



**THE PROCESS OF EXPANSION AND INTERIORIZATION OF BRAZILIAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES AND
THEIR DEVELOPMENTS**

**O PROCESSO DE EXPANSÃO E INTERIORIZAÇÃO DAS UNIVERSIDADES FEDERAIS BRASILEIRAS E
SEUS DESDOBRAMENTOS**

**EL PROCESO DE EXPANSIÓN E INTERIORIZACIÓN DE LAS UNIVERSIDADES FEDERALES
BRASILEÑAS Y SUS DESARROLLOS**

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Abstract: The text analyzes the recent expansion of the network of Brazilian Federal Universities and indicates that this process, by strengthening the multicampus model, contributed to the democratization of access to public higher education and to regional development in several ways. It also demonstrates how this process promoted conditions for the universities to review its institutional models, favoring interdisciplinarity and academic dialogue with society. Contrary to the managerialist canon of university management, the performance of the new campuses refers to the discussion around the university as a public good, and its role in reducing social inequalities and promoting human development.

Keywords: Brazilian Universities. Expansion of higher education. REUNI.

Resumo: O texto analisa a recente expansão da rede de universidades federais brasileiras e indica que esse processo, ao fortalecer o modelo *multicampi*, contribuiu para a democratização do acesso ao ensino superior público e para o desenvolvimento regional em diversos sentidos, promovendo também condições para que a própria universidade reveja seus modelos institucionais, favorecendo a interdisciplinaridade e o diálogo do meio acadêmico com a sociedade. Em sentido contrário ao modelo gerencialista de gestão universitária, a atuação dos novos campi remete à discussão a respeito da universidade como bem público e do seu papel na redução das desigualdades sociais e na promoção do desenvolvimento humano.

Palavras-chave: Expansão do ensino superior. REUNI. Universidades Federais.

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Resumen: El texto analiza la reciente expansión de la red de las universidades federales brasileñas e indica que este proceso, al fortalecer el modelo multicampi, contribuyó a la democratización del acceso a la educación superior pública y al desarrollo regional de varias maneras, además de promover las condiciones para que la propia universidad revise sus modelos institucionales, promoviendo la interdisciplinariedad y el diálogo entre el mundo académico y la sociedad. Contrario al modelo de gestión empresarial de la universidad, el desempeño de los nuevos campus remite a la discusión sobre la universidad como un bien público, y su papel en la reducción de las desigualdades sociales y la promoción del desarrollo humano.

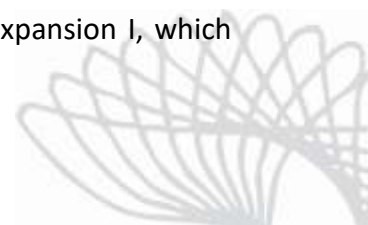
Palabras clave: Expansión de la educación superior. REUNI. Universidades Federales.

1 INTRODUCTION

Higher education has developed late in Brazil compared to other European colonies in Latin America. While at the end of the 17th century there were twelve universities in the Spanish colonies on the American continent, from Santo Domingo to Córdoba, the first Faculties of Medicine in Rio de Janeiro and Bahia were installed in Brazil only in the first half of the 19th century (TRINDADE, 2012). Since then, other institutions of Higher Education or Colleges were founded but were mostly isolated and disciplinarily focused, such as Schools of Agronomy, Nursing, Engineering, and Faculties of Law, Medicine, Pedagogy, among others, in several regions of the country. This process consolidated a model of higher education without universities (SEABRA SANTOS; ALMEIDA FILHO, 2012). The first universities were installed during the first decades of the twentieth century. by local initiatives in some states of the federation. The formal process of federalization of public universities only began in the 1940s.

From the first federal university campuses established in the 1950s and 1960s, there was a slow growth until the 1980s, when new campuses were created, especially in the North region. The 1990s were marked by a drastic reduction in investment in public universities and an exponential growth in the number of private higher education institutions (GONÇALVES, 2008; DUTRA, 2012; TRAINA-CHACON; CALDERÓN, 2015). From the early years of the twenty-first century, there was a new phase of growth of public higher education in all regions, increasing by more than double the number of university campuses in the country.

The main public policy responsible for this growth was the Federal Universities Restructuring and Expansion Program (REUNI), implemented by the Lula da Silva government (2003-2010) in 2007. There was also a first phase of expansion of federal higher education, called Expansion I, which



covered the years 2003 to 2007 (BARROS, 2015), and another phase of significant creation of new campuses, between the years 2011 to 2015, under the government of Dilma Rousseff. REUNI aimed to increase enrollment and also to expand the university network, especially with a view to reaching into the interior of the country, given that most federal universities were located in the capitals and in larger cities along the coast. According to data from the Ministry of Education, the process of interiorizing the campuses of Brazilian federal universities increased the number of municipalities served by public higher education from 114 in 2003 to 237 by the end of 2011, and resulted in an increase of approximately 70% of enrollments in the federal network (BRASIL, 2017).

The debate on the expansion of higher education in Brazil under the Lula and Dilma governments has focused on analyzing the number of institutions and enrollments in undergraduate courses in the public and private systems (MANCEBO, 2015; BARROS, 2015; TRAINA-CHACON; CALDERÓN, 2015). In this article, the process of interiorization of federal universities in the last decade is analyzed according to the real and potential impacts of the installation of new campuses in the contexts of public universities and Brazilian society. The study was based on bibliographic research, data obtained from the websites of federal universities and observation of cases, notably the expansion of the University of Brasilia, which started in 2006, concurrent with the implementation of REUNI.

2 METHODOLOGY

This article is based on documentary and exploratory research. The list of Brazilian federal universities was obtained from the Ministry of Education website, especially the one related to the Federal Universities Restructuring and Expansion Program (REUNI) and the website of the National Association of Directors of Federal Higher Education Institutions (Andifes).

Data on the number of campuses, host cities and the histories of each campus were obtained from the websites of each of the federal universities in the five Brazilian geopolitical regions: north, northeast, midwest, southeast and south. Since this is a study of the interiorization of federal universities, only the cases of academic units located in cities other than the main campus were considered as campuses. They were duly identified on the university's website through the terms campus or academic unit and containing a link to the same in a specific site or presenting images



and information from it. In fact, some campuses did not have their own websites, but were found via a reference on the university website through a small text presentation with photos. Other campuses had their own website, but contained only information on day-to-day management (enrollment, reports, etc.) without reference to the opening date or other aspects of the campus history. In such cases, an e-mail was sent requesting the opening date thereof. However, it was not possible to determine the opening date of 22 of those surveyed campuses.

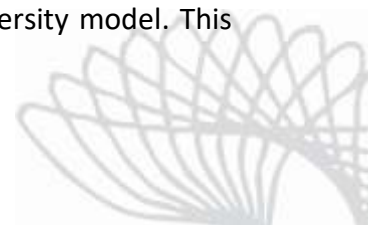
For the purposes of this study, the dates indicated for the creation of universities are generally the date of the decree that federalized them as universities. Thus, in some cases the date of existence of the institutions may be much older (around the first decades of the twentieth century) than the date when it achieved status as a federal university, which in many cases occurred from mergers between public or private institutions. The original dates were maintained only in the case of institutions that were created as a University and had not undergone mergers until now, but merely changed their nomenclature to a Federal University. These are the cases of the Rural University of Pernambuco, University of Rio de Janeiro, University of Bahia, University of Minas Gerais, among others.

The year 2005 was used to define the periods before and after the expansion policies of the federal universities under analysis.

3 FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES EXPANSION AND INTERIORIZATION PROCESS

A total of 267 campuses belonging to 63 universities were identified. The Southeast region had the largest number of universities and the Northeast the largest number of campuses. Universities had an average of five campuses, with no significant differences between regions, but with great variation between institutions (Table 1). Only nine universities had a single campus. The Federal Technological University of Paraná had the largest number of campuses, totaling thirteen.

The analysis of the periods before and after the expansion indicates that there was a significant growth in the number of federal universities, which increased by seventeen new institutions. However, the main impact on the interiorization of public higher education was the expressive increase in the number of campuses in all regions of the country (figure 1), revealing that the policy reached universities in order to induce the construction of a multicampus university model. This



model only previously existed in some of the country's federal universities (figure 2). The newly created universities also tended to adopt the multicampus model.

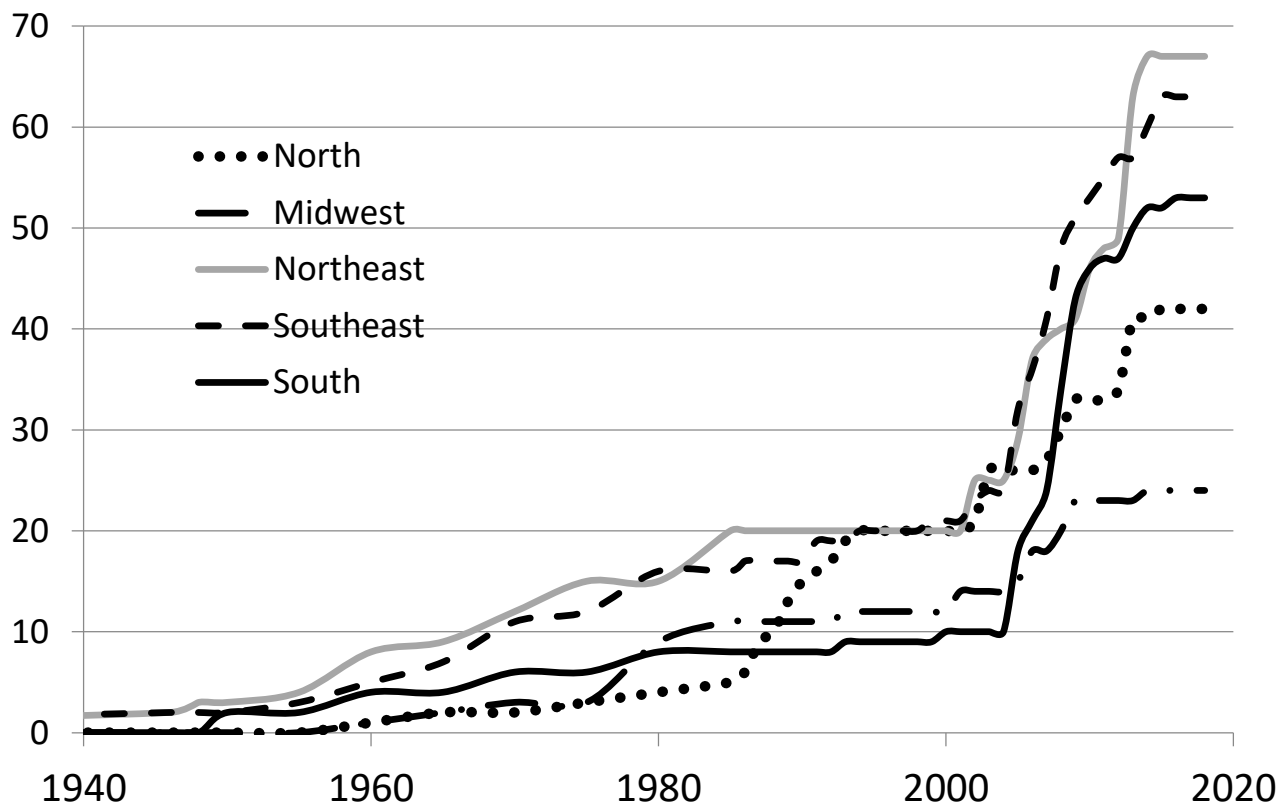


Figure 1 – Number of federal university campuses by region over the years.

Table 1 – Federal university campuses in the Brazilian regions.

Region	Number of Universities	Number of campuses	Average campuses per University	SD	Minimum campuses per University	Maximum campuses per University
North	10	50	5	3,4	1	12
Midwest	5	24	4,8	3,3	1	10
Northeast	18	75	4,2	1,9	1	9
Southeast	19	63	3,3	1,9	1	9
South	11	55	5	3,8	1	13



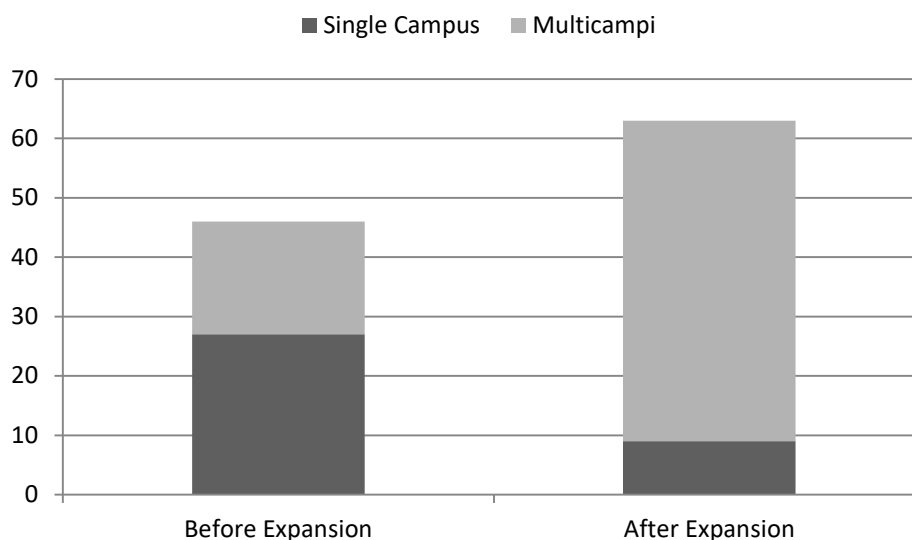
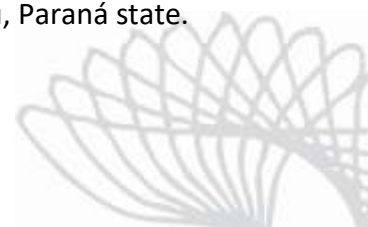


Figure 2 – Number of Federal Universities with single campus or multicampi before and after the expansion.

The expansion policies of the network of Brazilian federal universities contributed to the interiorization of campuses and their consequences for the democratization of access to public higher education through the following actions: (i) the creation of new universities designed from proposals of an organizational and academic structure; (ii) the creation of new universities conceived from the dismemberment of pre-existing university campuses; (iii) stimulating the creation of new campuses by pre-existing universities; (iv) making viable many campuses that came from previous and autonomous expansion processes of the universities, and could not develop fully as academic units due to the lack of resources and staff.

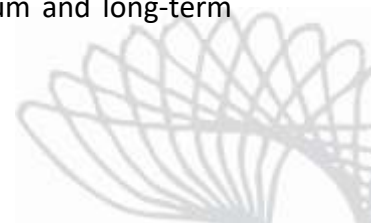
In the case of new universities, priority was given to regions not served by the federal network, such as the Federal University of the South of Bahia (UFESB), Federal University of the West of Bahia (UFOB), and the Federal University of Fronteira Sul (UFFS), Federal University of Pampa (UNIPAMPA) among others. There are cases in which pre-existing federal institutions established new universities, such as Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD) which was previously a campus of Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS), or the Federal University of the South and Southeast of Pará (UNIFESSPA), formerly part of the Federal University of Pará (UFPA). It is worth mentioning two strategic projects that placed higher education at the service of internationalization in important geopolitical contexts. These include the cases of the University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB), installed in the states of Ceará and Bahia, and the Federal University of Latin America Integration (UNILA), installed in Foz do Iguaçu, Paraná state.



In the case of new campuses, REUNI encouraged universities to modify their structure for a multicampus context. And in cases where the institution was already multicampus or had an expansion project, it was instrumental to make campuses initiated by universities on its own feasible, since, in many cases, they were inhibited by budgetary and personnel difficulties. Some campuses existed before REUNI in a very incipient way. For example, the campus of the Federal University of Goiás in Jataí was created in 1980 and operated until 2004 with 5 staff and 43 teachers. It was based on an agreement with the state of Goiás and the city hall of Jataí. Currently, 400 professors and 100 university staff support the activities developed on the campus which, in 2018, gave rise to the Federal University of Jataí (UFJ). The Planaltina campus was the first expansion of the University of Brasilia, inaugurated before REUNI in 2006. It was to be included in the program that enabled the budgetary conditions and necessary personnel to its effective implementation (BIZERRIL; LE GUERROUÉ, 2012). Another example is the campus of the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT) in Tocantinópolis, which was opened in 1990 by state decree as a UNITINS campus. It became part of UFT in 2003 with the formal creation of the university, thus avoiding the privatization advancing the institution. There is a clear importance of federalization to strengthen and add state and local initiatives for higher education ensuring their status as free public institutions.

4 THE IMPACT OF NEW CAMPUSES IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Several studies have evaluated the impacts of the expansion of public higher education in Brazil. The impact most recognized by society, and the one that gets most attention from researchers and the media, is the increase in enrollment for undergraduate courses (ROLIM; SERRA, 2009; BRITO, 2014). However, the situation can be analyzed by various other aspects such as from an economic point of view. A region that receives a university campus already benefits in the short term from the federal investment in the municipality. This investment funds the university's salaries and expenses with installation and maintenance, as well as by the increase in the student population from other regions that stimulates the local economy. In fact, when investing in universities, the federal government guarantees the execution of infrastructure projects of a substantial size that are carried out concurrently in various locations in the country. If the funds were transferred directly to universities then the investment could go to other projects. Another medium and long-term



economic effect is related to the impact on qualification and innovation in the local economy. This effect is generated by the university's graduates and the attention with which the local issues are taken up by research and extension projects at these universities.

Faveri et al. (2018) analyzed the economic impacts of Federal Institutes on the economies of Brazilian municipalities and found more significant impacts in smaller municipalities. However studies with this focus are also needed regarding to federal university campuses. University extension is recognized in the tradition of Latin American universities as one of its main pillars (MORA; SERRA; VIEIRA, 2017). Extension is called in both Europe and North America as the civic mission of the university, which is the task of getting involved with their communities, researching and producing solutions to significant local problems (CULUM, 2014). Inland campuses are more provoked in the sense of building extension actions more adjusted with the community interests and demands. This is due to their real proximity to local communities and the massive presence of their members inside the university. At the University of Brasília, in just a few years, the new campuses located on the outskirts of the capital became the academic units with the greatest number of extension actions in progress.

Other impacts that are more difficult to measure, but crucial for regional development, are linked to human development. The spread of a university culture adds values such as democracy, freedom, social responsibility, ethics, scientific and critical thinking. It also brings important contributions regionally in the political, social and cultural spheres. Although the entire Brazilian higher education system must act in order to meet this demand, several factors strengthen the idea that public universities, with emphasis on federal ones, are better equipped to fulfill this role. These factors are: ensuring that academic and administrative structures are diverse and democratic, supporting the continuance of professional qualification and internationalization; enabling conditions for conducting research and extension projects and; recognizing the history of autonomy and vocation of those institutions (LEHER, 2019; NÓVOA, 2019).

It is the university's intrinsic role to freely promote debate and critical analysis regarding everything related to science and society. This is the *modus operandi* of knowledge production and the formation of reflective people, which must be the primary reason the existence of these institutions. Over the past decades, several academics (RIBEIRO, 1986; SEABRA SANTOS; ALMEIDA FILHO, 2012; DIAS-SOBRINHO, 2016; CHAUI, 2018; NÓVOA, 2014, 2019; LEHER, 2019) have reiterated this characteristic of the university forged throughout of its millenary history, while rejecting the



minimalization of university activity to the mere formation of labor to serve the interests of the market or the State.

Studies have indicated that new campuses tend to receive a majority of their students from the region of influence of the campus. This increases the likelihood of positive impacts reported on reaching communities previously not covered by public higher education. It is evident that if the same financial and human resources investment were made in a concentrated manner on the central campuses of Federal Universities, the impact would be far from being the same, even if there was an increase in enrollment (BRITO, 2014). Student access and permanence to universities, regional economic impacts and a strong relationship with the local community in the cultural, social and political dimensions would not have reached the micro-regions without interiorization.

5 THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE EXPANSION FOR UNIVERSITIES

Several Portuguese-speaking authors who discuss the challenges of universities in this century (SANTOS; ALMEIDA FILHO, 2009; MELLO, 2011; SEABRA SANTOS; ALMEIDA-FILHO, 2012; NÓVOA, 2014; PEDROSA, 2014; DIAS-SOBRINHO, 2016, among others) have related several contemporary demands to universities, among which are: (i) scientific production with international recognition; (ii) production of significant knowledge; (iii) the ability to dialogue with different types of knowledge and sectors of society; (iv) technological transfer and influence in the productive sector and in economy; (v) qualified professional training; (vi) the formation of citizenship and leadership; (vii) renewal of public management; (viii) renewal of Higher Education and pedagogical practices; (ix) reduction of social inequalities; (x) social responsibility and involvement with local and national issues and; (xi) promoting sustainability. Finally, universities are increasingly expected to assume a central role in the process of moving society to higher levels of civilization.

The university's long history, conservatism and a growing individualistic and competitive culture have all been considered as causing resistance to the necessary changes in order for the university to leave the isolation of the Ivory Tower. A institution like this could be a guardian of scientific knowledge, but disconnected of the real world, could not seeks to meet these contemporary demands, approaching the needs of society (ĆULUM, 2014; CHAUÍ, 2018).



The possibility of creating new universities and campuses has promoted the conditions for the university community to strengthen its involvement with the university project as a public good and to advance its institutional and quality assessment models. The new campuses have favored interdisciplinarity, sustainability and the dialogue between academia and the reality of communities. This can be exemplified in several cases, such as the Federal University of ABC (TAVARES; GOMES, 2018), and others identified in the sites from universities as in the examples of the Federal University of Latin American Integration (UNILA) and the Litoral campus of the Federal University of Paraná:

“The institutional mission of UNILA is to train human resources capable of contributing towards Latin American integration, regional development and the cultural, scientific and educational in Latin America, especially in the Southern Common Market (Mercosul).”²

“UFPR Litoral's pedagogical proposal is based on projects and developed with local communities, seeking to contribute decisively to scientific, economic, ecological and cultural development. This provides a strong interaction between the UFPR Litoral and the coastal community to build a new regional development cycle.”³

The REUNI caused significant change in the profile of students by adding portions of the population previously underrepresented in public universities (NIEROTKA; TREVISOL, 2016; TAVARES; GOMES, 2018), such as indigenous, black, residents of the periphery, rural people, LGBTQIA+ and others. A majority of these students were the first generation of the family to obtain a higher education diploma. This phenomenon increased the sociocultural diversity of the university community. It brought new challenges previously ignored by institutions that, although public, in practice mostly served a restricted portion of the country's elite and middle class.

Dealing with this new reality means bringing the university to a place of strategic social relevance for the country. Most of the population does not place such importance to universities, and therefore tends to agree with government proposals to cut public universities budget or implement management models presented as innovative. But, in practice these proposals subject the university to market interests, a logic of competitiveness and privatization, which results in a narrow view of university work (LIMA, 2012; NÓVOA, 2019). In fact, the hegemonic standards of evaluation of higher education are almost entirely imposed by economically developed countries and less socially unequal than Brazil. They do not adequately consider the cultural and human and regional

² About UNILA. <https://portal.unila.edu.br/institucional>. Last accessed 04/06/2020.

³ Education by projects. <http://www.litoral.ufpr.br/portal/ufpr-litoral/projetos/>. Last accessed 04/06/2020.



development factors and are fixed in traditional science, expressed by indexed publications, and market interest values. The main international rankings focus their score on the university's reputation in academia or among employers, but do not consider the assessment that the local or regional communities make of the institution. They also consider the citations of scientific production by each professor, but they do not score development projects and extension actions that give the university relevance to society. Finally, the rankings take into account the ratio between the number of students and teachers as an indicator of quality of education, but do not evaluate the composition of the student population (i.e. ignore fairness, diversity and policies to support the retention of disadvantaged students as indicators of the university's commitment to combat social inequality). What these assessment tools make possible is to analyze and compare institutions from different indicators. However, there is a strong tendency to be linked to professional training by area of knowledge. Almost none of them consider the university in its entirety and its performance in the context of the challenges that contemporary higher education institutions face, especially in developing countries. As Nóvoa (2019), Santos and Almeida-Filho (2009) and Thiengo, Bianchetti and De Mare (2018) indicate the dangers of the spread of the World Class Universities (WCU) model for emerging countries and for the university institution in general:

Therefore, what the rankings have induced by spreading the WCU model and its “ideology of excellence” points to the deepening of inter and intra-institutional differentiation, as well as the strengthening of increasingly pragmatic and utilitarian concepts of university and science, conspiring or subverting the very historical concept of *universitas* (THIENGO; BIANCHETTI; DE MARE, 2018, p.1054).

6 CONCLUSION

The public university is an essential institution for society because, unlike a self-centered private organization, it has society as its reference (DIAS-SOBRINHO, 2016). Democratic management, combined with scientific and critical thinking and freedom of expression, gives universities an increasingly essential condition to act as a critical conscience of society and the State. This consciousness problematizes authoritarianism and an irrational common sense (SCHÜTZ; FUCHS; COSTA, 2020). That is why “governments with autocratic pretensions, fundamentalist churches, economic groups hostile to social development, particular corporate groups and conservative political forces in general have no appreciation for university autonomy” (LEHER, 2019, p.222).



The spread of this institutional profile across the country indicates the potential that new campuses of federal universities have to promote. If is not a considerable social revolution, it is at least a resistance to the growth of authoritarianism and attacks on science and reason. The expansion of access to higher education, changes in student profiles, an increase in the production of knowledge about facts and regions previously ignored by the academy has brought the university closer to society. This has renewed university culture and strengthened its vocation as a transformative agent in society and Brazilian reality.

On the other hand, the mere existence of the interiorized campus does not guarantee the full success of its role in local and regional development. Institutional diversity, political circumstances, university cultures, local contexts and human profiles should be the subject of future research that may expand the understanding regarding the expansion process of federal universities in Brazil.

Understanding federal universities as strategic institutions for both human and regional development is a pressing need for Brazilian society. In the case of campuses installed in the last decade, it is essential that future studies subsidize the creation of long-term support policies for maintaining and strengthening them in order to expand the potential benefits of these institutions for the country writ large.

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