



**STRATEGIES FOR THE  
INTERNATIONALIZATION OF  
POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN THE  
LEGAL AMAZON FROM THE PERSPECTIVE  
OF BOA VENTURA SANTOS**

**ESTRATÉGIAS DE INTERNACIONALIZAÇÃO DOS  
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## ESTRATÉGIAS DE INTERNACIONALIZAÇÃO DOS PROGRAMAS DE PÓS-GRADUAÇÃO DA AMAZÔNIA LEGAL SOB A ÓTICA DE BOA VENTURA SANTOS

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### ABSTRACT

Universities seek international recognition through restructuring to meet social, political, and economic demands. In peripheral regions like the Legal Amazon, these challenges are even more significant. This study analyzes the internationalization practices of Postgraduate Programs (PPG) in this region and their relation to Southern epistemology, as proposed by Sousa Santos (2016, 2019). The research is guided by analyzing the curricula of faculty members affiliated with internationally oriented PPGs in the Legal Amazon. Of the 448 programs in the region, only ten attained an international profile in the last evaluation by Capes. This highlights that programs not conforming to norms of Northern Global countries face limitations, affecting their functioning and development. This asymmetry underscores the disparity between internationally established PPGs and those transitioning. It was also found that the majority of analyzed PPGs have sought to propose solutions to the challenges of the Legal Amazon, mainly through strategic studies related to environmental issues and endemic regional biodiversity. This proves that internationally oriented PPGs have simultaneously engaged with both regional and global themes, aligning with the establishment of South-South cooperation.

**Keywords:** Regional Development. South-South Cooperation. Higher Education.

## RESUMO

As universidades buscam reconhecimento internacional através de reestruturações para atender às demandas sociais, políticas e econômicas. Em regiões periféricas, como a Amazônia Legal, esses desafios são ainda mais significativos. Este estudo analisa as práticas de internacionalização dos Programas de Pós-graduação (PPG) nesta região e sua relação com a epistemologia do Sul, conforme proposta por Sousa Santos (2016, 2019). A pesquisa orienta pela análise dos currículos dos docentes ligados aos PPG internacionalizados na Amazônia Legal. Dos 448 programas existentes na região, apenas dez alcançaram perfil internacional na última avaliação da Capes. Isso evidencia que os programas que não seguem as normas dos países do Norte Global enfrentam limitações, afetando seu funcionamento e desenvolvimento. Essa assimetria destaca a disparidade entre os PPG consolidados internacionalmente e aqueles em transição. Verificou-se, ainda, que a maioria dos PPG analisados tem buscado propor soluções aos desafios da Amazônia Legal, principalmente, por meio de estudos estratégicos relacionados as questões ambientais e da biodiversidade regional endêmica. Isto comprova que os PPG internacionalizados têm dialogado simultaneamente com temas regionais e globais, indo ao encontro do estabelecimento da cooperação Sul-Sul.

**Palavras-chave:** Desenvolvimento Regional. Cooperação Sul-Sul. Educação Superior.

## INTRODUCTION

When addressing the internationalization of higher education in the Brazilian context, one frequently encounters the equating of the terms globalization and internationalization, or the conception of internationalization as a natural consequence of globalization (Altbach, 2004). Despite their semantic distinctions, these concepts are intrinsically interconnected.

Heavily influenced by aspects of globalization, higher education is seen as a knowledge industry, essential for the globalized economy (Yonezawa, 2014). This theme has been debated since the 1990s, with analyses of the different ways in which the international dimension manifests itself in higher education. For now, this trend reflects the relevance of the subject (Jones; De Wit, 2012), but several questions remain open and debates are ongoing (Dal-Soto; Alves; Souza, 2016).

On a global scale, a significant disparity is observed between developed and developing countries, as well as between European and American higher education institutions—both of which have a well-recognized tradition in international academic mobility. Recently, emerging countries have begun to realize the benefits that the internationalization of research, teaching, and extension activities can bring to regional development (Dal-Soto; Alves; Souza, 2016).



In this context, academic mobility has become one of the main strategies to promote internationalization. It is the primary driving force behind the internationalization of Postgraduate Programs (PPG), in conjunction with international publications (Mattos, 2018). In the case of Brazil, due to the late establishment of its universities and the lack of articulation for internationalization, the country has become predominantly an exporter - Brazilian universities send their researchers abroad, but do not always succeed in attracting renowned researchers to visit Brazil (Tosta; Stallivieri; Tosta, 2016). Thus, it is evident that internationalization actions do not occur uniformly in all contexts, as it is a process that can be interpreted in different ways depending on the adopted perspective (Luce; Fagundes; Mediel, 2016).

Marrara and Rodrigues (2009), already in the 2000s, pointed out that internationalization policies were seen as tools for the training of teachers, students, and researchers, providing theoretical and practical experiences complementary to the education of postgraduate students, as well as promoting the development of education and science through collaboration with foreign partners.

A concrete example of support for internationalization policies in Brazilian higher education was the announcement of the Capes PrInt public notice in 2018. This notice aimed to select projects focused on the internationalization of higher education institutions that already had at least four PPGs recommended in Capes' latest evaluation. The PrInt notice proposed the implementation of actions over a four-year period, providing financial assistance for work missions abroad, resources for project maintenance, and the provision of scholarships for both Brazilian students abroad and foreign students in Brazil. This initiative sought to strengthen the international presence of Brazilian higher education institutions, promoting academic collaboration and exchange at a global level.

However, it is important to emphasize that the Capes PrInt did not support any institution from the Amazon region. The institutions selected and benefited by the Capes PrInt were, for the most part, those already consolidated and internationally recognized within the Brazilian academic scene. This reality highlights the need for additional efforts to promote the internationalization of higher education institutions located in the Amazon region, which face specific challenges in terms of resources, infrastructure, and international visibility. The inclusion of these institutions in programs and public notices supporting internationalization is fundamental to ensuring a broader and more diverse representation of Brazilian higher education in the global context. Although the most recent public notice specifically supporting



internationalization, dated 2018, represents a significant milestone in this process, it is important to note that several initiatives have been launched and implemented since then to strengthen this objective.

Given that inequalities exist among the PPGs across Brazilian regions - mainly regarding the promotion of internationalization practices - the aim is to understand the practices that have been developed to foster internationalization in the Postgraduate Programs of the Legal Amazon. In this sense, it is possible to reflect on new perspectives for South-South internationalization, considering the specificities of this region and not merely the dominant North-South approaches in the international geopolitical context.

Sousa Santos (2016) advocates for the need to give visibility to developing countries, countering the dominant Eurocentric logic and positioning them as universal references in their own right, each with its own particularities, as is the case with South-South cooperation. This cooperation refers to a collaborative approach among developing countries or peripheral regions, aimed at promoting solidarity and the exchange of knowledge and resources. It is a way to strengthen relations between countries of the Global South, overcoming the traditional dependency on countries of the Global North.

To that end, the objective of this article is to analyze the internationalization practices of the PPGs in the Legal Amazon and their relationship with the concept of the Epistemology of the South. This study will utilize the conceptions presented by Sousa Santos (2016, 2019) to engage in a relevant discussion on the Epistemology of the South through an analysis of the *curricula vitae* of the faculty affiliated with the internationalized PPGs in the Legal Amazon.

Through this perspective, it will be possible to analyze whether there are asymmetries among the PPGs in relation to internationalization. This analysis will be based on an approach that aims to repair the damages and impacts historically influenced by colonial relationships and global power inequalities.

## **METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES**

The adopted methodology is based on a qualitative-quantitative approach of an interpretivist nature, using investigative procedures grounded in documents and in the Lattes *curricula* of the faculty affiliated with the postgraduate programs (PPG) in the Amazon region – those identified with an international profile and evaluated with ratings of 6 and 7 by Capes. In states lacking internationally



recognized PPGs, those with a rating of 5 were selected due to indications of being in transition in this internationalization process.

Among the Postgraduate Programs in the Legal Amazon, there are 10 programs that have ratings between 6 and 7; these are considered to be of excellence and to have greater international impact, as asserted by Capes. It is assumed that these are the PPGs that serve as references for internationalization and, therefore, were selected for this research.

Of the 448 strict sense Postgraduate Programs in the Legal Amazon, only 0.448% have reached the status of internationalization, as defined by Capes, and they are concentrated in only three states of this region, predominantly in the state of Pará (70%). To cover the remaining six states of the Legal Amazon, one PPG with a rating of 5 was selected from each state, and an effort was made to select a diversity of areas of knowledge for better representativity of the research sample (Table 3). In Tocantins, more than one PPG was selected, given that it is the state of origin of the authors proposing this research, a circumstance that awakens interest in understanding the state reality (Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 1** | List of the Legal Amazon PPGs with an internationalization profile

Instituição de Ensino	Área de Avaliação	Nome do Programa	Nível	Nota
Federal University of Pará – UFPA	Astronomy / Physics	Physics	M/D	6
Federal University of Pará – UFPA	Biological Sciences I	Genetics and Molecular Biology	M/D	6
Federal University of Pará – UFPA	Biological Sciences III	Biology of Infectious and Parasitic Agents	M/D	6
Federal University of Pará – UFPA	Linguistics and Literature	Language and Literature: Linguistics and Literary Theory	M/D	6
Federal University of Pará – UFPA	Psychology	Psychology	M/D	6
Federal University of Pará – UFPA	Geosciences	Geology and Geochemistry Sustainable	M/D	7
Federal University of Pará – UFPA	Interdisciplinary	Development of the Humid Tropics	M/D	7
Federal University of Amazonas - UFAM	Computer Science	Computer Science	M/D	6
National Institute of Amazonian Research – INPA	Biodiversity	Biology (Ecology)	M/D	7
Federal University of Maranhão – UFMA	Social Work	Public Policies	M/D	6

Source: Plataforma Sucupira (2024).

**Table 2 |** List of the Legal Amazon PPGs with a transitioning internationalization profile

Instituição de Ensino	Área de Avaliação	Nome do Programa	Nível	Nota
Federal University of Tocantins – UFT	Urban and Regional Planning / Demography	Regional Development	M/D	5
Federal University of Tocantins – UFT	Environmental Sciences	Environmental Sciences	M/D	5
Federal University of Tocantins – UFT	Plant Production	Agricultural Sciences	M/D	5
Federal University of Mato Grosso – UFTM	Veterinary Medicine	Veterinary Sciences	M/D	5
Federal University of Amapá – UNIFAP	Biodiversity	Tropical Biodiversity	M/D	5
Federal University of Acre – UFAC	Linguistics and Literature	Language and Literature: Language and Identity	M/D	5
State University of Roraima – UER	Education	Science Education	M/D	5

Source: Plataforma Sucupira (2024).

By analyzing the curricula of the tenured faculty of the internationalized PPGs, it was possible to identify their areas of expertise, participation in international networks, publications in international journals, productivity scholarship holders, among other relevant information for understanding the contribution of the PPGs to the internationalization of higher education. Data collection took place in August 2023, encompassing an extensive mapping that involved a total of 365 Lattes curricula. This survey represented a comprehensive approach, allowing for a robust analysis of the information available during that specific period.

## CONTRIBUTIONS OF BOA VENTURA SOUSA SANTOS TO THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE SOUTH

The university plays a fundamental role as a plural and distinct space for integration, dialogue, and knowledge construction. According to the study by Farias, Oliveira, and Peloso (2021), in this environment there occurs an antagonism in relation to the homogenizing hegemonic model, in which culture is referenced by the Euro-North model, based on access to and consumption of products. The university's openness to dialogue and participation, especially by the most marginalized publics, enables the learning of an inclusive citizen-democratic culture that promotes a sense of belonging and a commitment to values of justice, tolerance, and solidarity - essential for the construction of autonomy and the expansion of consciousness.

South-South cooperation is a concept proposed by Boa Ventura Sousa Santos, which refers to a form of collaboration among developing countries or peripheral regions, with the aim of promoting solidarity and the exchange of knowledge and resources. It is an approach that seeks to strengthen the relationships among Global South countries, overcoming the traditional dependency on Global North countries (Sousa Santos, 2016).

In this vein, Sousa Santos (2018, p. 300) coins the term *Epistemologies of the South* to denote “the production and validation of knowledge anchored in the resistance experiences of all social groups that have systematically suffered the injustice, oppression, and destruction caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy.” The core of the *Epistemology of the South* is to acknowledge and grant due value to the knowledge that has been discredited or undervalued by the dominant epistemologies - developed especially in the Global North. In its place, room is made to ignite struggles of resistance in the face of the successive oppressions experienced by the Global South against knowledge - oppressions that continue to manifest and be perpetuated in different spaces and times (Sousa Santos, 2018).

In fact, its objective is to identify and valorize that which often does not even appear as knowledge in light of the dominant epistemologies, emerging instead as part of the struggles against oppression and against the knowledge that legitimizes such oppression. Many of these forms of knowledge are not abstract theories but are, rather, empirical (Sousa Santos, 2018).

In this way, Sousa Santos (2007, p. 28) refers to the *sociology of absences*, stating that “in our reality it is actively produced as non-existent, and therefore our greatest trap is to reduce reality to what exists.” Such domination overshadows what is real. Thus, according to Sousa Santos (2007), it is necessary to change the state of being of subjects - from absent to present - in order to achieve social emancipation or even to reinvent it through the identification and validation of knowledge. In other words, the sociology of absences underscores the importance of overcoming the monoculture of scientific knowledge, which is permeated by linearities and universalisms. The author proposes the need for a *Sociology of Emergencies*, which, starting from small movements - such as collective action and social movements - can lead to possible and concrete experiences that have not yet manifested - whether due to a lack of spaces or alternatives - but that are real and capable of emerging socially.





The broadening of the understanding of the reflections presented by Sousa Santos (2007) lies in the concept of *abyssal thinking*, by emphasizing that the world is divided between two imaginary lines, which consequently represent dual realities permeated by different characteristics - divided between Global North/Global South, metropolis/colony. This separation causes subjugations, exclusions, oppressions, invisibility, and non-existence for the South. The failure to recognize knowledge outside the scope of what is established as universal diminishes the knowledges that emerge in the Global South. There exists, therefore, “on this side of the line” and “on the other side of the line,” which demarcates humanity between those who have achieved recognition and those whose human condition is rendered unviable. On one side, domination and control; on the other, subordination, negation, and devaluation.

In this endeavor, the *Epistemologies of the North* are regarded as central in providing valid and superior knowledge, as they possess the necessary expertise to develop the greatest and best research. In addition, they make use of classic scientific methods, techniques, and instruments, considered standards and guarantors of efficiency with international recognition -positioning the North as the benchmark and reference for the South. This fact creates a false impression and establishes universalisms that are difficult to overcome, as it ends up justifying the superiority and normative duality that haunts the South - that is, metropolis and colony still in full reproduction and naturalization in contemporary societies, even if in a veiled manner (Sousa Santos, 2018).

In light of the worldwide recognition of scientific productions originating from the Global North - which serve to accentuate disparities and perpetuate the mirroring, as stated by Sousa Santos (2018), of what is produced in the North by the South - the devaluation of the national identities and cultures of Southern countries is highlighted, even though they possess immense diversity and foster the flourishing of broad research possibilities. In this context, two fundamental premises of the Northern approach find support: the first emphasizes the importance of systematic observation and controlled experimentation by science to provide a foundation; the second underscores that scientific knowledge, due to its rigor and instrumental potential, differs radically from other forms of knowledge. These essential principles solidify the conceptual basis and contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of science in this specific scenario.



## MAIN RESULTS AND RESEARCH DISCUSSION

Of the ten postgraduate courses analyzed that are internationalized in the Legal Amazon, according to Capes' latest evaluation, seven are part of the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), two belong to the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA), and one is affiliated with the National Institute of Amazonian Research (INPA). Among those at UFPA, Genetics and Molecular Biology, Biology of Infectious and Parasitic Agents, Physics, and Letters obtained a rating of 6 in the latest Capes evaluation. The first three were established in the 2000s and share similar characteristics concerning the variables analyzed in the study, as can be verified in Table 1.

Within this group, only the Letters course stands out, as it was established in 1987 and its processes of *ad hoc* review as well as the publication of journals have been concentrated in national periodicals; additionally, the number of faculty members benefiting from CNPq productivity grants is reduced. However, the work developed over the years, together with the program's history of progress, may have contributed to achieving and maintaining the rating of 6 in Capes' evaluation, while also emphasizing the international collaborations established with other Research, Development & Innovation (PD&I) institutions.

Another UFPA program that obtained a rating of 6 is the Psychology program, established in 2005, in which it was observed that there is no concentration of publications and reviews in international journals, and only a small percentage of the faculty holds productivity grants. It is noteworthy that two UFPA programs achieved remarkable performance, resulting in a rating of 7 as assigned by Capes in the latest evaluation: the Sustainable Development of the Humid Tropics (PPGDSTU) and Geology and Geochemistry (PPGG), both established in the 1970s. A strong international performance - characterized by participation in networks and a significant number of publications in foreign journals and in foreign languages - is observed for PPGG, while for PPGDSTU the presence of productivity grants among a considerable portion of the affiliated faculty is highlighted (Table 3).

In turn, the Ecology program (PPG-Ecology) at INPA, with forty-seven years of existence, demonstrates an extensive academic trajectory and maintains a fruitful international production, in addition to featuring formative and highly recognized researchers among its peers - a combination that contributed to obtaining the highest rating assigned by Capes.



In this study, it is fundamental to emphasize the importance of certain criteria, such as investment in international publications, support for *ad hoc* reviews, the promotion of events with international scope, and the formation of institutional partnerships with foreign actors. The purpose of these initiatives is to boost the recognition of postgraduate programs not only at a national level but also in prestigious international instances. It is also noteworthy, given its great relevance in promoting internationalization, the trajectory of the program combined with its infrastructure, the faculty and student body, the established networks, enhanced by participation in associations/scholarly societies and international exchanges. Such elements confer legitimacy and respect, even though international presence does not feature prominently among all the variables analyzed.

**Table 3** | Comparison among some of the Legal Amazon postgraduate programs

Program	University	CAPES Score	Journal Review and Publication	Productivity Fellow	Year of Establishment
Genética e Biologia Molecular	UFPA	6	Focused on international journals	78,6%	2001
Biologia de Agentes Infecciosos e Parasitários	UFPA	6	Focused on international journals	61,9%	2004
Psicologia	UFPA	6	Focused on national journals	7,4%	2005
Física	UFPA	6	Focused on international journals	55%	2003
Letras	UFPA	6	Focused on national journals	23,53%	1987
Desenvolvimento Sustentável do Trópico Úmido	UFPA	7	Focused on both national and international journals	17,4%	1977
Geologia e Geoquímica	UFPA	7	Focused on international journals	76%	1976
Informática	UFAM	6	Focused on international journals	26,47%	2001
Ecologia	INPA	7	Focused on international journals	51,43%	1976
Políticas Públicas	UFMA	6	Focused on national journals	12,9%	1993

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Lattes CV database of the faculty members, 2023.



The analysis of the internationalized postgraduate programs - as well as those in the process of internationalization - in the Legal Amazon, more specifically regarding productivity, reveals varied performance across different indicators, which also reflects what is espoused by each field of knowledge. In Table 4, it is observed that the Sustainable Development of the Humid Tropics program at UFPA stands out in the Amazon region with the highest number of published articles (755) and the highest average number of publications per faculty member (32.8). This suggests a scientific production of greater international impact and high productivity among the researchers involved in this program.

**Table 4** | Comparison of Productivity Variables Among the Legal Amazon Postgraduate Programs

Program	Published Articles	Number of Faculty	Average Publications per Faculty Member	English	International Co-authorship	North-South	South-South	Amazon
Biology (Ecology) / INPA	717	35	20,48	97%	40%	91,6%	8,4%	83,6%
Sustainable Development of the Humid Tropics / UFPA	755	23	32,8	15%	13,3%	50%	50%	72,5%
Geology and Geochemistry / UFPA	351	24	14,6	93%	34,6%	54%	46%	3,9%
Genetics and Molecular Biology / UFPA	644	23	28	97%	22%	69,6%	30,4%	23,6%
Biology of Infectious and Parasitic Agents / UFPA	425	21	20,2	95,5%	13,6%	84,6%	15,4%	37,5%
Psychology / UFPA	196	27	7,2	18,0%	22,2%	50,0%	50,0%	1,5%
Physics / UFPA	171	20	8,5	93,7%	33,7%	85,2%	14,8%	2,5%
Language and Literature: Linguistics and Literary Theory / UFPA	304	34	8,9	1,2%	7,9%	30,7%	69,3%	31,4%
Computer Science / UFAM	128	34	3,7	97%	30%	80,9%	19,1%	4,2%
Public Policies / UFMA	152	31	4,9	4,4%	1,1%	100,0%	0,0%	2,2%
Regional Development / UFT	315	16	19,8	17,7%	5,7%	33,3%	77,7%	28,8%

Environmental Sciences / UFT	340	16	21,2	23,7%	13,1%	100%	0%	54,3%
Plant Production / UFT	429	14	30,6	74,5%	16,1%	33,3%	77,7%	12,5%
Veterinary Sciences / UFMT	189	14	13,5	89,0%	7%	28,6%	71,4%	5%
Tropical Biodiversity / UNIFAP	376	20	18,8	92,2%	23,3%	47,6%	52,4%	55,5%
Language and Identity / UFAC	247	18	12,05	7,3%	8,6%	77,7%	22,3%	28,6%
Science Teaching / UERR	154	12	12,8	9,8%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	29,4%

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Lattes CV database of the faculty members, 2023.

Regarding publications in English, the courses that stood out were the Biology (Ecology) program at INPA, Genetics and Molecular Biology at UFPA, and Informatics at UFAM, all with 97% of the total publications during the analyzed period. Collaboration with foreign researchers is an important indicator of internationalization and research quality. Programs such as Biology (Ecology)/INPA (40%), Geology and Geochemistry/UFPA (34.6%), and Physics/UFPA (33.7%) stood out by having the highest percentages of foreign co-authorship in scientific publications among the Legal Amazon postgraduate programs.

With respect to partnerships, some programs demonstrate strong collaboration both among institutions from the North and among Southern countries. For example, the Public Policies program at UFMA has an exclusively North-South collaboration (100%), whereas programs such as Regional Development and Plant Production, both at UFT, demonstrate significant South-South collaboration (77.7%). Programs like Physics/UFPA and Informatics/UFAM exhibit a high percentage of applied publications (88.7% and 68.5%, respectively), indicating a practical focus and direct relevance to the needs of the region. In turn, the Biology (Ecology) program at INPA stands out among the other postgraduate programs in the region for correlating its scientific work with topics inherent to the Amazon (see Table 2).

The practice of publishing articles in English-language journals and the participation of faculty members in international scientific events occur mainly in environments where English predominates. This emphasizes the dissemination of a language through which science has historically been spread. This phenomenon reveals the influence of a system in which Northern Hemisphere countries imposed their

traditions and discoveries as absolute truths, even though they can be refuted by Southern Hemisphere countries through updated and/or complementary knowledge (Sousa Santos, 2019).

As presented by Sousa Santos (2019), by legitimizing scientific knowledge at the expense of other kinds of knowledge, other forms of knowing - especially those of vulnerable groups on the margins of society - are disregarded, thus contributing to the perpetuation of cognitive injustice. In this context, it is asserted that the university should be a “pluriversity” and, by making a play on words with the term “plural,” the importance of decolonizing and opening up to silenced forms of knowledge is signaled. It is highlighted that a complex and radical change is essential, going beyond the knowledge produced in universities, in order for the transformation to be effective.

In light of the above, it is possible to understand the difficulties involved in the internationalization process for universities, especially those in the Legal Amazon, whose obstacles and limitations are explicit - for instance, the difficulty in accessing internationalization policies compared to those in the South and Southeast regions of the country. The dissemination of their research within the domains of the Global North faces challenges in materializing, since, when presenting investigations intertwined with a local/regional reality, most often their research is relegated to the margins of recognition within the dominant academic arena. The data collected in this research make it possible to elucidate this reality, given the efforts made by a large portion of the faculty to establish networks with researchers and research institutions in the North.

It is also noteworthy that among the postgraduate courses surveyed, those with greater visibility and which obtained the highest rating in Capes’ quadriennial evaluation were the ones that established a work policy based on internationalization – particularly by gaining positions in higher education institutions in European and North American countries – such as the postgraduate courses in Biology (Ecology), Genetics and Molecular Biology, Biology of Infectious and Parasitic Agents, Physics, Geology and Geochemistry, Informatics, Public Policies, Environmental Sciences, and Letters (Language and Identity). In turn, the PPGs in the process of internationalization, such as Regional Development, Environmental Sciences, and Veterinary Sciences, displayed greater affinity in the articulation of internationalization actions among South-South countries, which is also encouraged by some fields of knowledge.



The pressure experienced by higher education institutions to achieve greater international prominence and to establish partnerships with the Global North is evident from the analyses of the Lattes curricula of the faculty members. Among the postgraduate programs (PPGs) surveyed, analysis of the faculty curricula revealed that six of them concentrate their efforts on reviewing and publishing in international impact journals, demonstrating a clear commitment to reaching the internationalization standard that qualifies and provides new opportunities for growth, recognition, and investment from funding agencies in these programs. In this compendium, the following programs are listed: Genetics and Molecular Biology, Informatics, Biology of Infectious and Parasitic Agents, Physics, Ecology, and Geology and Geochemistry. It is worth noting that the first four received a rating of 6 in Capes' quadriennial evaluation, while the last two achieved the maximum score of 7. Notably, the Sustainable Development of the Humid Tropics program also obtained a rating of 7, with the distinction that both the *ad hoc* journal reviews and the publications were interconnected, being concentrated in both national and international journals.

The postgraduate programs in Psychology, Letters, and Public Policies - which fall under the fields of human and applied social sciences - stood out due to the concentration of reviewing and publishing in journals (with a focus on national journals) by the faculty, and they received a rating of 6 in the evaluation. This contrasts with the previously mentioned fields, whose focus areas are in the exact sciences, biological sciences, and chemistry - domains that generally manage to establish broader international connections due to their research lines being interlinked with studies from various countries or due to research influenced by what is being developed in the Global North. This aspect is not always observed in research within the human or social sciences, since those fields largely involve discussions linked to local, regional, and territorial realities - areas that are not always considered internationally prioritized. Moreover, the use of different research methods and instruments causes the PPGs in the human and applied social sciences to be questioned regarding the scientific rigor of their work.

Regarding the PPGs rated 5, considered to be in transition, it is pertinent to mention that all such programs were established in the 2000s. Three belong to the Federal University of Tocantins - PPGDR, PPGCIAMB, and PPGPV - one to the Federal University of Mato Grosso - PPGVET - one to



the Federal University of Amapá – PPGBIO - one to the Federal University of Acre - PPGLI - and one to the State University of Roraima - PPGECC. The average number of permanent faculty per PPG was 14.8, while the average for the internationalized PPGs was 30.2.

It is also observed that the challenges of internationalization span the strategic planning of these programs. Some have made greater advances, as is the case with PPGPV and PPGBIO, which have heavily invested in publications and participation in *ad hoc* reviews in international journals. In this direction, PPGCIAMB and PPGVET are also found, with a concentration of both national and international publications and reviews. As for the others, the most intensive academic investments have occurred in publications in national journals, albeit with impact, as presented in Table 5 below.

**Table 5 | Comparison Among Some Legal Amazon PPGs Rated 5**

Program	University	Journal Review and Publication	Productivity Fellow	Year of Establishment
Graduate Program in Regional Development – PPGDR	UFT	Focused on national journals	31,25%	2007
Graduate Program in Environmental Sciences – PPGCIAMB	UFT	Focused on both national and international journals	6,25%	2003
Graduate Program in Plant Production – PPGPV	UFT	Focused on international journals	35,71%	2006
Graduate Program in Veterinary Sciences – PPGVET	UFMT	Focused on both national and international journals	35,71%	2007
Graduate Program in Tropical Biodiversity – PPGBIO	UNIFAP	Focused on international journals	30%	2006
Graduate Program in Language and Literature – PPGLI	UFAC	Focused on national journals	0%	2006
Graduate Program in Science Teaching – PPGECC	UERR	Focused on national journals	0%	2012

Source: prepared by the authors based on the Lattes CV database of the faculty members, 2023.



Another variable analyzed corresponded to the extent to which faculty members secured productivity grants from CNPq, with a low success rate observed for this group - fewer than 35.71% of the postgraduate programs (PPGs) being awarded such grants. The PPGPV, PPGVET, and PPGDR stand out, while in some programs no professional was awarded a grant, as is the case with PPGLI and PPGECE.

Faculty participation in associations/societies also exhibits a low percentage or an absence of such affiliations. Among the programs whose faculty are members of these institutions are PPGDR and PPGBIO. These findings are consistent with what is repeatedly presented in Sousa Santos' work (2013), in which he explains that a monoculture of knowledge still prevails, in contrast to the recognition of multiculturalism - a characteristic typical of non-white peoples who do not find spaces for dialogue within Eurocentric knowledge.

Thus, South-South cooperation is recognized as a significant means of strengthening the capacity of universities in developing countries to improve and diversify their international cooperation demands. Through such cooperation, institutions can establish partnerships with other universities in countries with similar characteristics in order to share knowledge, skills, experiences, and resources, in accordance with the guidelines advocated by funding agencies, with the aim of attaining positions that promote greater scientific impact. As Sousa Santos (2019) asserts, it is necessary to resort to new epistemologies that lead to the flourishing of alternative thinking, capable of reinvigorating the struggles against the oppressions historically experienced by Global South countries.

Therefore, in the area of higher education, South-South cooperation can play an essential role in the internationalization of universities located in regions marked by acute inequality. Such universities often face significant challenges, including a lack of resources, limited infrastructure, and reduced international visibility. Through this type of cooperation, institutions can foster and enable the exchange of knowledge among faculty and students, collaborative research projects, the development of joint academic programs, the interchange of best practices, and institutional capacity building. This form of cooperation can improve the quality and relevance of higher education by promoting cultural diversity, academic collaboration, and regional development among the involved countries - particularly with the countries bordering the Legal Amazon.

In the context of global inequality, South-South cooperation is seen as an alternative to



traditional models of international cooperation, which often reflect asymmetrical power relations. By focusing efforts on solidarity among Global South countries, this approach seeks to promote a more equitable distribution of knowledge and to stimulate the active participation of all those involved in building a more comprehensive and accessible higher education system.

In this sense, the concept of “Epistemology of the South,” as explored by Sousa Santos (2016, 2018), transcends a mere geographic notion and refers to the epistemic challenges aimed at addressing the disadvantages and inequalities resulting from colonial relations. This North –South idea was already highlighted by Freire (2005), when he used the term “sulear” to emphasize the importance of understanding the oppressed from the perspective of their geographic region. Thus, this term directs attention to the discrepancies caused by the predominance of a science designed to serve the interests of Northern countries. At the same time, it is an attempt to give visibility not only to the potential of the South but also to its perspectives and viewpoints, in direct opposition to the Eurocentric framework that regards the North as a universal standard.

This tendency toward the homogenization of science and its practices can pose serious challenges for universities, especially for those located in more peripheral regions, which must expend considerable everyday effort to achieve recognition for the quality of their teaching, research, and extension activities - partly evidenced by their capacity for internationalization.

The superior performance of universities brings with it a series of benefits, such as, for example, securing greater financial contributions from the federal government and funding agencies, which are indispensable for sustaining the entire dynamic of their work. In addition, improvements in infrastructure, the hiring of staff at technical and higher levels, and continuous research funding are achieved. The challenge is that the failure of educational institutions to meet the standards established by the Global North creates the risk that they will not progress in terms of financial, human, and structural resources, subjecting them to an alienating situation regarding the knowledge they produce.

Another point to consider refers to the demands imposed on PPG members related to overall academic productivity. This includes criteria such as the publication and *ad hoc* review of scientific papers in a foreign language - predominantly in English - guidance of students by permanent faculty, participation in and organization of academic events (especially those with international collaborations),



among other variables. These requirements directly impact the professionals' productive routines, resulting in work overload. This situation arises from the operational logic of universities, which face an increasingly productivity-focused reality - especially in the quest for resource acquisition - given the significant financial and budgetary reductions experienced by higher education institutions in recent years.

Among the indicators that demonstrate solid performance and visibility of the PPGs is the granting of productivity scholarships - whether from CNPq or state-level research funding agencies - to faculty members. However, to achieve this level, it is necessary for faculty to produce high-impact publications, to mentor other researchers (especially at the doctoral level), and to stand out among their peers - with recognition of their contributions on both national and international levels in their respective fields. Among the analyzed PPGs, those that established the most international partnerships - Genetics and Molecular Biology; Biology of Infectious and Parasitic Agents; Physics; Geology and Geochemistry; Ecology - are also the ones whose faculty members received the highest number of productivity scholarships.

Sousa Santos (2019) corroborates the debate with the concept of Epistemology of the South by highlighting the importance of postgraduate programs recognizing and valuing local knowledge and historically marginalized experiences, so as to promote internationalization through the acknowledgment of local issues for regional development.

The construction of internationalization projects for higher education institutions located in regions with pronounced inequalities demands a rethinking and re-signification of the purposes of education, the role of the university, and the knowledge it produces in contemporary society, with a focus on regional interests. This requires stable and long-term cooperative efforts on the part of the postgraduate network individuals who comprise the various collectives involved (Farias; Oliveira; Peloso, 2021). It is, therefore, a call for the dialogical and critical construction of knowledge, privileging horizontal and supportive learning environments that enable the promotion of diverse forms of knowledge through different forms of internationalization.



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study undertaken here demonstrated that there are considerable obstacles for postgraduate programs (PPGs) to achieve greater autonomy and freedom in their actions, still due to the intense demand to operate according to the models imposed by Eurocentric countries. This subservience poses challenges for the programs to obtain better ratings and evaluations, given that they have specific realities and operate within a peculiar social, economic, and political context. Among the 448 postgraduate programs in the Legal Amazon, only ten achieved ratings between 6 and 7 in the latest quadriennial evaluation by Capes. Thus, it was found that programs that do not conform to the determinations imposed by Global North countries suffer limitations in their functioning and development, confirming the asymmetry that exists between the internationalized PPGs and those in transition toward an internationalized profile.

From the perspective of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, the conclusions drawn from this understanding of university internationalization, South-South cooperation, and knowledge construction evoke a profound transformation in educational and scientific paradigms. The aforementioned author proposes a rupture with Eurocentric hegemony, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and valuing knowledge and experiences that have historically been marginalized.

According to this view, the university should be a space of plurality, dialogue, and resistance against historical oppressions. Openness to diverse knowledge and the active participation of traditionally excluded social groups are fundamental for building a democratic and inclusive culture.

South-South cooperation emerges as an alternative to the asymmetrical power relations present in traditional models of international cooperation. This approach contributes to reflecting on the need for an equitable distribution of knowledge in order to strengthen the capacities of universities in developing countries. In this context, internationalization should not merely be a quest for pre-established standards by the Global North, but rather an opportunity to create an “Epistemology of the South” that respects and values the diverse forms of knowledge.

The process of internationalizing universities in the Legal Amazon represents not only a quest for external recognition but also an opportunity to redefine the region’s role in the global scenario, given its specificity in relation to the other Brazilian regions. The creation of international



network partnerships should be based on more than just the exchange of knowledge – it should also emphasize the appreciation of local identities and the promotion of a science that respects cultural and social diversity.

In summary, Boaventura de Sousa Santos' vision challenges us to rethink the way scientific knowledge is conceived and practiced, as well as to recognize the role of universities in society. The author's arguments suggest there is no intention of replacing one epistemology with another, nor of inverting the positions of the North and the South. Rather, the emphasis is on recognizing that the goal is not to erase the differences between the North and the South, but to minimize the centrality of the power hierarchies that underpin these distinctions.

When analyzing the internationalization process of the Legal Amazon PPGs, it was found that part of their scientific production is already published in English, in accordance with international publication criteria, as advocated by funding agencies. What differentiates the PPGs is the number of articles published in high-impact journals.

For programs rated 5, which are in transition to an internationalized profile, a relevant strategy would be, first of all, to establish or strengthen cooperation among Southern countries so that, having improved their internationalization efforts among themselves, they can scale up and gain space and recognition among Northern countries.

To achieve international prominence, universities have been undergoing restructuring to meet the social, political, and economic demands of the contexts in which they are embedded. However, it is important to consider that in economically peripheral regions, the challenges are even greater.

The study also found that most of the analyzed PPGs have been seeking to propose solutions to the challenges of the Legal Amazon, primarily through strategic studies related to environmental issues and endemic regional biodiversity. This demonstrates that the internationalized PPGs are engaging in dialogue with both regional and global topics, moving toward the establishment of South-South cooperation.

The internationalization of universities in the Legal Amazon can also have a positive impact on the region's economic and social development. Through partnerships and network collaborations with international institutions, the potential to attract investments, foster entrepreneurship, and stimulate the creation of innovative businesses increases. Moreover, the international visibility of the Amazon region as a center of knowledge and research can boost scientific and cultural tourism, generating employment and income for local communities.

However, it is important to emphasize that the internationalization of universities in the Legal Amazon must occur in a responsible and sustainable manner. It is essential to ensure respect for traditional knowledge and local communities, so as to promote inclusion and the active participation of these groups in academic and research activities. In addition, it is critical that internationalization aligns with the conservation and preservation of Amazonian biodiversity, avoiding negative impacts and focusing on solutions that promote sustainable regional development.

Therefore, the Legal Amazon also has the potential to contribute to the internationalization of Brazilian universities. This can occur through the exchange of knowledge, the training of qualified human resources, and the promotion of scientific and technological development on issues inherent to the region. In this way, universities can play a fundamental role in valuing and conserving regional particularities through internationalization practices that prioritize South-South cooperation, thereby addressing local problems while simultaneously contributing to improving the quality of the PPGs.



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