

HUMANITIES RESEARCH IN ARGENTINA AND ITS INTERVENTION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT: Within the framework of studies on the links between science and society, this article addresses the processes of production, mobilization, and intervention of humanistic knowledge from the perspectives of Argentine researchers. The main objective is to reflect on its specificity as a field of knowledge, to question its (supposed) futility, and to examine its particular forms of contribution to society through concrete practices. The methodology adopted is qualitative and presents the results of empirical work based on interviews with 43 researchers trained in the humanities within the Argentine science and technology complex. The sample is intentional, non-probabilistic, and balanced with respect to academic age and gender. As findings that bring new meaning to this historically problematic link, it is recognized that the production of humanistic knowledge is opposed to the logic that seeks to reduce utility to a purely economic return. It is highlighted that researchers view teaching practice as a form of intervention that facilitates the recognition of others and as a way of both transferring and generating critical thinking.

Keywords: humanities, scientific production, social function of science, forms of intervention

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INTRODUCTION

The relevance of this topic is justified in the context of a resurgence of questions surrounding the position of the social sciences and humanities and their pronouncements in the current context of knowledge production, which has taken on the appearance of an epochal change in Latin America (Didriksson et al., 2020). At the regional level, the Final Declaration of the UNESCO Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES-2018) expressed the conviction to advance the transformation of the university and the higher education system in the region, with a vision of science and technology from the perspective of the humanities, interculturality, inclusion, and equity. In this context, academic and scientific policies over the last twenty years have called for a rethinking of the epistemological positions of knowledge production, in light of the need to provide or redefine meanings that link what researchers do to the needs, ideas, debates, and concrete incursions into society. In this sense, the scope of the current knowledge production model is valued, and it is worth asking how it addresses the challenges that arise from the needs of our society (Mariángela and Naidorf, 2021).

As for the humanities, these are defined as those fields of knowledge that give meaning and interpretation to human experiences in their individual and collective dimensions, activating a potential for action in their political imagination, to denaturalize the established order (Deleuze and Guattari, 2001; Derrida, 2002; Foucault, 1998; González, 2021). Their institutionalization as a field of knowledge involves addressing their passage through the disciplinary era that, from the 16th and 17th centuries onwards, equated rationality with the natural sciences, thereby establishing the “human being” as an object/subject of study (Foucault, 2006). This issue aims to contribute to the debate on the forms of production and mobilization of knowledge (Mariángela and Naidorf, 2021), understanding that the humanities differ profoundly from “other sciences” (Mardones, 1994). In this sense, it is argued that there are different dynamics and modes of knowledge production within a field of knowledge; therefore, this article aims to continue this debate anchored in the humanities—a vacant aspect—and in its particular way of understanding contributions to society from the concept of intervention as a novel conceptualization. Consequently, as a

valuable contribution to the disciplinary field of higher education studies, the aim is to reflect on the forms of knowledge production in terms of their capacity to mobilize, intervene, and contribute to society within the framework of the debates now being held on the humanities.

This article aims to contribute to current discussions on the science-society contract, focusing on debates about the social function (Sarewitz, 2016; Ziman and Lawler, 2003) of humanistic knowledge. The main objective is to provide comprehensive categories that systematize the forms currently assumed by the production and mobilization of knowledge in the humanities based on the concept of intervention. The central research question was formulated as follows: What forms of knowledge mobilization and intervention does knowledge production in the humanities take on, based on the meanings given by researchers trained in different academic and institutional spaces? Another question is: What is the researchers' view of the status of knowledge production in the humanities based on the university-society debates?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The role of the humanities in the scientific system is currently being challenged by questions about their use, usefulness, and social function (Alonso, 2021; Fischman and Tefera, 2014; Ziman and Lawler, 2003). A central aspect of this work is to contribute to reflection on these issues by proposing the meanings of intervention and the humanities' contribution as dimensions of analysis. This allows us to ask what meanings are currently attributed to these uses for researchers in the humanities, how they are constructed, how they are established, and how they are reflected in research practices within a given academic culture (Naidorf, 2016). From the dominant approaches in current scientific policies (Mariángela and Naidorf, 2021; Naidorf et al., 2015; Naidorf and Perrotta, 2015; Red Argentina de Autoridades de Institutos de Ciencia y Tecnología (RAICYT), 2024) it is not so easy to find an agreed-upon role for the humanities: how can they “produce something that benefits society”?

Following Vaccarezza and Zabala (2002), the concept of social utility can be understood as a socially constructed quality of knowledge: the possible meanings that the utility of knowledge can take on result from socially interactive processes and are therefore sociologically problematic (Alonso, 2021). It is worth highlighting, then, on the one hand, the nature of social utility (Alonso et al., 2023; Belfiore and Upchurch, 2013; P. Benneworth, 2015; P. S. Benneworth, 2009; BÈrubÈ, 2003; Lavagnino, 2017), as a category in suspense that results from social interactions and is not attributable solely to an object of knowledge that will later be “transferred” from academia to a productive or market environment. In this sense, it is interesting to note a concept of social utility derived from the capacity for meaning construction that researchers themselves attribute to it to consider potential uses of humanistic knowledge that do not necessarily respond to a commercial or immediate logic (Adamovsky, 2024). In turn, society as a whole, from a broad definition, constitutes itself as the direct recipient of knowledge, being both the subject and object of study of the humanities; this allows us to affirm that there are external conditions that outline a certain delimitation of possible uses, recipients, and demanders, based on specific experiences (concrete practices) that are carried out by the subjects themselves. Once again, the idea of social utility is a concept that can be endowed with meaning by the agents themselves, but in the case of the humanities, it implies associating it with its history of critical intervention in different formats and territories, added to a certain intrinsic value of critical thinking (Deleuze and Guattari, 2001; Derrida, 2002; Horkheimer, 1974). From our point of view, knowledge will be useful if it can account for a certain controversial and disruptive circulation and attribution, allowing it to be received by society from different sectors and historical contexts.

Although the scientific view and the epistemological-methodological approach of the humanities persist due to positivist philosophical currents that mirror the so-called “hard sciences” (Albornoz et al., 1996; Alonso, 2021; García, 2011), this does not mean that there is a growing wave of criticism (Contreras and Goity, 2019; García, 2011; Hernández Montoya, 2009) that strives to differentiate and demonstrate the specificity of the humanities without renouncing their scientific nature, much less the resources that they seek to obtain, as other sciences do. The justification of their value is undoubtedly a way

that is absolutely linked to maintaining not only their prestige, equity, and equivalence in universities and in the bodies that regulate and promote knowledge production, but mainly to disputing their place in the distribution of research funds, whether they come from states, supranational (international) organizations, or sectors of civil society. The humanities have the capacity to orient themselves toward critical and transformative thinking, a close link to a social function that can be associated with specific ways of intervening in reality, but also the capacity to associate themselves with the powers that be (González, 2021; Heidegger, 2013), hence the relevance of disputes within the field of the humanities in a global context such as the current one. The question lies in being able to reveal and systematize the current meanings that academic culture in Argentina—always under construction—gives to social function and how this allows them to be assumed in its modes of producing knowledge.

From a critical perspective, in “The Social Function of Philosophy,” Horkheimer (1974) had already analyzed the position of philosophy—based on the reformulations proposed by the Frankfurt School—through a discussion of the very notion of validating scientific knowledge from a positivist point of view. Thus, he posits a critical utility of the humanities as a negative force, based on an ontological-epistemological reflection on their place in society. The author highlights the value of the function of enlightenment, understood as rejecting scientific truths, social lifestyles, or established cultural habits as natural tendencies that must be uncritically accepted; this is the nature of critical thinking. Hence, “the critical function of philosophy is pedagogical in the task of guiding men in the perception that social conditions are not natural, fixed, or eternal, and in the persistence of the improvement of the social totality” (Horkheimer, 1974, p. 285). In this case, usefulness responds to the social function of science, but only in a far from positive way; on the contrary, it develops in terms of the social domination necessary to maintain the capitalist system (Di Bello, 2010). However, the different notions of the social utility of knowledge often lie in the tension between generating purely applied and purely basic knowledge that does not take into account how each era and context conceives of the social function of science. Sarewitz (2016) had already pointed out as a problem the granting of science a free pass to decide what “progress” is without reference to the real world; thus, thinking about research from a neutral position of pure academic “freedom” (Derrida, 2002) and

associated with the decisions of “scientists” in solitude (the Mertonian *ethos*) turns scientific knowledge into knowledge for an elite. In the case of the humanities, this issue becomes even more complex insofar as it is possible to see positions that clash between an unrestricted defense of knowledge production for its own sake and others that contribute to the conception of thinking about utility and/or intervention in reality, but from other perspectives that do not eliminate its epistemological specificity or its critical function and from a constructivist perspective of scientific knowledge (Alonso, 2021). Similarly, according to Carli (2018), both the debates on the end of the humanities, linked to the defunding of university programs and their curricular displacement in favor of other areas of knowledge, and those on the relevance or irrelevance of the humanities, place different disciplines before the challenge of arguing about the value of their collections, objects, and languages and of proposing new incursions and contributions and, above all, new questions.

The positions that uphold the intrinsic value of the humanities in terms of individual spiritual or aesthetic enrichment (the hedonistic view of knowledge) are well known (Vasen, 2012). Other perspectives present a vision that can be approached from multiple angles and propose rethinking the role of the humanities in an attempt to disassociate them from the sole function of theoretical production of knowledge for knowledge's sake, suggesting instead that the disciplines are as proactive in the debate on science as a factor and instrument of social change. In this way, thinking about the meanings of intervention and social contribution of the humanities and their relationship to the concept of utility in debates about the social function of science continues to emerge as a possible issue.

Within this broad framework, this article aims to contribute to the construction of the concept of intervention and its multiple meanings. The concept of knowledge intervention proposed in this article is linked to an analytical perspective known as knowledge mobilization. This category (Naidorf and Alonso, 2018; Pérez Mora and Inguanzo Arias, 2018) involves a series of strategies, processes, and actions that are identified in the daily work of scientists, as well as a series of recommendations that imply its normative nature aimed at addressing the processes of linking knowledge producers and users (Bennet and Bennet, 2007; Levesque, 2009; Nutley et al., 2007; Qi and Levin, 2011). For its part, the

concept of intervention has generally been associated with forms applicable to the field of social sciences and public policies that are deployed to promote specific social changes. In the case of anthropology and cultural studies, Restrepo (2012), from Colombia, understands the concept of intervention as a praxis theoretically oriented towards transformation. This can operate on different levels: the interruption of certain concrete links between common sense and collective imaginaries; interventions as actions derived from concrete research and contextually based theoretical inputs to achieve structural transformations. Restrepo (2012) develops a critique of the forms of knowledge production in the humanities, mainly around what he considers to be the confinement of researchers following the productivist logic and academic bureaucracy imposed in universities; but on the other hand, he also highlights an anti-academic and anti-theoretical logic that celebrates an “epistemic relativism that all knowledge is equally valid in terms of intervention in power diagrams” (Restrepo, 2012, p. 167).

We therefore propose to analyze the forms of intervention in society that researchers in the humanities construct, which begin by questioning the classical model of knowledge production. This intervention (analyzed as interaction, openness, dialogue, etc.) does not refer, therefore, only to technology transfer or university-business links, but rather it is necessary to visualize the diversity of actions that universities carry out with their environments, in many cases aimed at solving social problems under other modalities (Alonso et al., 2023). Likewise, this concept allows us to investigate social issues in such a way that its interpretative method not only inquires into human issues, but also allows us to denounce and collaborate in the repair of situations of injustice; this reveals the contingent nature of cultural discourses and the possibility of modifying them: there is a persistent desire to intervene in socio-political reality (Deleuze and Guattari, 2001).

In summary, the concept refers to a materialization of knowledge that results in concrete knowledge production, but at the same time—and this is where its novelty lies—it aims to be approached from the epistemological complexity of knowledge production in the humanities that takes place in academic spaces. To this end, the article proposes to operationalize the concept of intervention from the multiple meanings that humanities

researchers give it through their own practices. This involves systematizing the strategies, processes, and actions that are identified in the daily work of scientists, aimed at addressing the multiple forms of connection between scientific knowledge and society.

METHODOLOGY

The proposed methodology is primarily qualitative, as it allows for the description of the complex conceptual structures underlying the practices, ideas, and beliefs of the actors under investigation, in this case, for research in the humanities. Thus, the first step was to frame and systematize the theoretical production that serves as the basis for the analysis. The bibliographic review and systematization will be useful, following Hernández Sampieri et al. (2010), to detect key concepts, enrich the work with new conceptualizations, and delve deeper into previous approaches to the problem. To investigate these meanings, an intentional sample of 43 researchers—the units of analysis—in the humanities belonging to different institutes and/or research spaces belonging to universities in Argentina was constructed. The units of analysis were identified using the snowball technique (Sautu, 2009). Forty-three in-depth interviews were conducted using a thematic guide in virtual and face-to-face formats during the period 2022-2024; these were recorded and then analyzed. The sample was intentional, non-probabilistic, and contains parity with respect to academic age and gender. Informed consent was obtained from the researchers who participated in the research, with the prior approval of the ethics committee of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Buenos Aires (a requirement for all doctoral projects, including this article).

The empirical groundwork sought to problematize conceptual tensions on two levels: how humanities researchers understand and make sense of intervention as part of a collective, and what aspects of their daily practices they identify as intervention. This technique allows the interviewee to develop their arguments and the interviewer to maintain a certain ability to guide the interviewee, so that the interview is not lacking in structure and the conversation is directed towards issues that are not fundamental to the research problem to be solved. The data was then analyzed using content analysis techniques, guiding the study

with a grounded interpretation based on the data. The data were collected based on the definition of a theoretical sample, that is, at the same time, representative of the study problem. In this way, the responses that emerged from reflection and systematization on their own knowledge production were evaluated in relation to the concept of mobilization and intervention, and contribution to society.

RESULTS

In previous works, resulting from the empirical work mentioned at the beginning of the article (Napoli, 2025; Napoli and Cuschnir, 2025; Napoli and Patitucci, 2026) three emerging themes have been systematized that synthesize the specificity of humanistic thinking arising from the meanings given by the interviewees themselves. First, the interpretive, reflective, and comprehensive nature that operates on one's own thinking, actions, and experiences of other subjects and their discourses (Napoli, 2025) has been pointed out as epistemological and methodological ways of producing knowledge. It has been developed how the debate, due to its scientific nature, leads to a certain struggle for its legitimacy, based on the need for certain convergent articulations between ontological, epistemological, and methodological discussions (Alonso, 2021; Alonso et al., 2023). Today, there is still an oscillation between naming and conceiving them as sciences or even as knowledge. On the other hand, their imaginative and prospective nature, insofar as they venture into the speculative and creative realm (García Canclini, 2019), is stated as necessary and closely linked to their mediating character and their temporality, which differs from that of other sciences. From this perspective, the humanities are proposed as lenses or perspectives no longer of purely empirical observation, but as ways of approaching and interpreting. Another noteworthy point is the denaturalizing nature of the established order, which generates concrete effects based on the composition of critical thinking that constructs values while dismantling sedimentary meanings. In this way, a function is established for thinking about the discourses of others, including other sciences and institutions, as ways of questioning existing logics.

These characteristics also raise questions about their relationship with the current positivist model of knowledge production, which often clashes with the proposed characteristics. The interviews conducted highlighted other emerging issues, such as the positive view of the importance of peer review as a way of legitimizing standardized scientific work production; but associated with a mission of survival in the system, assuming that scientific productivity in terms of article publications is the most widespread model on which the dynamics of science are organized. It should be noted, then, that on the one hand, there is a persistent generalized and negative view of the production and evaluation parameters associated with the commodification of academic production; but, at the same time, they point out that this provides certain common rules and criteria in terms of entry and permanence in the research career that has been successful in occupying the current spaces. This widely criticized format of research paperization emerges as a central topic in contrast to the essay genre (and the book format) as exploratory, speculative, and less predictable ways of presenting “objective and neutral” results. Here points out a key point of discussion, in that they have also highlighted the lack of methodological reflection that would give a rigorous or scientific meaning to the production of knowledge in the humanities, highlighting an unresolved issue.

As a final key emerging theme, the conception of the humanities outlined above includes a function that challenges the function of instrumentality in terms of purely economic profitability and produces forms of “distinctive knowledge” marked by the currents of other epistemologies and methodologies. The vision of research that must preserve other contributions that are not immediately apparent to humanity (Contreras and Goity, 2019) exposes, in that very gesture, a political view of human beings that society itself demands in its constitution as such. The importance of confronting the commercial logic of reproducing “imposed” agendas oriented toward profitability, which undermine not only academic freedom but also the interpretive nature of research itself, has also been pointed out. However, the marked need to achieve greater professionalization in these fields is also considered, which would provide a certain “strength” to drive changes in their dialogues with the state and contribute to a scientific policy determined outside the logic of “self-marginalization” (Vasen, 2012). Although the concepts that have emerged since the first

decade of the 21st century indicate progress in terms of evaluation criteria (and, therefore, institutional recognition and the formation of value and legitimacy), predominantly quantitative guidelines still leave humanistic studies in a marginal position and/or question their specificity (Ramallo, 2022). From this perspective, the debate on research practices is enabled from a defense of disciplinary specificity as a way of sustaining the production of critical and emancipatory knowledge that takes on multiple meanings in each context and era analyzed.

On current forms of knowledge intervention in the humanities from the perspective of researchers

As noted, intervention as a concept allows for the convergence of the multiple meanings of mobilized knowledge. For the humanities, it is clear that these meanings do not necessarily result in direct or immediate actions of appropriation; however, their reflective, imaginative, and denaturalizing nature implies laying the foundations for knowledge in constant dialogue with the reality it addresses. With these assumptions, researchers in the humanities pointed out different meanings associated with thinking about these forms of intervention, which are systematized below.

Symbolic-cultural intervention as a potential or possibility

Firstly, they point out that the concept of contribution and intervention (hereinafter referred to as intervention) constitutes a possibility for their research task. At the same time, they emphasize that the ways of demonstrating the uses and effects of their practices are not easily identifiable or measurable:

"What is important is the potential of a practice to generate something. Generating something does not imply a transformation that leads to a radical social revolution of the conditions of existence, but rather generates the power of a possibility different from existing living conditions" (INTERVIEW INV. 15).

“The humanities produce because of the possibility of intervening; so that it may be useful to someone someday” (INTERVIEW INV. 10).

In this sense, the concept of intervention is understood through the possibility that the generation of disruptive and dialogical thinking allows us to question the reality in which all scientific practice is embedded. It is not presented in terms of direct and structural modification of society: it is investigated for the possibility of intervention. Reflexivity, the ability to form opinions and common sense based on the development of *expertise*, is the meaning that emerges most strongly in the interviews, in line with the less immediate forms of circulation and, therefore, with a diffuse nature of measurement of their effects. Some research has the function of “illuminating” key aspects of the problems faced by decision-makers through concepts or new approaches, without offering obvious tools for intervention. The concept, then, is constructed as a category in suspense whose meanings are encompassed under the idea of *symbolic-cultural intervention* as a possibility or potential; this concept is established as the guiding principle of the disciplines, taking the meanings proposed by the majority of researchers and associated with the epistemological-political nature of knowledge production. This potential social value may or may not be used directly by social audiences (P. Benneworth, 2015) and is therefore connected to the imaginary of the usefulness of scientific knowledge and, more strictly, "to the association between scientific knowledge production and the fulfillment of an explicit social function that assumes that research practice has the capacity to improve people's social living conditions; at this level, no explicit reference is made to the effects of knowledge use but rather to its transformative potential" (Alonso et al., 2023, p. 10):

“The intervention is symbolic and cultural. We are constantly developing and reworking how to build a national tradition that consists of concepts that are fully operational for a society” (INTERVIEW INV.1).

“I believe that we have, even if it is small, that function of public intervention. My team and I go out to show history in every setting we can; we show ourselves in the library, in demonstrations. So, it's like taking the structures to the streets, with our bodies, our faces, our hands, with everything” (INTERVIEW INV. 39).

“Intervention in the transformation of mentalities, which are the most difficult things to change” (INTERVIEW INV. 4).

“The exercise of imagination is a sine qua non condition for action. It is not true that action comes first and imagination second; imagination is a nutrient for action. But the humanities do not put you in touch with heaven, in the Platonic style, but rather work with what is there, with that source of desire” (INTERVIEW INV. 5).

However, this form of symbolic intervention, which cuts across all disciplines, is described as one that is linked to reality and challenges it through different forms of articulation. In this way, the interviews reveal the concrete forms that these possibilities for intervention offer, based on the need to articulate these mediations. Thus, the researchers propose to bring together the ways of concretizing the intervention directly through different actions. In this sense, the legitimacy of the humanities is constructed beyond the defense of their epistemological-political character; the capacity for intervention is inferred as potentially useful and is constructed in the links and articulations that they describe. This “reality” in which the sediments of meaning, reflections, and the creation of concepts operate produces effects of denaturalization, creation, and dislocation of common sense that circulate implicitly. However, researchers point to the need to articulate this function inherent to the humanities with institutional forms or modes that allow for concrete intervention with different types of actors in society, even when their effects are not fully measurable. Thus, a table is presented that systematizes the forms of intervention of the humanities, based on the interviews conducted, understood as material practices of intervention:

Table 1
Characteristics of Intervention in Humanities Research

Symbolic-cultural intervention as power or possibility

Forms of Articulation	of Undergraduate and – graduate teaching	Actions for dissemination, outreach, and	Outreach	and Academic	and scientific
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Material Intervention Practices	practice	communication	transfer actions	activities
Features	<i>Transmitting expert knowledge as a form of commitment to the University. Expert knowledge is proposed for the training of potential researchers.</i>	<i>Making knowledge visible as a way of participating in public debate. Expert knowledge can be understood by a wider audience.</i>	<i>Institutionalize activities that are preliminary and/or required to address a specific social need. Forms of engagement with the environment (identified civil society institutions). Weak links with public policies.</i>	<i>Generate opportunities for dialogue with national and international peers to enrich our own knowledge production. Ways of remaining in the scientific system.</i>

Forms of articulation: material intervention practices in the humanities

i) Teaching Practice

This form of articulation is recognized by researchers whose main motivation is to disseminate and transmit the knowledge produced in their research. Although this way of linking knowledge is considered one of the historical missions of the university as an institution, the interviewees maintain that the training process allows critical thinking in the humanities to take root and, at the same time, constitutes a form of research that provides feedback on the training itself. It is described as a fundamental element of the humanities (unlike other sciences) that drives the production of valuable knowledge in terms of the production and reproduction of concepts and theory. At this point, it is important to note that these teaching activities are limited to the academic world of the university: for undergraduate and graduate students; they do not include teaching methods or devices that are intertwined with other non-traditional forms aimed at other audiences and non-academic spaces. However, it should be noted that university teaching practice is the seed that allows this content to be taught in other formats.

University teaching practice, then, stands as a cross-cutting and essential activity; the proposed form of articulation involves transmitting, imparting, and creating knowledge embodied in future graduates and potential researchers. Teaching, then, is defined as the clearest form of intervention for the interviewees, related to the “first dimension of third mission activities, which is the training of professionals” (Alonso et al., 2023, p. 97):

“My territorial work is to be in the university office. My territory today is the degree, which professionalization pushes me towards” (INTERVIEW INV. 29)

“Teaching, for example, which is not counted as production and which I think would count for a lot, is a very clear and direct way of reaching the community” (INTERVIEW INV. 6)

“Teaching is pedagogical dissemination, but at the higher level, pedagogy and didactics are invisible, as if they did not exist, from an elitist teacher’s perspective. We also teach it as scientific dissemination, because one researches to teach. It is not the same thing” (INTERVIEW INV. 35).

The above, then, exemplifies teaching practice in terms of the transmission or dissemination of thought that articulates symbolic and cultural intervention through the delivery of classes; it is presented as a way of reaching a large audience in training who wish to formalize their learning. In this sense, this conception is also primarily associated with the approach to social commitment implied by university teaching (P. S. Benneworth, 2009).

ii) Dissemination, Outreach, and Communication Actions

Actions that engage a general, non-academic audience can be grouped under dissemination, outreach, and public communication of research activities. Although they are conceptualized as distinct approaches in the existing literature, for this instance, they function at the same level of articulation based on the circulation of these activities in spaces of intervention in public debate. On the one hand, these actions are mainly associated with venturing into the media, mass communication (today, it is essential to

mention the internet, its reach, and the use of social networks), or teaching spaces that differ from traditional ones.

"I never say no to a radio interview or a newspaper interview, and if there are activities where I can communicate the results of my research, I do so, because I think it is beneficial both in the school environment and in general social reflection" (INTERVIEW INV.1).

"I have been working in outreach for many years, on radio stations. I worked for two years as a radio columnist and co-producer of a radio program, but since it was unpaid work, I couldn't keep it up. I have also been invited several times to university radio programs and TV shows to talk about science fiction" (INTERVIEW INV. 18).

"I felt that there were many ways to articulate knowledge with productions that did not necessarily fit into academic papers, and that allowed me to use an essayistic tone, with some reflections on everyday life, some humor, and some attractive texts for a more general reader, not thinking about explaining or transmitting knowledge, but rather playing with ideas. "(INTERVIEW INV. 10).

At this point, it is clear that, in terms of the origin of the activities, they are carried out on topics of *expertise* based on a call for proposals that, according to the interviews, almost always stems from an external "request" or on a topic of social interest that is consulted so that experts can contribute their views. On the other hand, but to a lesser extent, proposals stand out that originate from an incipient commitment by the universities or institutes themselves, based on a mutual relationship to address certain agendas or topics of interest. It is interesting to consider how interest in a relevant agenda or knowledge is managed as a non-linear process that involves the intervention or involvement of scientists to impose or take up topics that enrich social debate:

In my case, it was through a student who invited me to an interview for a radio program. I gave a presentation and realized that I couldn't be unstructured and needed to work on it, and that's where my research came in handy. What's

interesting is that this year is the third year of the format, which is a column where I read and interpret songs, and listeners send in questions, and that's where a live exchange began, now 40 minutes of interaction. Now podcasts have been created on Spotify, and it has become educational material as a trigger for class topics" (INTERVIEW INV. 27).

"I also do podcasts and television appearances. I don't refuse because that's what we're here for, to be called upon to discuss an issue" (INTERVIEW INV. 10).

"Sometimes the best strategies for visibility are unplanned. No one can fail to feel challenged by environmental problems. Now, there will be researchers who genuinely commit to this cause and others who decide otherwise, and we must also give them space. We don't all have to do the same thing" (INTERVIEW INV. 18).

On the one hand, then, there is the idea that an expert "must" be called upon to debate and engage in public debate, as if it were just another mission, in tension with the idea that participation in these spaces is not "mandatory" and that not all researchers should play this role. Therefore, a function is foreshadowed that recognizes the importance of participating in areas of social reflection, even if these are not sufficiently recognized or remunerated, based on a commitment or responsibility to promote other ways of circulating knowledge. Therefore, it is noteworthy that these practices are developed in different spaces that are not strictly academic, which allows for expanding the reach of interlocutors by opening up possibilities for intervention in the media or the creation of digital content as a first option.

On the other hand, the humanities are also presented in their specificity as cross-disciplinary knowledge that is called upon to address topics of discussion, but no longer as training for future experts, but rather as forms of general knowledge for non-specialized audiences. In this sense, they highlight that these interventions, in their capacity as invited experts, allowed them to amplify the reach of their research results in terms of knowledge appropriation for other types of audiences. The most notable dissemination and communication products are: dialogues with local media, participation in radio and television programs, production of specialized podcasts, participation in magazines with

other non-traditional formats, creation of audiovisual content, and workshops or knowledge transfer activities for non-expert audiences.

iii) Outreach and transfer actions

The concept of transfer is controversial and murky; it did not arise from thinking about these practices in the humanities and social sciences, so its appropriation continues to be disputed, as is the case with “social transfer” (Llomovatte et al., 2017). The most traditional view focuses on the perspective of a scientific producer who connects with the “external” non-scientific environment to transfer knowledge (Estébanez and Korsunsky, 2003). Similarly, the idea of university outreach inherited from the Córdoba Reform of 1918 assumes the principle of social justice linked to the Latin American experience as a social mission not identified with the economic model, but rather with community projects of a welfare nature. Although the two concepts are not interchangeable, in the words of the researchers, they operate within the same sphere in that they allow for the consideration of institutionalized and accredited activities in their links with spaces outside the academic sphere. Both activities channel motivations related to a “militant and committed” exercise, but in many cases, they allow them to be combined with their research projects as academic enrichment. In this way, it is also possible to propose lines or approaches to research that challenge the linearity of the knowledge production process. The objective is no longer to transmit or communicate knowledge in terms of social debate, but rather through contact with certain local communities to address a specific problem or issue to which they can contribute.

Outreach activities are described as follows:

“I worked for many years teaching in prison. I would never have entered that world if it hadn't been for the University's mediation. I had given up my political activism and found my place in that outreach work. I see it as an integral part of my university teaching work.” (INTERVIEW INV. 9).

“All civil organizations, for example, products that are intended for NGOs, development associations, unions, magazines that do not have a strictly academic scope, that is, leaving the mainstream logic to enter into concrete links with society” (INTERVIEW INV. 29).

“What I always do in my subject is to propose outreach work, that is, to ensure that what we do is disseminated in some way. In 2018, we tried to circulate classic texts from a sophisticated perspective, and we came up with the idea of putting together a book that would be published. I took the Greek texts and the translation and language problems out of the academic sphere” (INTERVIEW INV. 20).

“I work a lot with the teachers' union: I worked on some issues in the press and union magazines, and another very interesting project with them when they asked us to give a diploma course for early childhood teachers and propose a seminar on the history of early childhood education in the province” (INTERVIEW INV. 30).

With the exception of teaching, these activities are in addition to others that researchers identify as a diffuse area of knowledge production that allows for the accreditation of non-traditional academic-university practices. In most of the interventions, specific experiences are highlighted based on personal motivations and interests that guide their implementation. On the other hand, the excerpts cited highlight the need to establish close links to connect these activities with an institution that acts as a mediator. University mediation, then, is central to institutionalizing the proposals, and there is evidence of a deep interest in them. Unlike outreach and communication activities that circulate through channels that are, in most cases, undefined, these practices require formalization of links. This can be explained by the historical mission of Latin American universities in their outreach practices as promoters of these activities, which has given them a more formal path. However, according to the researchers' view, despite being an established practice, when referring to the material conditions of reproduction in the field, these types of activities do not appear to be sufficiently valued. They are based on personal motivation to bring together certain pre-existing extra-academic links with social organizations, trade unions, or party activism spaces that put researchers in contact with specific needs in society. Another idea that

emerges is that the conceptualization of extension comes after the activity has been formulated. First, the problem is identified on the basis of a previous encounter or knowledge of the problem, and then a systematization and institutionalization of the work already begun (either through spaces of activism or previous research) is proposed. Although institutionalization is not always effective, in many cases it results in productions or products that differ from the typical *paper* format or even the academic book, which are the most obvious media, and allows for forays into other unforeseen spaces. This extensionist approach can be related to the style of engagement (Cuschnir, 2021) oriented towards social commitment, which explicitly seeks solutions to problems caused by inequality, poverty, and environmental conflicts, and is oriented towards the common good of the collective (students, teachers, inhabitants of a given region, dissident populations).

In summary, then, it should be noted that outreach activities are referenced in their intersections with forms of *community engagement* (P. S. Benneworth, 2009), insofar as the Latin American function of the university is recovered in direct relation to activities that enable social sectors or “partners” (if they have prior links) to achieve their objectives. Likewise, this knowledge of “social partners” enriches the process of critical knowledge production that researchers highlight. In this sense, then, we mention the implementation of workshops, training sessions, exhibitions, consulting, training programs, productions for schools, and teaching, among others.

Regarding transfer activities, the following experiences and conceptualizations arise:

“Transfer lines not only respond to social demands but also to the demands of capitalism, and that's where the market comes in. I think that sometimes they are like a kind of big umbrella under which a lot of things are hidden” (INTERVIEW INV. 9).

“Advice in different areas. For example, we did a study for the Ombudsman's Office of the City of Buenos Aires on access to health services in the City of Buenos Aires. An anthropology team was formed to address this problem, and this was taken as input by the Ombudsman's Office” (INTERVIEW INV. 34).

“What does it mean to connect with society? Through social media? Instilling scientific knowledge through a TikTok video? What is social transfer? There is one that is very clear, let's say it is the possibility of serving as input, a public policy, and that this then has an effect on society, so the transfer is not direct. Let's say, if not through the configuration of policies” (INTERVIEW INV. 2).

“Why are the humanities not called upon to participate in public policy? Because we have not been clear enough, I have not been able to explain what our role is, what kind of practices we have, and why we are the treasure of humanity. In a world tied to urgencies, we have no place there; it is a work of interpretation that cannot be mechanized” (INTERVIEW INV. 5).

Firstly, the concept of transfer is not widely associated with the humanities, nor is it defined by researchers. Its content continues to be largely linked to the notion of links with business (Naidorf, 2005) and the aim of producing products for the market. There are a few formalized experiences, but they mainly occur through links between universities and government agencies, with which this type of action is carried out. The aforementioned consultancies, agreements, or participations arise from a specific interest of the state (provincial or national or from various institutions), that is, from a political decision to connect or link with a reference point on a topic considered strategic. The result of the transfer is seen mainly as an input for thinking about and developing public policies. In this sense, the interviewees specifically relate the idea of transfer to the formation or possibility of implementing public policies, but they perceive it as the weak point of the humanities in the double game mentioned above. on the one hand, processes of self-marginalization do not allow for the legitimization of the potential for intervention that would enable concrete uses through the postulation of certain productive uses that are not necessarily commercial; and, on the other hand, it is the state that also fails to envision these potentials from the epistemological specificities of the humanities.

iv) Academic-scientific activities

In this regard, the central space in which they operate is closely related to the academic community, as it is their peers with whom they engage in dialogue between experts, which is considered necessary. This also strengthens the critical capacity of researchers and motivates them to continue thinking about their own work. In this sense, the best known are the presentation and publication of articles and papers that are debated in spaces mainly associated with universities/institutes for the purpose of academic circulation. It is also related to the description of the previous dimension on the prevailing forms of scientific production that weigh on scientific practice and the place given to these instances as ways of achieving prestige and scientific validity:

“I am interested in communicating with specialists in work-related topics and circulating more specific research that may not be the most suitable for exchange. There are also many very interesting exchanges there” (INTERVIEW INV. 10).

In addition to this, researchers point out another interesting point. Although these spaces produce valuable and necessary exchanges, the idea of survival that also underlies the implementation of these practices often reproduces knowledge in closed and endogamous spaces, restricting its scope and calling into question its real contributions as a rather stagnant practice:

“What ends up happening is that we get together among ourselves. I've been reading texts by Latin American Critical Theory feminists, but if you connect with those same people and participate in those conferences, and then you go outside, you open up and find something else” (INTERVIEW INV. 28).

These instances, then, are conceived by researchers as the least representative activities for the circulation of knowledge; they constitute activities that allow for a deep-rooted connection to the current scientific-academic system and tend to reproduce, in many cases, an automated language that does not enable the discussion of new knowledge. However, it is interesting to note that researchers point out that instances such as conferences, workshops, or roundtable discussions differ from other interventions whose objectives do

not involve “an exposition or explanation” but rather a position of critical debate that circulates in its opposition, difference, or proximity to the ideas of other colleagues. At this point, it is worth considering how the university is understood or conceived today from a perspective that views it as a space for the circulation of disruptive knowledge that revisits topics of social interest and presents other methodologies for discussion.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Academic production—and academic practice—does not occur in isolation, but is situated within a socio-historical context. In order to define it socio-historically, the complex relationship between science and society and the nuances it takes on in the humanities have been critically reviewed. The institutionalization of science in the modern era was made possible by its ability to offer practical solutions to specific problems in specific contexts; changes in the ways societies have progressed through history have modified, reconfigured, redefined, refined, and created new forms of organization for research institutions, which were not exempt from these changes.

The most significant change in the mid-20th century was the need to organize academic practice under the gaze of the state, giving rise to science policy. Through science policy—public and state—resources (*inputs*) are made available to science, and science is expected to deliver results (*outputs* and *outcomes*). In contexts of scarce resources, it is always necessary to be able to prioritize not only who to grant resources to, but also to evaluate their results. An initial issue characterized this process of professionalization of science: equating all disciplines and fields of knowledge under the idea of “science.” This science-society relationship, in terms of *inputs* and *outputs*, galvanized a mode of knowledge production in which considerations about the function and usefulness of knowledge were relegated or simply reconfigured into new indicators to measure its scope. The linear model of innovation that governs the possible contributions of science to society continues to be present in the fields of science and technology management. The implementation of these governance mechanisms has always been the responsibility of scientists themselves: the autonomy of scientific practice is one of its most salient features. Of course, the scientific

community is not exempt from struggles, but the Mertonian scientific *ethos* proved to be more normative than explanatory-descriptive.

In this sense, the scientific field is a field of tension, with relationships of domination in which there is competition for a special symbolic capital: scientific authority. Like any process of struggle, it produces winners and losers. By the mid-20th century, the dominant position of disciplines such as physics, chemistry, and biology over the social sciences and humanities was already consolidated under the precept of greater objectivity, which allowed them to accumulate authority within the scientific field. However, mechanisms were established in the hegemonic mode of knowledge production to measure and evaluate scientific practice: this is nothing more than a hierarchy of *outputs*. This work is situated at the heart of this issue, exploring the nature of these *outputs* of the humanities. As a central contribution, the article develops two dimensions emerging from the empirical analysis based on its described epistemological specificity: how it is possible to problematize the intervention of the humanities and how this is socially constructed by the researchers of the humanities themselves.

The study showed that the scientific practices of researchers in the humanities and the meanings they attach to them allow us to understand how the nuances of knowledge transfer dynamics are often overlooked. In the specific case of the humanities, it is important to problematize the university-society link and not reduce it to the dimension of economic commercialization: if transfer and linkage are explicitly demanded of academics, other modalities of these dynamics should also be recognized beyond those that only concern technology transfer or university-business links (Alonso et al., 2023). In this sense, the humanities and the meanings of knowledge transfer are situated taking into account the ways of conceiving humanistic scientific knowledge with its epistemological specificities that cannot be translated in the same way as other sciences and that embody other meanings pointed out in the interviews as resistances of different types (academic values vs. business values; social, cultural, and scientific ends vs. profit). Therefore, the definition of transfer in the context of the debate on its social function is, at the very least, uncomfortable and imprecise for subsuming and “labeling” the contribution of the humanities to this category. Consequently, we choose to assume that forms of intervention, as another category, are

diverse and necessarily stem from their socio-historically constructed epistemological complexity. Today, these forms of intervention in public debate (producing critical, unique, and valuable knowledge) also involve producing knowledge based on creative formulations and problems that contribute to the great dialogues that traverse and are traversed by society, as well as insertion into new modes of knowledge production that link it to other fields and environments.

In this context, it is worth highlighting teaching practices in all their forms (workshops, classes, training sessions) undertaken by researchers as a means of recognizing others and as a way of transferring and generating critical thinking. In other words, it constitutes an activity whose *output* (the knowledge produced in terms of ideas) feeds back, circulates, and drives the realization of symbolic cultural intervention as a key factor. Consequently, this activity is constructed as a privileged form of resistance by humanities researchers against positivist modes of production through so-called “critical thinking,” understood as that which opposes logics that seek to reduce utility to purely economic returns. In turn, it is adopted as a practice that allows for the materialization of the senses of responsibility and social commitment that make it possible to undo certain stereotypes associated with the figure of the humanities intellectual “in their ivory tower.”

CONCLUSIONS

In closing, and as a contribution to the proposed field, it should be emphasized that without a scientific policy that promotes specific funding for the humanities and their promotion of scientific development in this key area, their work could not be carried out. This exposes a vision of research as one that must preserve other “non-immediate” contributions to humanity, and in that very gesture, it reflects a political view of the human being, which society itself demands in its constitution as such. In this sense, it is important to take a stand against the commercial logic of reproducing profit-oriented agendas that undermine not only academic freedom but also the very interpretive nature of the humanities. In this sense, the university, as a central space that houses humanistic research, stands as an

institution with a particular history and with objectives that traverse and institute the duty-to-be of the researcher and their academic cultures.

In closing, and in relation to the objective set out, the article discusses the creation of comprehensive categories such as socio-cultural intervention as a possibility, focusing on the need to articulate humanistic knowledge with forms of intervention, and therefore, concrete practices. The researchers persist in the complex relationship between science and society, as a vacant and little-explored topic even within their communities, but with the conviction and responsibility to formulate political programs that circulate in the university as a counter-hegemonic space to produce critical powers.

As future areas of work, the question still resonates as to whether the university is still a space for the circulation of ideas that question or discuss key issues affecting society, and what role researchers have in ensuring this. How to define them, how to grasp them, within the complex system in which research is embedded, continues to be an unresolved issue; Asking where the university continues to be a “beacon” of symbolic and cultural intervention, how academic cultures construct agendas (as opposed to the logic of uncritical importation of academic capitalism), and how these allow for the production of critical and situated knowledge seems to offer some clues for the pressing tasks of the present.

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