

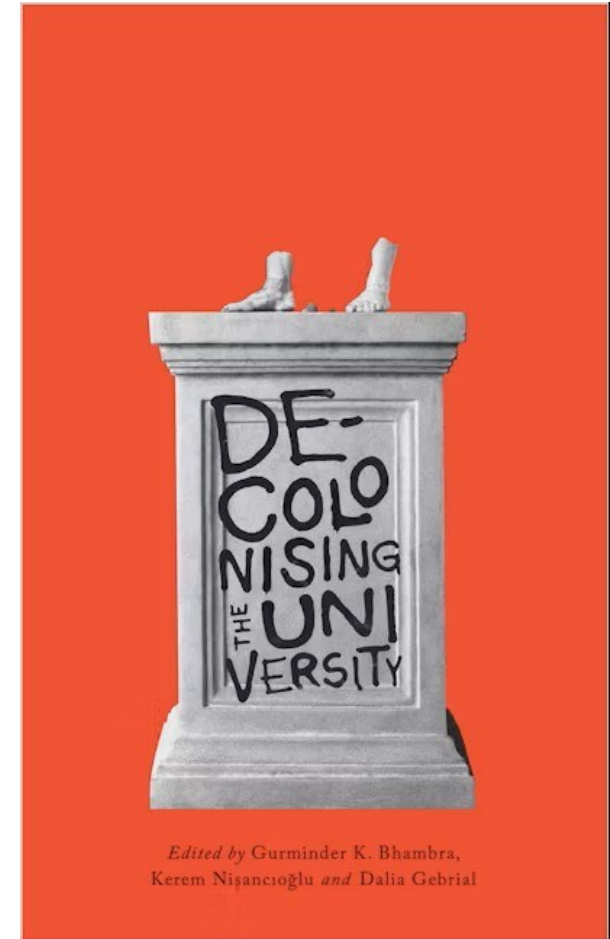
Indigenous Universities as Public Anthropology: Decolonial Practices of Academic Knowledge Production at the Universidad Autónoma Comunal de Oaxaca

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Public Social Sciences and the decolonisation of European universities

- In recent years, different debates over the problematic of exclusive academic spaces have arisen over...
- ...on the decolonisation of "westernised" universities and their curricula (Santos 2021, Grosfoguel 2022, Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021)...
- ...and on the link between society and science, for example in public anthropology (Borosfky 2007) or sociology (Burawoy 2005).
- However, looking at indigenous and community-based university education processes, we realise that problem goes beyond that...

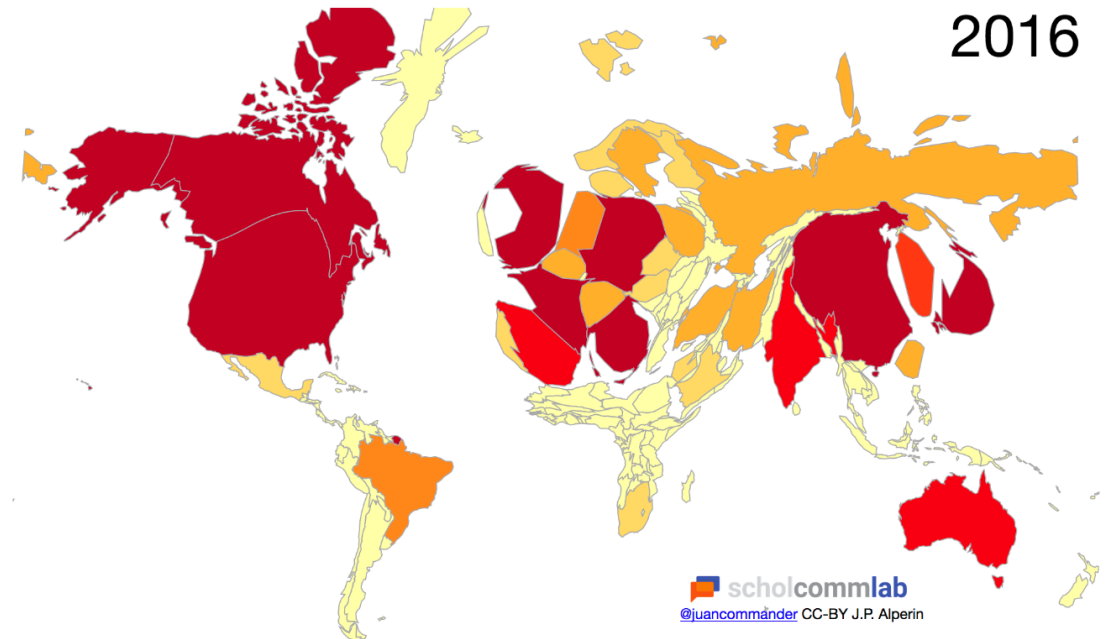


The production of academic knowledge within the geopolitics of knowledge and epistemic oppression

- Epistemic oppression “[...] refers to persistent epistemic exclusions that hinder one’s contribution to knowledge production. Epistemic exclusion, here, will be understood as an unwarranted infringement on the epistemic agency of knowers” (Dotson 2014:115)
- In the context of indigenous knowledge characterised by historical **Epistemicides** (Santos 2018) and **Internal Colonialism** (Gonzalez Casanova 2006)
- Different orders of **Epistemic Oppression** within the Geopolitics of Knowledge, structured by an epistemological North-South-Divide (Krotz 1997):
 1. **Colonial, racial and sexist prejudices** deny subjects the capacity to articulate knowledge with value for the (Social) Sciences.
 2. The **unequal landscape of academic knowledge production** hinders other types of knowledge beyond the dominant epistemic system to enter hegemonic discourses.
 3. The **epistemological framework of scientific knowledge production** systematically excludes other *epistemic lifeways* and render their knowledge as non-knowledge within their discourse.

“The epistemological privilege that modern science grants to itself is thus the result of the destruction of all alternative knowledges that could eventually question such privilege” (Santos 2016:153)
- Within this unequal epistemic system, we must situate decolonial discourses (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010, Makaran and Gaussens 2020)

World scaled by number of documents with authors from each country in Web of Science



Alperin (2018) found in Torres Heredia (2021)

Methodology

- Institutional Ethnography (Smith 2005) and Comunal Research Methodology.
- Document analysis, interviews, informal discussions and participatory observation.
- 2 weeks in Guelatao de Juárez, Sierra Norte, Oaxaca.
- I joined master's and bachelor's classes as a student at the Centro Universitario Comunal
- This is part of a comparative study between the UACO, the *Universidad Campesina en Red Indígena* and the *Universidad Autónoma Indígena de México*.



Geographical Context



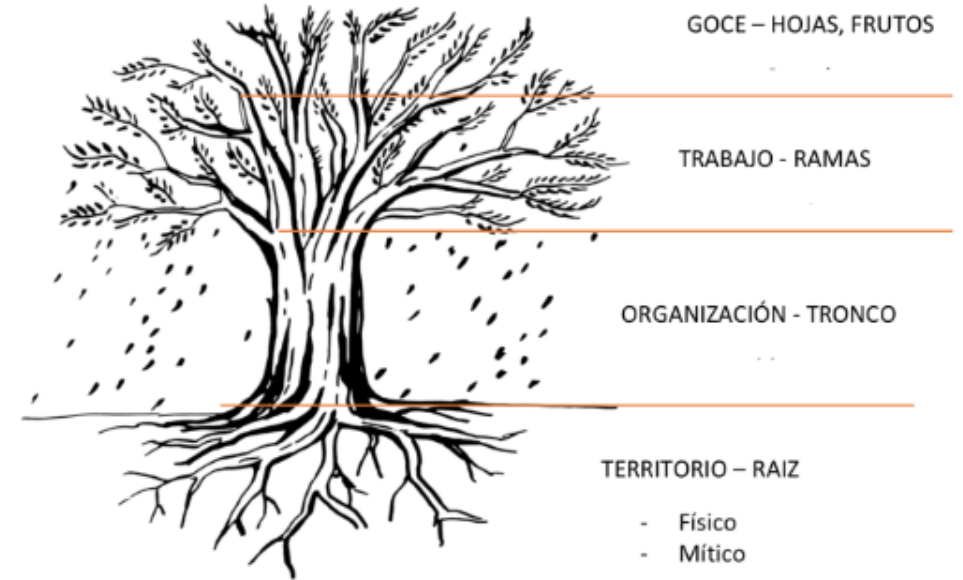
- Oaxaca is characterized by a high ethnic diversity, with 16 recognized Indigenous peoples, and 39% of the population speaks Indigenous languages.
- Since 1995, Oaxaca has been the only state of Mexico primarily governed by Indigenous self-governance (*Sistema de Usos y Costumbres*).
- Guelatao de Juárez is located in the Zapotec region of the Sierra Norte and has 554 inhabitants and forms part of the system of Usos y Costumbres.

Source: Instituto de Órganos Históricos de Oaxaca, A.C. 2024

Comunalidad

- A concept that emerged from the collective struggles in defense of territory in Oaxaca in the 1970s.
- It has four pillars:
 1. The communal territory
 2. The communal organisation
 3. The communal work
 4. The communal festivities

“Communality is the verbal predicate of the We. It names its action and not its ontology. Incarnated verbs such as eat, speak, learn are collectively created in a specific place. It only exists in its execution. The We is realized in the ‘spiral of experience’. We can distinguish three moments within it.” (Osorio Guerrero 2019:130)



Lopez Mendoza (2023:13)

Precedents of Communal Education

- The gap between Primary and Upper Secondary Education in Indigenous Education Plans in Mexico gave birth to autonomous initiatives for Communal Education.
- 2012: Plan for the Transformation of Education in Oaxaca (PTEO), provides a framework for the implementation of education with a critical intercultural community approach.

Tabla. Experiencias de educación comunitaria en Oaxaca y año de creación

Nivel educativo	Educación pública	Educación privada
Inicial	Nidos de lengua (2008) y diplomado en Educación Inicial Comunitaria (2011-2012) ^a	No
Preescolar	Escuelas de la Coalición de Maestros y Promotores Indígenas de Oaxaca ^b Escuelas de las jefaturas mixtecas de la Dirección de Educación Indígena (DEI) (Maestros de la Nación Ñu Savi) (2009) ^c	No
Primaria	Escuelas de la Coalición de Maestros y Promotores Indígenas de Oaxaca (CMPIO) Escuelas de las jefaturas mixtecas de la DEI (Maestros de la Nación Ñu Savi) (2009)	No
Secundaria	Secundarias comunitarias indígenas (2004) ^d	No
Bachillerato	Bachillerato Integral Comunitario Ayuujk Polivalente (1996) ^e Bachilleratos integrales comunitarios (2001) ^f Telebachilleratos comunitarios (2013) ^g	Preparatoria "José Martí" de San Francisco Ixhuatán (1982) ^k Bachillerato de Asunción Ixtaltepec (1987) ^l
Universidad	Escuela Normal Bilingüe Intercultural de Oaxaca (2000) ^h Unidad de Estudios Superiores de Alotepec (2011) ⁱ Universidad Comunal Intercultural del Cempoaltépetl (2012) ^j Maestría en Educación Comunal de la Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca (UABJO, 2016)*	Instituto Superior Intercultural Ayuuk (2006) ^m

Maldonado Alvarado and Maldonado Ramírez (2018:3)

La Universidad Autónoma Comunal de Oaxaca

- Foundation: 20 April 2020
- Objectives:
 - To provide education with cultural and communal sensitivity and knowledge.
 - To develop research activities and communal, humanistic and scientific projects, primarily in response to the problems of the community.
 - To preserve, promote and disseminate culture, indigenous languages and communal knowledge.
 - To establish training programmes aimed at community outreach and organisation.
- 1200 students in 16 Community University Centres.
- From full autonomy...
- ...to administrative autonomy.
- CNDH lawsuit for lack of consultation with indigenous peoples and invalidation of the university law by the SCJN (2021).

¡POR QUE UNA EDUCACIÓN COMUNAL DESDE Y PARA LOS PUEBLOS Y COMUNIDADES ES POSIBLE!
¡RESPECTO A LOS VALORES Y PRINCIPIOS DE NUESTRA VIDA COMUNAL UNIVERSITARIA!
¡VIVA LA UACO!



UACO

La Universidad Autónoma Comunal de Oaxaca cuenta con 16 Centros Universitarios Comunales distribuidos en todo el estado de Oaxaca.

Los principios que fundamentan la educación comunal: integralidad existencial, complementariedad, horizontalidad, equidad de género, respeto y reciprocidad, se ven reflejados en la organización, el tequio, el gobierno, el goce y en general el servicio para el bien común de los pueblos.

La UACO tiene como fin generar educación de nivel licenciatura, posgrado, especialización y actualización, recuperando y preservando las relaciones colectivas y comunitarias para refundar la formación de profesionales incorporando los conocimientos y saberes comunitarios en su formación.

CENTROS UNIVERSITARIOS COMUNALES

CUC de Santa María Tlahuitoltepec
CUC de San Antonio Huitepec
CUC de Valles Centrales de Oaxaca
CUC de San Cristóbal Lachirioag
CUC de Santa María Colotepec
CUC de San Pedro Comitancillo
CUC de San Pedro Amuzgos
CUC de la Heroica Ciudad de Tlaxiaco
CUC de San Pablo Guelatao
CUC de Santa María Yaviche
CUC de San Andrés Solaga
CUC de Magdalena Jaltepec
CUC de Unión Hidalgo
CUC de San Francisco Ixhuatán
CUC de Matías Romero
CUC de Ciudad Ixtepec

LICENCIATURAS

1. Licenciatura en Territorio y Bien Vivir Comunal
2. Licenciatura en Vida Comunal y Territorio
3. Licenciatura en Comunalidad
4. Licenciatura en Gestión Comunal
5. Licenciatura en Comunalidad Agrícola
6. Licenciatura en Educación Comunal
7. Licenciatura en Derecho Indígena Comunal
8. Licenciatura en Artes y Filosofía Comunal
9. Licenciatura en Salud Integral Comunitaria
10. Licenciatura en Agroecología Comunal
11. Licenciatura en Pesca y Cooperativismo
12. Licenciatura en Comunicación Comunal
13. Licenciatura en Gastronomía Comunal
14. Licenciatura en Política Comunal
15. Licenciatura en Cultura Musical Comunitaria
16. Licenciatura en Sistemas Alimentarios Sustentables

INGENIERÍAS

1. Ingeniería Comunal
2. Ingeniería en Bioconstrucción Comunal

ESPECIALIDAD

1. Especialidad en Educación Comunal

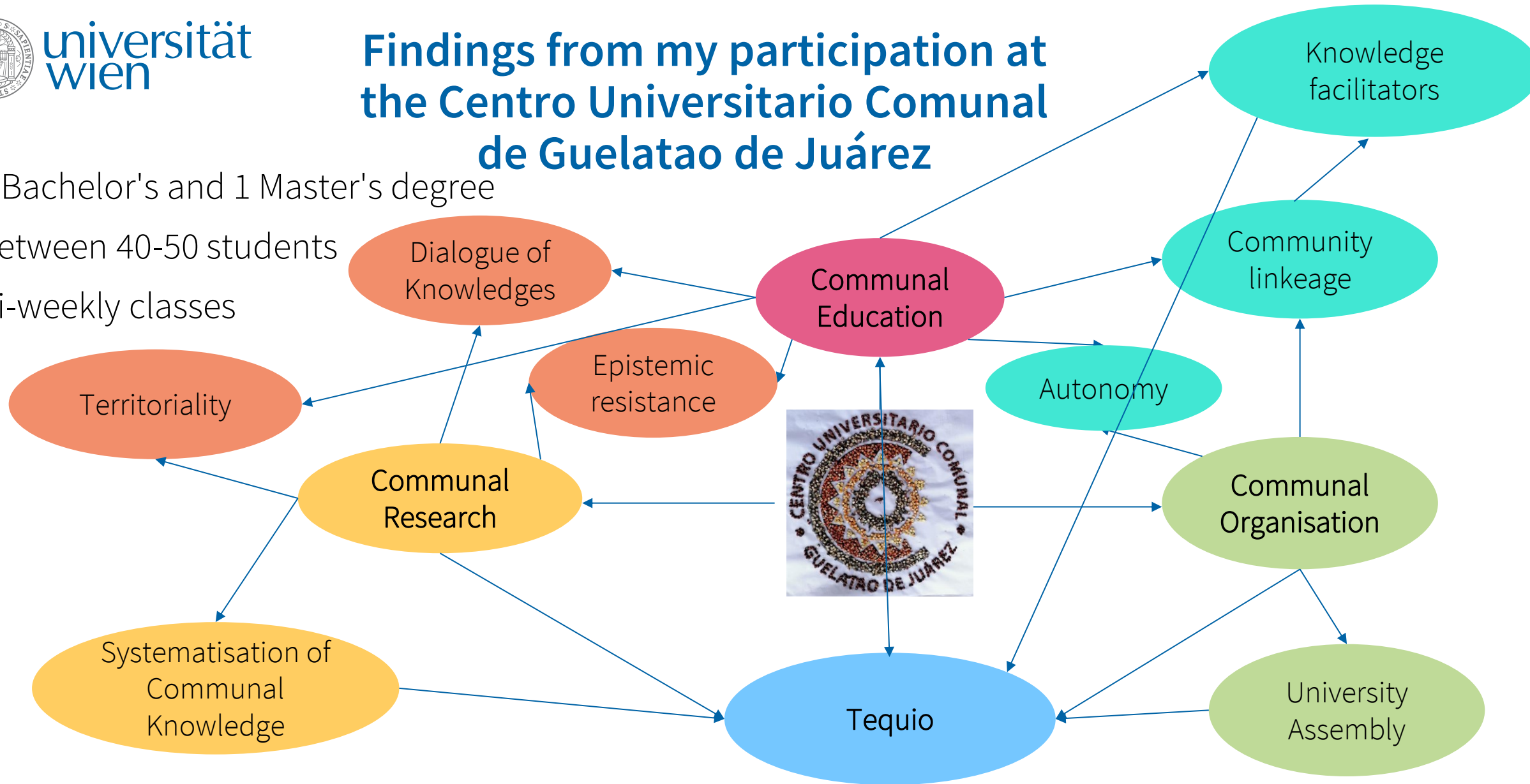
POSGRADOS

1. Maestría en Educación Comunal
2. Maestría en Recreación Comunal
3. Maestría en Comunal lingüística Mixe

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Findings from my participation at the Centro Universitario Comunal de Guelatao de Juárez

- 3 Bachelor's and 1 Master's degree
- Between 40-50 students
- Bi-weekly classes





Knowledge exchange of CUC Guelatao with the Universidad Autónoma Indígena Intercultural de Colombia



What does it mean for decolonising traditional academic spaces?

- Historically, understanding academic spaces as a territory of **struggle, resistance and contradictions**.
- The link between university and community makes us **rethink the discourse of Public Social Sciences** through the very conceptualisation university, research and teaching.
- We should regard academia as a space that **enables different worldviews** and their validation in the geopolitics of knowledge, i.e. **diverse imaginaries of university education**, given an **epistemic humility of professionalised Social Sciences**.
- The need for **pluritopic hermeneutics (Santos 2005)** for the decolonisation of universities: Searching for the **“ruins seeds” (Santos 2018)** of university education and systematising the dialogue of knowledge.
- It shows that we need to **understand decolonialisation as a political, militant and engaged practice**, beyond theoretisation and traditional academic spaces.
- So, how can we rethink our own institutions in dialogue with the UACO?

Many thanks for your attention!

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