions from the two fields involved: sociology and law. Unfortunately, the favorable opinion of the consultants was not accepted by the Scientific Technical Council (CTC) of Capes, which determined that a new visit and report be carried out to “clarify more about the interdisciplinary nature of the academic proposal, the faculty members, and their intellectual production”.

While the project faced hostile stance from the newly created multidisciplinary committee, dominated by a culture closer to exact sciences, such as engineering, resistance to accreditation came specifically from the sociology committee. Thus, the procedure recommended by the CTC involved the visit of a commission made up exclusively of sociologists, Maria Arminda do Nascimento Arruda and Carlos Benedito Martins. As a result, it was clarified that the program’s certification would not be confused with the classic certification obtained in sociology programs. In fact, the findings of the visit helped us confirm that we were unequivocally certain of what we did not offer. This did not mean, however, that we were clear about the content of the training provided by the PPGSD. In the end, considering only the period in which I participated in the discussions, it took a little over two years for PPGSD to finally be accredited and to obtain the authorization to offer its master’s degree program.

The graduate program was originally conceived with a single area of concentration (Legal and Social Sciences) and two lines of research (“Citizenship, Public Sphere and Criticism of Political-Legal Institutions” and “Work and Social Exclusion”). The PPGSD has known different academic configurations throughout its years of existence, which can be divided into three phases. From its creation in 1999 until the initial offer of its doctoral program in 2009, all the efforts to consolidate and expand the program came together with a view to opening a doctoral program. The second period, whose underlying theme is the unbridled expansion guided by the growth in numbers of professors and students that make it almost impossible to build any sense of unity. This period goes precisely from the opening of the doctoral program in 2009 to the crisis generated by the four-year evaluation of 2017.





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articulated around the concepts of violence and, later, on governability, which nonetheless did not remain in force. Along the way, two lines of research were abandoned: one that dealt with interdisciplinarity either as a methodological strategy or as an epistemological challenge, and another that was interested in social theory and contemporary culture. In the end, what emerges is a picture of uncertainty and great instability, with almost continuous redefinitions of the research agendas, as if the lines of research were adapted to the reorientations of its components instead of them reshaping their research for the sake of collective and common interest. In other words, as if the thread that united us was reinvented with each official scrutiny; our reaction to the evaluative push was always the same: we were part of the community, but we did not belong there, because we were outsiders trying to argue against hegemonic thought. In cinematographic terms, *Rumble Fish*.

Basically, both movements - suppression of a line of research and merger of two others - did not result from the adoption of a logic of reorganization but arose as a result of an academic desire and a teaching reorganization. Thus, the debate that proposed rethinking the lines of research of the PPGSD around a common theme, namely, social conflict, was frustrated. In other words, the diversity of lines of research would not hide a common starting point, which concerns the examination of social conflict and its management by society. In this sense, work management would be the unifying element of the line of research titled "Access to justice, labor relations, social rights and institutions", whose existence is related to the very origin of the program. In turn, environmental management (and all the complexity that it engenders) would be the basis of the line of research titled "Socio-environmental, rural and urban conflicts", in the same way that global management leverages the line of research titled "Human rights and global governance". Finally, the management of violence is at the root of the line of research titled "Institutional management of conflicts and public security policies". Indeed, four management units: work, environment, world, and violence, which suggest a unity and a convergence of approaches that would contribute decisively to the PPGSD consolidating an institutional identity.

However, this is nonetheless a story of wasted opportunities. No change managed to go beyond the cosmetic reorganization of the institutional apparatus. There was no consistent discussion, and the joy of victory was summed up in the certainty of having postponed the confrontation with the evaluation institutions for a future moment. In fact, we did not take advantage of any of the troubled moments that the evaluation system gave us – the recommendation to move to the law area in 2004; the rejection of the first APCN of the doctoral program in 2008; the fall of the program in 2010; and the recommendation to discredit the doctoral program in 2017 – which intended to put an end to the institutional architecture that had forged lines of research as scholarly tribes, and which also sought to reorganize our

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collective agenda to produce an institutional identity. In the end, the prevailing logic has always been that the future can wait.

While the future did not arrive, I navigated between the original lines of research of the PPGSD, never getting close to the lines of research added in time. In the line of research on work and social exclusion, we were a small group: André Laino, Joaquim Leonel de Rezende Alvim and Marília Salles Falci Medeiros, in addition to me. Our production was dispersed, without a collective identity. During this period, with Rezende Alvim, I wrote a trilogy of articles on the working relationship of evangelical pastors with the integration of undergraduate students, but without any PPGSD student participation. Basically, our unifying element was the ongoing transformations in the world of work and, in this sense, most of the dissertations that I conducted during the first evaluation cycle (1999-2003) focused on this theme, as indicated in the table II, whose last column suggests an arbitrary qualification of the research agenda with the purpose of indicating how each dissertation or thesis would address my personal scientific interests. With the retirements of André Laino and Marília Medeiros, the line of research was maintained, essentially by the incorporation of Professor Luis Antonio Cardoso da Silva and the graduates of the PPGSD: Ivan da Costa Alemão Ferreira and Carla Appollinário de Castro.

TABLE II  
GUIDELINES AT THE PPGSD

Year	Program	Led by	Theme	Line of research	Current position
2002	Master's Degree	Teresa Cristina D'Almeida Basteiro	The new uses of strike.	Work relations	Attorney of the Public Prosecutor's Office of Labor (MPT)
2003	Master's Degree	Denis de Castro Halis	Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.: The great dissident shapes the United States.	Judiciary	Professor at the Universidad Estácio de Sá (UNESA)
		Cíntia Muniz de Souza	Space for Rights: an experience of access to justice for low-income communities.	Judiciary	Adjunct Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)
		Felipe de Santa Cruz Oliveira	Work time and bank work: the dead ends of a once synchronous relationship.	Work relations	Lawyer, President of the Federal Council of the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB)
		Alexandre Albernaz Bibiani	The Labor Inspectorate and its track record in Brazil: possible articulations between citizenship and work.	Work relations	Labor Auditor at the Ministry of Economy
2004	Master's Degree	Fernanda Maria de la Costa Vieira	Imprisoned in the name of the law? Criminal status and criminalization of the Landless Movement (MST)	Critical theory	Adjunct Professor at the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF)
		Magnae Latitia Brito dos Reis de Oliveira	The email and the work environment: employer power and the right to privacy.	Work relations	Lawyer
		Lidia Caldeira Lustosa Cabral	The constitutional principle of the democratic management of public education: a look at basic education in the city of Rio de Janeiro.	Citizenship and identity	Professor at the Augusto Motta University Center (Unisum)
2005	Master's Degree	Ellen Simas Gonçalves Coutinho	Relativizing the notion of acquired right: an exemplary look from the Social Security reform.	Critical theory	Businesswoman in Sorocaba (SP)
		Rita de Cássia Paula Pereira	Discovering Saint Ivo: the construction of the identities of public defenders in the State of Rio de Janeiro.	Citizenship and identity	Researcher of the Ministry of the Army



2006	Master's Degree	Pedro Heitor Barros Geraldo	The Senator and the Bishop: meetings and disagreements in the antechamber of politics.	Citizenship and identity	Adjunct Professor at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF)
		Lina Lúcia Queiroz Ponce	Mirror, mirror, what professor -of legal sociology- am I? Analysis of teacher identity and its reflexivity.	Citizenship and identity	Plastic Artist
		Fernando de Castro Fontainha	The entrepreneur as a new type of judge: a diagnosis based on the computerization of Brazilian courts.	Citizenship and identity	Adjunct Professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)
2008	Master's Degree	Fernanda Andrade Almeida	From liberal to social: debates on the right of resistance in the National Constituent Assembly of 1987/1988.	Judiciary	
2009	Master's Degree	Rodolfo Liberato de Noronha	In the corridors of the courts: a study on the new judicial architectures.	Judiciary	
		Francisco Ubiratan Conde Barreto Junior	Institutional changes in the Judiciary: a case study on the implementation of quality in the courts.	Judiciary	Lawyer
2012	Master's Degree	Izabel Saenger Nuñez	Dogmas and doctrines: consecrated truths and interpretations on the Jury Court.	Critical theory	Postdoctoral Fellow of the Graduate Program in Anthropology (PPGA) of the Fluminense Federal University (UFF)
2013	PhD Program	Fernanda Andrade Almeida	The "scarecrow" judge and the "law in motion": a case of judicialization according to the Brazilian style.	Judiciary	Adjunct Professor at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF)
2014	PhD Program	Rodolfo de Liberato Noronha	Inside the court, outside the process: empirical analysis of the Innovare Award.	Judiciary	Adjunct Professor at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Unirio)
	Master's Degree	Ana Paula de Oliveira Sciammarella	When gender is diluted in (court) jurisdiction.	Judiciary	
2015	PhD Program	Cristiana Vianna Veras	A stranger in the orchestra, a noise in the music: the appropriation of mediation by the Judiciary based on an experience in the Cejusc of the TJRJ.	Judiciary	Adjunct Professor at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF)

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2016	PhD Program	Juliana Livia Antunes de la Rocha	Public hearings in the Federal Supreme Court: from technicality to democracy?	Judiciary	Attorney at the <i>Empresa Brasileira de Infraestrutura Aeroportuaria</i> (Infraero) and Professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation of Rio de Janeiro (FGV-RIO)
2017	PhD Program	Rafaela Selen Moreira	From access to justice for citizens to the construction of citizenship for justice: deciphering the potential of itinerant justice.	Judiciary	Substitute Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)
2018	PhD Program	Carolina Pereira Lins Mesquita	Therapeutic spiritism and its judicialization: a case study of the spiritual works of João de Deus, in the house of St. Ignatius of Loyola, in Abadiânia, Goiás.	Sociology of religion	Adjunct Professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)
	Master's Degree	Thais Lemos dos Santos	Cartography of a discipline (or of a subject or even of a content): Legal Sociology in the academic world of law.	Law education	Lawyer
2019	PhD Program	Ana Paula de Oliveira Sciammarella	Magistracy of the Magistrates: An analysis of the female professional condition in the Judiciary of Rio de Janeiro.	Judiciary	Adjunct Professor at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Unirio)
	Master's Degree	Nathalya Royer	Life is not fair? The career path of Andréa Pachá, a judge who was in the National Council of Justice.	Judiciary	PhD student from PPGSD/UFF
		Adriana Avelar Alves	Where are the black judges in Brazil? A cut in the Brazilian Judiciary: social and political perspectives.	Judiciary	Scholarship Researcher at the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipea)
		Ana Letícia Domingues Jacinto	Working conditions of bus drivers in Rio de Janeiro: socio-legal appropriations of a category in motion.	Work relations	Lawyer
2020	PhD Program	Amanda Alves de Souza	Practice, extension, or Law clinic: Limits and possibilities of (re)invention in the field of legal education.	Law education	Lawyer and Professor at the Universidad Estácio de Sá (UNESA)

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When the second evaluation cycle (2004-2006) began, although I remained a member of the line of research, and upon the approval of a Capes-Cofecub agreement with the University of Montpellier I (France), whose coordination was carried out together with my former PhD tutor, Michel Miaille, all my research orientations were directed to the thematic axis of cooperation, i.e., “Citizenship and Identity”. As a result of this collective effort, Fernando de Castro Fontinha and Pedro Heitor Barros Geraldo, after completing their theses with me, are following the path of a full doctorate program in Montpellier. While they continue there, my interests are channeled, in a substantive way, towards a sociology of the Judiciary, which from now on becomes the aggregating theme of my teaching and research activities at PPGSD. This explains my migration to the other original research line of the program, whose unifying element had ceased to be citizenship, to be replaced by a concern for access to justice. I found a safe refuge there, without this implying that a collective identity was being forged among its components. In the federative spirit of the lines of research, what connected us was a type of common interest in a thematic area, which despite the different interests of its members, once institutionalized, allowed us to function as a small academic tribe.

My return to the line of research on work is not the result of a personal research agenda conversion, but the result of federative divergences within the tribe, a tribe that is engaged in the access to justice debate. In fact, despite the common scientific interest, the absence of a collective agenda had turned us into competitors fighting for scarce resources within our small community; obviously, no one gets away with this type of competition. The fragile thread that united us had been stretched in such a way that any sudden movement could result in its breaking. This is not uncommon in the existing postgraduate programs in Brazil, where participation in other programs (duplicate/triplicate professors), line of research changes, funding lines of research, in short, individual agendas prevail over collective constructions. However, the excessive tension had resulted in the erosion of personal relationships, whose preservation I was convinced, would be achieved by my migration to another line of research. However, I just came back, I came back now to stay / Because here, here is my place / I returned to the things I left behind / I returned to the line of work, which would soon abandon the discussion of social exclusion.

In fact, even before the evaluation shock of 2017, the line of research had already been reorganized around the following elements: labor relations, social rights, and institutions, without much clarity on the meaning of its articulations. Indeed, in the description of the line of research, these three dimensions are intertwined in a type of perfect chain: (a) present in different sociopolitical theories and strategies, (b) structure multiple constructions and, consequently, (c) provide meaning to the actions of its actors. However, it is a sequel that says nothing about its content and that could be borrowed from many other fields. Deep down, it is a

cliché that says nothing and lacks the necessary mortar to produce a collective identity.

After the evaluative shock, the two original lines of research of the program were merged, gathering four elements: access to justice, labor relations, social rights and institutionality. However, the summary included in the 2020 selection process publication indicates that the merger was nothing more than a juxtaposition, exactly what was pointed out by Edson Fachin twenty years ago when we designed the original PPGSD proposal. Thus, the public notice talks about examining the quality of the Brazilian jurisdictional and the construction of a procedural citizenship independent of public power through alternative means of conflict resolution. This is the field of the growing issue of access to justice. However, this is not articulated with the rest of the elements and whose description reproduces the same preceding criticism. In summary, the link between the two amalgamated lines of research is a sum in which the whole is not the result of the sum of the parts.

It is urgent to think of an articulation that produces a collective identity, that brings us together as an academic group and that is not a mere federative juxtaposition to claim a space that we can call ours. “Citizenship, work and access to justice” or simply “access to justice and labor institutions” are possible clues, but they would have to be refined to build a collective research agenda. The articulation of these two or three aspects would make it possible to structure at least two collective research projects that involve, on the one hand, access to justice and social litigation and, on the other hand, labor institutions and solidarity regimes.

For this, it is essential to incorporate social litigation to think about the conflict as a social engine and go beyond state jurisdiction as an exclusive resolution mechanism, thus, opening the investigation to aspects that deal with: (a) jurisdiction and litigation in Brazil, (b) ethics and legal ideology, (c) conflicts of power and institutional stability, and (d) alternative means of conflict resolution. In the latter case, reference to solidarity regimes is essential to understand the meaning of work in society, its impact on sociability and its importance for social organization. Understanding these different dimensions is something that can then be developed around four aspects: (i) work and collective memory, (ii) work and gender, (iii) democracy, new populisms, and labor regulation, and (iv) individual and collective labor litigation.

The moment is not, however, easy. We are in the middle of a pandemic that has interrupted a large part of our life mottos. Our private and professional worlds blended into a single environment, with overlapping tasks that mitigated both spatial and temporal limits. Our research fields have become refractory to empirical research which, due to the risk of circulation, sees its possibilities of realization reduced. As a consequence of social distancing, our classes have migrated to the virtual sphere. In the end, I lost count of the digital platforms with which I had to

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become familiar in these months of the pandemic: Lifesize, Meet, Slack, Teams, Webex, Zoom, in addition to reviving Skype and expanding the use of WhatsApp. This confinement, which provided a trip through my room (a play on words in connection with the title of the classic book by Xavier de Maistre), ended up framing the world and involved an excursion behind my screen. The pandemic occurred just when we could have celebrated two decades of PPGSD, i.e., twenty years of our first selection process. However, there was no party like five years ago.

In the commemoration of its fifteenth anniversary, the celebration was crossed by the expectation of the next round of institutional evaluation that was approaching. Between us, there was the certainty of an improvement that would raise our reputation. We had worked for it, we were convinced. We organized the V Meeting of Empirical Research in Law (V EPED), in Rio de Janeiro, in August 2015, and included a self-celebration panel in it. Two of the current members of the line of research were at the table that discussed the path of the program and the meanings of interdisciplinarity. Marcelo Pereira de Mello, with touches of elaborate humor and without worrying about beautifying our institutional path, demonstrated that interdisciplinarity is sometimes a mere matter of convenience, the result of chance. In turn, Rezende Alvim argued that we would no longer have enemies against which to produce (critical) knowledge and, even worse, interdisciplinary knowledge would cease to be transgressive, domesticated by disciplinary academic ties. In short, it was as if he were telling us that we had grown old and were meek. In fact, there is an analysis error here, because we continue to resist, holding transgression as a flag and, to the extent that they allow it, forming cadres for Brazilian universities.

Throughout two decades, I supervised eight theses and 22 dissertations, of which 27 graduated, of which thirteen began their teaching career, mostly in federal public institutions. Some are still in the process of training, studying their doctorate, while others have dedicated themselves to different legal careers: law, labor inspection, Public Prosecutor's Office of Labor. There were those who became businesswomen, but there are also those who made a complete and total professional conversion to become artists. All of them dispersed, brought an important renewal for the consolidation of an interdisciplinary perspective in the human and social sciences, expanding the possibilities of reflection around forgotten themes, guided by a non-dogmatic approach. They are my legacy. I've produced some knowledge, but it's likely to sit dusty on some obscure library shelf or be resold in some second-hand online bookstore. I was not an interventionist or a social engineer, but I made the training of cadres my heritage. I hope this helps Brazilian universities.