



Research at UFFS Campus Cerro Largo and the interfaces with regional development

Edemar Rotta

Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul – Cerro Largo – RS – Brazil

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1608-7078>

Rafael Rodrigo Wolfart Treib

Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul – Cerro Largo – RS – Brazil

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6743-5146>

Abstract

The theme of this article is the relationship between University and regional development, focusing on research projects developed at the Federal University of Fronteira Sul (UFFS), Cerro Largo Campus. It aims to identify the main contributions made by institutionalized research projects at UFFS in its first ten years of operation (2010 to 2019), towards the reflection and the production of knowledge about the challenges faced by the Missions and Northwest Border regions of Rio Grande do Sul State. The research methodology is based on the principles of the critical-dialectical approach: historicity, movement, interaction, totality, and emancipation. Data was collected through documentary research in the archives and the institutional systems of UFFS and in the Strategic Plans for Regional Development (PEDR) of COREDES Missões and Fronteira Noroeste in the period studied. The data was analyzed and interpreted using the content analysis technique. During this period, 357 research projects were developed with undergraduate research scholarships, out of 40 research funding calls. The results show that the University stands out as an institution that helps and stimulates regional development through its research, as its subjects are intertwined with the demanding priorities of the regions. The publication of scientific papers, chapters, and books, alongside the participation in regional, national, and international events, contribute to the publication of research results and the production of knowledge, especially about the challenges faced by the regions analyzed.

Keywords: University. Regional development. UFFS. Research.

A pesquisa na UFFS Campus Cerro Largo e as interfaces com o desenvolvimento regional

Resumo

O artigo tem como temática a relação entre Universidade e desenvolvimento regional, com foco nos projetos de pesquisa desenvolvidos na Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS), Campus Cerro Largo. Objetiva identificar contribuições realizadas pelos projetos de pesquisa institucionalizados na UFFS, em seus primeiros dez anos de funcionamento (2010 a 2019), no sentido da reflexão e da produção de conhecimentos sobre os desafios enfrentados pelas regiões Missões e Fronteira Noroeste do Estado do Rio Grande do Sul. A metodologia tem por base os princípios da abordagem crítico-dialética: historicidade, movimento, interação, totalidade e emancipação. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de pesquisa documental nos arquivos e sistemas institucionais da UFFS e nos Planos

Estratégicos de Desenvolvimento Regional (PEDR) dos Coredes Missões e Fronteira Noroeste, no período estudado. A análise e a interpretação dos dados ocorreram a partir da técnica da análise de conteúdo. Durante o período analisado, realizaram-se 357 projetos de pesquisa com bolsas de iniciação científica e tecnológica, em um universo de 40 editais de fomento à pesquisa. Os resultados demonstram que a Universidade se destaca enquanto instituição que auxilia e estimula o desenvolvimento regional, a partir das pesquisas realizadas, pois seus objetos de pesquisa estão interligados às prioridades demandadas pelas regiões. As publicações de artigos científicos, capítulos e livros, além da participação com apresentação dos resultados em eventos regionais, nacionais e internacionais, contribuem para a publicização dos resultados das pesquisas e a produção do conhecimento, de forma especial, sobre os desafios enfrentados pelas regiões analisadas.

Palavras-chave: Universidade. Desenvolvimento Regional. UFFS. Pesquisa.

La investigación en UFFS Campus Cerro Largo y las interfaces con el desarrollo regional

Resumen

El artículo tiene como temática la relación entre Universidad y desarrollo regional, con foco en los proyectos de investigación desplegados en la Universidad Federal de la Frontera Sur (UFFS), Campus Cerro Largo. Objetivo identificar contribuciones realizadas por los proyectos de investigación institucionalizados en la UFFS, en sus primeros diez años de funcionamiento (2010 a 2019) en el sentido de la reflexión y de la producción de conocimientos sobre los desafíos enfrentados por las regiones Misiones y Frontera Noroeste del Estado de Rio Grande del Sur. La metodología tiene por base los principios del abordaje crítico-dialéctico: historicidad, movimiento, interacción, totalidad y emancipación. La recolección de datos fue realizada por medio de investigación documental en los archivos y sistemas institucionales de la UFFS y en los Planes Estratégicos de Desarrollo Regional (PEDR) de los Coredes Misiones y Frontera Noroeste, en el período estudiado. El análisis y la interpretación de los datos ocurrió a partir de la técnica del análisis de contenido. Durante el período analizado, se realizaron 357 proyectos de investigación con becas de iniciación científica y tecnológica, en un universo de 40 edictos de fomento a la investigación. Los resultados demuestran que la Universidad se destaca como institución que auxilia y estimula el desarrollo regional a partir de las investigaciones realizadas, pues sus objetos de investigación están interconectados con las prioridades demandadas por las regiones. Las publicaciones de artículos científicos, capítulos y libros, además de la participación, con presentación de los resultados en eventos regionales, nacionales e internacionales, contribuyen para la publicación de los resultados de las investigaciones y la producción del conocimiento, sobre los retos a los que se enfrentan las regiones analizadas.

Palabras clave: Universidad. Desarrollo Regional. UFFS. Investigación.

1 Introduction

Scientific research carried out in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), especially in Universities, is considered one of the essential bases for the development of a specific country or region. The creation of institutions to promote research, especially at the state level, contributes to supporting Universities so that they can make research viable and, therefore, fulfill their basic purposes, both legal and social (SCHWARTZMAN, 2008).

By pointing out this relationship between Universities and their social surroundings, and the perspective that development is multidimensional, the dimension of territory emerges as one of the bases for understanding development and the University itself. Knowledge of the historical, cultural, geographic, economic,

social, political, institutional, and environmental characteristics of local spaces becomes imperative for Universities (GRACZKOWSKI; PEREIRA, 2021).

The presence of Universities in local and regional spaces can configure a differential condition in the dynamics of their development, whether by contributing decisively to the activation of endogenous potential (BOISIER, 2006), or by representing a privileged space for articulation between instances of production knowledge and generation of new technologies, with social actors responsible for their implementation in economic and sociocultural processes (ROTTA, 2007).

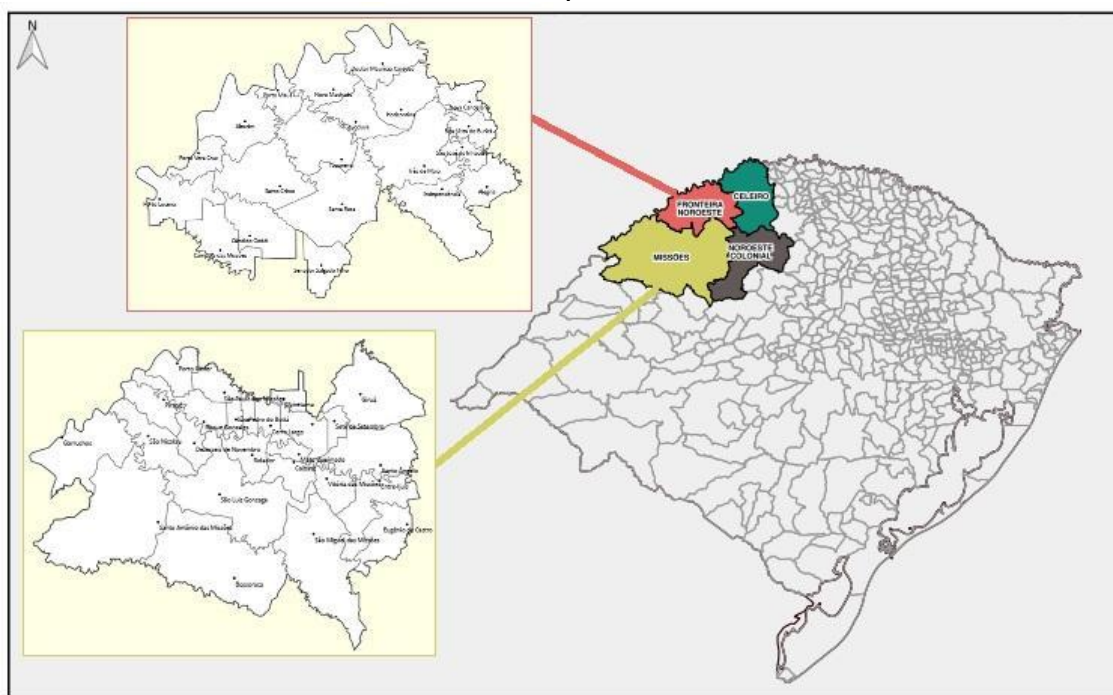
This article¹ seeks to look at the interfaces between the research carried out at the Federal University of Fronteira Sul (UFFS), Campus Cerro Largo-RS, and the Regional Development Strategic Plans (PEDR) of the Regional Development Councils (Coredes) of the Missions and Northwest Border, during the period from 2010 to 2019. It aims to identify the main contributions made by research projects institutionalized at UFFS, towards reflection and production of knowledge about the challenges faced by the aforementioned regions. We work with institutional research calls and projects supported by scientific or technological initiation grants.

The main question that guided this research can be formulated as follows: UFFS, in these ten years of trajectory, using research as a reference, was able to handle the reflection and production of knowledge about the challenges of the Coredes regions: Missions and Northwest Border, proactively contributing to its development? The working hypothesis was developed as follows: the topics covered and the results produced by the research projects approved in notices developed at UFFS, Campus Cerro Largo, between 2010 and 2019, are in line and contributed to reflection and the production of knowledge about the challenges faced by the Missions and Northwest Border regions of Rio Grande do Sul. In Figure 1 it is possible to locate the two Coredes regions studied, bearing in mind that they are part of the Functional Planning Region (RFP-7)², together with Coredes Celeiro and Northwest Colonial.

¹This article is part of an institutionalized research project at UFFS Campus Cerro Largo, which seeks to help understand regional development.

²The RFPs were proposed by the Rumos 2015 study, considering economic, social, and environmental aspects. The main criteria for grouping Coredes into the RFP were polarization by jobs and productive specializations. Thus, regionalization sought to address two crucial points: first, respect the Coredes framework, as these institutions represent an important form of organizing the regions' social capital, with political support and acceptance, and there does not appear to be any worrying evidence regarding relevant inadequacies in their compositions. Second, to seek a regional division capable of recognizing, respecting, and incorporating existing homogeneities in economic, environmental, and social terms, in addition to reflecting on the polarizations observed (RIO GRANDE DO SUL, 2021).

Figure 1 – Missions and Northwest Border Coredes and their respective municipalities



Source: Rio Grande do Sul (2021), adapted by the authors (2024).

Corede Missões was created in 1991, consisting of 25 municipalities, covering a total area corresponding to 4.6% of the territory of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, that is, 12,855.5 km². The total population is 255,399 inhabitants (2021), with a demographic density of 19.9 inhabitants/km²; illiteracy rate for people aged 15 and over (2010) of 6.45%; life expectancy at birth (2010) of 72.08 years; and infant mortality coefficient (2021) of 10.30 per thousand live births (FEE, 2022). Looking at data from the Socioeconomic Development Index (IDESE), updated for 2020, the Missões region presents an education indicator (0.772) above the state average (0.747), however, in health indicators (0.823), income (0.678) and IDESE overall (0.758) its performance is below the state average, which was, respectively 0.834, 0.723 and 0.768 (RIO GRANDE DO SUL, 2024).

Corede Fronteira Noroeste was created in 1991, consisting of 20 municipalities, covering a total area of 4,693.4 km², which represents 0.365% of the territory of Rio Grande do Sul, on the border with Argentina. It has an estimated population of 220,270 inhabitants (2021); demographic density of 46.9 inhabitants/km² (2021); illiteracy rate for people aged 15 and over (2010) of 4.47%; life expectancy at birth (2000) of 73.87 years; and infant mortality coefficient (2021) of 6.84 per thousand live births (FEE, 2022). Looking at IDESE data, updated for 2020, the Fronteira Noroeste region presents education (0.79), health (0.867), income (0.728), and general (0.795) indicators above the state average, representing a situation of development slightly above that presented by the Missões region.

In terms of methodological proposal, this research was guided by a critical-dialectic approach, both in the construction of the theoretical support and in the definition of document collection and analysis procedures. According to Arenhart, Hahn, Arenhart, and Rotta (2021, p. 98-101), research guided by the critical-dialectic approach favors studies on medium- and long-term historical processes; perceive

reality as constant movement, driven by internal contradictions, competing interests, and relationships between different social actors, and between them and nature; understand the scenarios based on the reciprocal and mediated interaction between the phenomena as a whole; perceive reality, the human being, nature and knowledge as a totality; and are guided by critical-emancipatory human interest, in the sense of developing “criticism and nurturing the praxis that transforms reality and frees the subject from different forms of instrumentalization, domination and deception”. These references guide the theoretical foundation of the topic, data collection, analysis, and the establishment of inferences based on the research carried out.

Data collection was carried out based on documentary research in the archives and institutional systems of UFFS and in the Development Plans of Coredes Missões and Fronteira Noroeste that cover the period studied. The focus of the research developed is predominantly qualitative, as the resolution of the problem is supported by the analysis of information, always related to documentary and bibliographic research (GIL, 2019). Once collected, the data was organized, systematized, and analyzed with the help of the content analysis technique.

The study locus used is UFFS, Campus Cerro Largo. This choice occurred due to its creation process, its importance in the region in which it operates, and the activities it develops. The Missões and Fronteira Noroeste Coredes were chosen because they are the ones with the greatest inference from the actions developed by the Cerro Largo Campus (TREIB; THOMAS, 2021). In addition to being closer to the Cerro Largo Campus, they participate in the regional agendas in which the institution operates. The territorial area that Coredes and UFFS Campus Cerro Largo cover is included in Functional Planning Region 7. The research projects were initially tabulated according to the year of validity and the number of grants, taking into account the granting agency promotion and type of research in terms of scientific or technological initiation. In these projects, the following categories of analysis were considered to make inferences: research area, research theme and title, project objective, methodology used, and results presented. The latter had their filters focused on analyses carried out on the researchers' Lattes CVs and compared to scientific productions. After filtering the projects according to categories, they were grouped to enable analysis and relate them to Coredes' priorities and actions.

In relation to regional development, two Coredes are used as study references: Missões and Fronteira Noroeste and their PEDR, analyzing the models that cover the period studied in both. Each Corede analyzed has, during this period, two documents that were constructed and put into practice in each region, and were grouped with the aim of facilitating the analysis, since many themes, as well as priorities and proposed actions, are identical or complementary. PEDRs establish analysis standards for regional development, creating proposals and possibilities for municipalities and their regions. These proposals were prepared with the participation of organized civil society, through forums that debated the issues to reach possible consensus and directions. For the analysis of PEDR, two categories were used as a basis: (1) priorities, based on the described context, priority themes, and priority areas of action, taking into account the analysis subgroups; (2) the proposed actions, highlighting the priority actions and demanded projects.

This article is structured into two sections, in addition to this introduction and final considerations. The first section presents the concepts of university, research, and regional development that guide the study. The second section presents the

collected data, its interpretation, and a discussion of the results. In the final considerations, some inferences originating from the study are highlighted and new research possibilities arising from it are indicated.

2 University, research, and regional development

In this section, the basic concepts that underpin this article are discussed. It begins with the idea of the University as a social institution, bringing references to its birth and transformations, with emphasis on the creation of UFFS in the study region. The second part highlights research and its role in the production of knowledge, as well as its importance in social and institutional spaces. In the third part, regional development stands out with its characteristics, conceptualizations, and foundations in relation to society, using research as a contribution and bringing Coredes as a reference for this regional analysis.

2.1 University

The University, as an institution, has a polysemy of meanings, foundations, and functions (MORAES, 2021). The understood reference of this study has as one of its basic assumptions the functions established by the Brazilian Federal Constitution (CF/88) of 1988, in which teaching, research, and extension stand out, being, therefore, a place for discussions, with the function of qualifying society and meeting its demands.

Since their emergence, in the 11th century, in the year 1088, with the founding of the first University in the Western world, the University of Bologna, in Italy, these institutions have, as their main purpose, the function of enabling societies to establish conditions for the construction of knowledge and the critical reflection of ideas. Schwartzman (2015) highlights the University as the best, if not the only, necessary environment that achieves this purpose.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2017) highlights that the University, in the context of the great transformations that humanity has been undergoing since the end of the 20th century, needs to affirm its characteristic of being “a public good”. In other words, a privileged public space for open and critical discussion, not only of human knowledge but also of all aspects that constitute the relationships between human beings and between them and nature, with science as a contribution. To be a space for teaching, research, and extension in the fullness of their meanings, permeated by democratic relationships, both internal and external. Being a link between the present, the past, and the future, thinking, together with the different actors in civil society, about new perspectives for humanity (NETO; CASTRO; BRANDÃO, 2017). UNESCO (2019), in its World Declaration on Higher Education in the XXI Century: Vision and Action, highlights the public character of the University, as a space for training, research, and interaction with society, in a context of pluralism and cultural diversity.

In Latin America, the creation of the first Universities is linked to the colonization process of the new continent. The first record that exists is that of the University of San Marcos, in Peru, in 1503. The University of Mexico, founded in 1553, however, is recognized as the longest-lived on the continent. The regions of Spanish

colonization had prominence in the creation of Universities in relation to those of Portuguese colonization (CUNHA, 2007a).

Fávero (2016) highlights that, in Brazil, the creation of Universities was resisted by Portugal, due to its colonization policy, which was based on exploitation, and considered more appropriate for the elite of the time to carry out higher education studies in Europe since higher education was not accessible to everyone. The University of Coimbra, with a strong influence on the Portuguese government, exerted great pressure not to create higher education institutions in the colonies. This situation only began to change with the arrival of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil, in 1808, however, very slowly. The idea of creating a University in Brazil, along European lines, would only have space and be debated after the Federal Constitution of 1891. It should be noted that during the period between 1824 and 1891, access to education was deficient; only large cities, such as the capital, Rio de Janeiro, and some regions such as São Paulo, Minas Gerais, and Bahia had schools that allowed greater improvement, for later entry into the academic world (CUNHA, 2007a).

However, the University, in its institutional concept – which promotes science – would only be realized with the creation of the University of Rio de Janeiro (currently UFRJ), in 1920, from the union of three faculties (CUNHA, 2007b). In 1934, the State University of São Paulo (USP) was created, becoming the first state university in the country. The institution received criticism from the federal government, due to the possibility of changing the perspective of the federal authority's dominance in the creation of higher education institutions and, in particular, for treating the hiring of teachers through public competitions, which facilitated its organization. and structuring (CUNHA 2007b; SCHWARTZMAN, 2015).

The emergence of the first Universities triggered a cycle of expansion that, although limited, gave rise to prospects for the consolidation of higher education. However, it was only with the movement for redemocratization and the implementation of CF/88 that the idea of higher education as a citizen's right was consolidated. CF/88 guaranteed Universities the principle of didactic-scientific, administrative, financial, and asset management autonomy; the principle of inseparability between teaching, research and extension, and free public education at all levels. However, higher education, and especially public and free education, remained exclusive to large urban centers, with some regions being completely unassisted, as is the case of the Grande Fronteira mesoregion of MERCOSUR, as there was no educational policy of internalization (FROTA, 2017).

In Rio Grande do Sul, higher education developed more timidly than in the rest of the country. The city of Pelotas was the first higher education base in the state, with the Faculty of Agronomy Eliseu Maciel, created in 1883, and which is currently part of UFPEL (MELO, 2020). In 1935, the University of Porto Alegre, now UFRGS, was created. However, most of the higher education available was provided by private institutions and based on religious or community experiences. In this context, the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), created in 1960, was the first public University in the state of RS outside the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre.

In the case of the Northwest region of the state of RS, the tradition resulting from the colonization process, by non-Iberian European immigrants and their descendants, generated an understanding of education as an essential tool in the community development process (TREIB, 2021). Community, Confessional, and/or Philanthropic Institutions account for the first experiences of higher education in the

northwest of Rio Grande do Sul (WBATUBA, 2018). Milestones in this process are the creation of the Integrated Regional University of Alto Uruguai and Missions (URI), in Santo Ângelo/RS, and the creation of the Regional University of the Northwest of Rio Grande do Sul (UNIJUÍ), in Ijuí. URI was founded in 1969 and transformed into a University in 1992. UNIJUÍ was founded in 1957 and transformed into a University in 1985.

From the 2000s onwards, especially in the first decade, government initiatives stimulated the growth of higher education in the country. A series of measures were adopted to resume the growth of public higher education, promoting physical, academic and pedagogical expansion through support programs, including the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities (REUNI), which helped with its internalization; the Unified Selection System (SISU), in which candidates compete for vacancies in public higher education institutions by participating in the National Secondary Education Examination (ENEM); the Open University of Brazil (UAB), which provides for the creation of Distance Education Centers from consolidated Federal Public Universities; the expansion of the Federal Professional Education Network, which allowed the creation of Federal Institutes of Higher Education (IFES), expanding access to technical-professional and higher education; and the University for All Program (PROUNI), which offers full or partial scholarships to candidates selected in Institutions that meet the criteria of the Ministry of Education and the higher education evaluation structures (RISTOFF, 2008).

From this set of new public policies for higher education, the northwest region of the State of Rio Grande do Sul had a demand met, with the creation of the Federal University of Fronteira Sul (UFFS), in 2009, providing a Campus for the municipality of Cerro Largo. This is an old claim, as there are records of movements for the creation of a Federal Public University in the region since the 1980s (TREIB, 2021; SILVA, 2014). The establishment of free public higher education institutions within the states contributed, among other things, to the development of regions, the reduction of regional inequalities, and the reduction in the migration of young people to large urban centers (SIMON et al., 2015 ; TISCHER; ROCHA, 2017).

The creation of UFFS, in 2009, with a Multicampus structure (Chapecó – SC, Erechim and Cerro Largo – RS, Laranjeiras do Sul and Realeza – PR) and covering three states of the Federation (RS, PR and SC), represented the confluence of this new set of public policies for higher education with the historical struggles of the Grande Fronteira mesoregion of MERCOSUR (415 municipalities and almost 4 million inhabitants) for access to free public higher education (TISCHER, 2016). Social and trade union movements have been demanding, at least since the 1980s, the implementation of state and federal universities to strengthen regions discriminated against from accessing free higher education and marginalized in development processes via public investments (PREDIGER et al., 2019).

2.2 Research

Research, or the act of researching, is as old as human beings, what has changed over time are the ways of carrying it out, because, based on Francis Bacon's analyses, research now has a method, and this is what makes it possible for it to be replicated by other people, proving its scientificity (SCHWARTZMAN, 2015).

Minayo (2016, p. 17) understands research as the “basic activity of science in its inquiry and construction of reality” because although it is a theoretical practice, it links thought and action. “Nothing can be a problem intellectually if it has not been, in the first place, a problem in practical life”. In this sense, research questions are related to socially conditioned interests and circumstances.

Historically, scientific research has had its privileged space for development in Universities. Schwartzman (2015) highlights that, currently, much of the research carried out in developed countries is carried out by private and government companies; however, Universities are the basis for developing research that addresses the population's desires, and their territories' needs effectively met. In Brazil, research is mostly carried out in public HEIs, around 95%, according to the higher education census, with a small portion carried out by companies and private higher education institutions (BRASIL, 2020).

In the trajectory of the constitution and affirmation of Universities, scientific research has established itself as one of its fundamental “pillars”, along with teaching and extension. The Brazilian Ministry of Education only recognizes a Higher Education Institution as a University when research is carried out. In this sense, it can be said that research is an instituting principle of the University. Demo (2013) advocates the need for permanent articulation between research, teaching, and extension, as none of them stands out over the other. It is necessary to understand research as the everyday life of the institution, as teaching is effective when it is based on the process of building knowledge, and not on the mere transfer of content, that is, there is no teaching without research. Similarly, research is one of the bases of extension, in its characteristic of receiving the challenges of reality, translating them, building knowledge about them, and returning to society, in a permanent movement (UFFS, 2019).

The development of research in Brazilian Universities has less than a century of history. It can be said that the first public recognition of research as an attribute of Universities, in Brazil, occurred with Decree nº 19,851, of April 1931, by the then Minister of Education in the government of Getúlio Vargas, Francisco Campos. The government decree approved the activity of “scientific research in any domain of human knowledge”, as an attribute of Universities and as the *raison d'être* of academia (SCHWARTZMAN, 2015).

At the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s, the basic structures for the development of scientific research in Brazil were created: the Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC), the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). These structures enabled more or less regular funding for research; training of researchers, via notices to promote and encourage master's and doctorate courses; the creation of dissemination instruments and evaluation mechanisms; and others. The participation of Universities in this process is considered fundamental, to help governments and societies in the success of actions related to regional development. In the short and medium term, the inclusion of Federal Government resources in the implementation and maintenance of these institutions helps the University to be a concentration of resources (NETO; CASTRO; BRANDÃO, 2017).

Even with important advances, especially from the second half of the 20th century, it can be said that scientific research in Brazil still lacks resources and is

undervalued, when compared to the dimension it assumes in most developed and developing countries (SOARES, 2018). The contingency of resources, especially in research, carried out by the federal government, in the last five years, to university institutions and funding bodies, constitutes a clear demonstration of the devaluation of research and the lack of understanding of its importance in the country's development (ANDIFES, 2019).

UFFS, throughout its history of just over a decade, created the institutional structures to operate and encourage the production of scientific research. Its activities cover the most diverse areas of knowledge, via funding notices for researchers and scholarship holders; encouraging publication and participation in scientific and technological events; and allocation of working time to researchers on their respective journeys. However, UFFS, as a federal public institution, has been feeling, very intensely, the impacts of restrictive research policies adopted in the country (TREIB, 2021).

2.3 Regional Development

Regional development studies have a consolidated tradition that dates back to the mid-19th century, based on contributions from different areas of knowledge (RANDOLPH; SIQUEIRA; OLIVEIRA, 2014). Seeking to understand characteristics of specific territories and their possibilities and/or limits for development, or even the relationship between development and region, different perspectives of studies are born, which build diverse epistemological, theoretical, and methodological references that spread in academia, in spaces of public and private planning and society in general (MATTEDI, 2020). Similarly, it can be said that these perspectives produce different conceptualizations of what regional development is (THEIS, 2020).

In this tradition of regional development studies, the contributions of geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, and political science, among other social, human, and applied social sciences are significant (DALLABRIDA, 2017). Different ways of classifying studies also emerge, depending on the theoretical option, focus, and analysis perspective, among others. Mattedi (2020) states that these studies can be systematized based on two sets of theories: “container theories”, which conceive the relationship between Development-Region as a kind of process that occurs in a container; and “envelope theories”, which are characterized by considering the positions that regional development assumes and enables in the social context. Fochezatto (2010) understands that regional development theories have evolved from microeconomic approaches, centered on supply conditions, to macroeconomic approaches, centered on aggregate demand and multiplier effects on production, until they are, today, characterized by mesoeconomic approaches, focused on the region and its competitive potential, in an environment increasingly integrated with other regions and countries. Cavalcante (2008) works from the perspective of two major matrices in theoretical productions on regional economics: the classic location theories, which seek to identify the factors that lead a firm to define its optimal location, and theories with an emphasis on agglomeration factors, which emphasize the possibility of the existence of positive externalities arising from industrial agglomeration. Just to mention a few classifications, and to remind that any type of classification, in this broad universe of debates, will always be subject to criticism, divergences, and complementations.

The affirmation of a specific “field of knowledge”, especially from the creation and consolidation of *Stricto Sensu* Postgraduate Programs, in a special way (as this theme is also present in programs from other areas of CAPES) in the large area of Planning Urban and Regional/Demography, specialized journals and research groups focused on regional studies have contributed to the establishment of epistemological, theoretical and methodological assumptions that, at the same time as establishing a new field, enable dialogue like those already established (THEIS, 2020).

Theis *et al.* (2022, p. 261), analyzing the tradition of studies on regional development, understand that one can work with the idea of understanding it as a “medium-range theory”, as it is not located in the sphere of theories general systems, nor does it stop at detailed descriptions of minutia, using the characterization established by Merton (1970). This understanding would not limit it to what emanates from one or two disciplines, but would highlight its interdisciplinary character and allow us to understand that “the distinction between the objective and concrete fact and the idealized subjective manifestation is inadequate to differentiate regional development as empirical data, on the one hand, and consciously outlined purpose, on the other.”

In this sense, Mattedi (2020) suggests understanding regional development not as “a thing in the world”, something given, ready, finished, but rather as “a way of understanding the world”. “From this point of view, regional development is everywhere all the time” (p. 119). This way of understanding the world is relational, as it involves understanding the configurations that emerge from the relationship between development and region, as well as considering the conditions that allow for its understanding; multidimensional, as it involves the economic, social, political, cultural and environmental dimensions; multidirectional, as it simultaneously means progress and regression; multi-meaningful, as the meaning varies according to social groups; ambivalent, because when a region develops a set of problems is solved, but others are created; it has circular causation, in that effects become causes and causes become effects; and it is uncertain, as the consequences of regional development are unpredictable.

In summary, it can be said that thinking about regional development implies the adoption of three simultaneous operations: a) a reflexive epistemology: the idea that knowledge about regional development must be justified regionally; b) a contextual theory: theories created with regional development must have a regional scope; c) a relational methodology: knowledge about regional development must be produced through a calibration between development and region. It is now a matter of extracting the implications of this cognitive platform through empirical research (MATTEDI, 2020, p. 122-123).

In the scope of this study, we worked with this fundamental understanding of regional development and made use of the theoretical elaborations produced in this field that seek to reflect on the importance of research and the production of knowledge in the development processes of regions, with emphasis on the endogenous development, technological districts, and innovative means.

From endogenous development comes the understanding that, to assume a leading role in development processes, “organized territories” need to constitute a local system for generating science and technology capable of generating their own

technological impulses for change, in order to cause qualitative changes in the system as a whole (BOISIER, 2005). Amaral Filho (1996) highlights that research, science, and technology form the qualitative basis of development, as they contribute to the formation of human capital; improving interconnections between agents; the level of speed of decisions within the system; improving work productivity; and in the qualification of the articulations between micro and macro processes.

Studies on technological districts (LOPES, 2001) emphasize the need for articulation between productive structures, university environments, and research laboratories. This characteristic is very important as one of the basic objectives of the research carried out was to identify possible articulations between the research projects developed within the Cerro Largo Campus, at UFFS, with the priorities established in the Regional Development Plans of the Fronteira Noroeste and Missões regions.

The innovative means approach highlights the importance of interaction processes between productive sectors and development and research institutions, with the support of local and regional authorities, in order to produce synergies capable of generating collective learning, engagement, and common projects. Important aspects in order to identify whether the researchers present at the Cerro Largo Campus, at UFFS, oriented their research projects towards themes and latent problems in local-regional communities, in order to qualify their understanding and identify possibilities for overcoming them. It may also be important to ask whether social actors were involved in or facilitated the research processes carried out by the Campus faculty and research fellows.

3 Research and regional development: possible contributions of projects developed at the Cerro Largo Campus, at UFFS, between 2010-2019

As evidenced in the previous section, the University has as one of its essential responsibilities the production and dissemination of science, through the multiple activities it develops, via research, extension, and teaching. From scientific research and comparison with practice, progress is made in terms of building new ontological, epistemological, theoretical, and methodological approaches, as well as in the production of innovations and generation of new technologies, in different areas of knowledge, nature, and human life. The Federal Universities Expansion Program, through REUNI, brought to regions previously unassisted by the State's most effective action, in terms of access to free public higher education, the possibility of creating institutional structures and human resources capable of providing public, good quality and free education to local communities. This expansion also attracted qualified professionals from other regions, contributing to interaction with the human and social capital already established in local spaces, contributing to its improvement and strengthening.

The internalization of public and free higher education also contributed to the reduction of social and regional asymmetries and inequalities, as it improved social indicators, strengthened consolidated activities, and created others, thus generating new perspectives in regional development. In this sense, scientific research carried out in universities is the practical and/or theoretical implementation of empirical knowledge, enabling education to improve and modify the bases of science, whether

to implement the knowledge generated or avoid identified problems. It is in this sense that we seek to look at how the presence of the Federal University of Fronteira Sul, through the Cerro Largo Campus, in the Fronteira Noroeste and Missões regions may have contributed to reflecting on the challenges of this local-regional space and thinking about possible alternatives to the problems that this specific territory has been facing in its development.

It is considered that the article seeks to identify the main contributions made by research projects institutionalized at UFFS, Campus Cerro Largo, in the period from 2010 to 2019, in the sense of reflection and production of knowledge about the challenges faced by the regions of Coredes Missões and Fronteira Noroeste. We worked with institutional research notices and projects supported by scientific or technological initiation grants. The methodological approach of reference was critical-dialectic. Data collection was carried out based on documentary research in the archives and institutional systems of UFFS and in the Development Plans of Coredes Missões and Fronteira Noroeste that cover the period studied. Once collected, the data was organized, systematized, and analyzed with the help of the content analysis technique.

The research projects were initially tabulated according to the year of validity and the number of grants, taking into account the funding agency and the type of research in terms of scientific or technological initiation. In these projects, the following categories of analysis were considered to make inferences: research area, theme and title of research, project objective, methodology used, and results presented. The latter had its filters focused on analyses carried out on researchers' Lattes CVs and compared to scientific productions. After filtering the projects according to categories, they were grouped to enable analysis and the establishment of possible connections with Coredes' priorities and actions.

Em In relation to the Development Plans for Coredes Missões and Fronteira Noroeste, the references drawn up for the periods 2010-2030 and 2015-2030 were used in both cases. Bearing in mind that these are documents organized based on different planning and textual construction techniques, two categories were used as reference for systematization: (1) the priorities listed, taking as reference the described context, the priority themes, and the areas action priorities, taking into account the analysis subgroups; (2) and the proposed actions, highlighting the priority actions and the pointed out projects.

Regarding the data identified in relation to the research carried out at the Cerro Largo Campus, at UFFS, for the period analyzed, Table 1 shows a reference regarding the number of research projects awarded grants in the respective CNPq research areas. The Health Sciences area is excluded due to the lack of courses in this area on the Campus.

Table 1 – Research projects developed and awarded grants, between 2011-2019, according to area of knowledge

AREA	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	TOTAL AREA
Quantity										
Exact and Earth Sciences	5	3	0	5	10	2	2	4	5	36
Biological Sciences	2	6	3	7	12	10	1	4	8	53
Engineering	2	5	7	8	10	11	3	5	7	58
Agricultural sciences	0	1	3	5	13	13	6	4	5	50
Applied social sciences	5	1	2	8	7	2	1	3	3	32
Human sciences	13	17	13	9	13	10	7	8	11	101
Linguistics, literature, and arts	4	2	2	4	2	4	3	3	1	25
TOTAL of SCHOLARSHIPS	31	35	30	46	67	55	22	31	40	357
TOTAL of PROJECTS	31	68	74	73	86	91	69	134	109	735

Source: Systematization carried out by the authors based on research notices (2021).

It can be seen that the area of Human Sciences is the most significant in terms of projects approved with funding grants, in the period and throughout almost every year, only being surpassed by the area of agricultural sciences, in 2016. On the other hand, the area of Linguistics, Literature, and Arts has the lowest number throughout the period. This portrait is directly related to the consolidation or not of research groups as a result of the approximations generated by the undergraduate and postgraduate courses that are established on the Campus over the period. The period between 2014 and 2016 is also evident as the period with the greatest achievement of funding grants, being directly related to the period of greatest release of resources for research, especially in internal calls for proposals and in partnerships with funding agencies.

At the bottom of Table 1, there is a comparison between the total number of projects presented in the funding notices and the number of grants won by Campus researchers. It can be seen that, from 2012 onwards, there has been a significant increase in the number of projects presented, which denotes the consolidation of research. However, it can also be seen that 2018 was the year with the lowest relationship between the number of projects presented and the funding grants awarded, being in the order of 4.3 projects for each funding grant presented. In total for the period, this ratio is in the range of 2.05 projects for each grant won, which is also an indication of the quality of the projects presented in the context of UFFS as a whole and with external funding agencies.

As a direct result of the research projects, there is a significant amount of scientific production that can be attested by consulting the researchers' CVs: 1,159 articles in journals; 52 books; 616 book chapters, and 3,174 articles in scientific event annals. The area of Human Sciences has the largest number of these publications, with 321 articles, 20 books, 331 book chapters, and 1,260 articles published in event annals, as verified in the document analysis. When attention turns to the main research themes, objectives, and methodology, the set expressed in Table 2 can be seen.

Table 2 – Research projects according to the area of knowledge, themes, objectives and methodology used

Area	Main Themes	Objectives	Methodology
Exact and Earth Sciences	Chemical synthesis and chemical analysis; teaching chemistry and physics; and conservation and recovery of water resources.	Development of a methodology to assist in the synthesis and chemical analysis of organic products, in didactic analysis for the training of chemistry and physics teachers, and the conservation and recovery of water resources.	Parameter measurement and document analysis.
Biological Sciences	Fish; plants; insects; bacteria; waste; and pesticides.	Study of reproduction processes and fish diversity; analysis of the importance of insects; use of native and medicinal plants; and soil contamination with pesticides and residues.	Sampling, verification and establishment of correlations.
Engineering	Chemical waste components; health indicators, pesticides; and clean energies.	Analysis of organic residues, soil contamination, health indicators, and the relationship with pesticides. Studies of biodigesters and renewable energy systems.	Sampling, parameter measurement, and experimental and documentary analysis.
Agricultural Sciences	Soils; plants; water; bacteria; tools; and meteorology.	Soil analysis and its uses in agriculture; studies of plants for cultivation, bacteria and their implications for Agriculture; study of meteorological systems.	Parameter measurement, sampling, and experimental and documentary analysis.
Applied Social Sciences	Regional development; public and social policies; and technologies and tools aimed at administration and public transparency.	Studies on public management, experiences of public and social policies, and relationships between public policies and the development and public transparency of municipalities in the region.	Document analysis, interviews, and experience studies.
Human Sciences	Teaching science, chemistry, and physics; continued teacher training; education networks; textbooks; teacher training methodologies; and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs).	Studies on science teaching, teacher training, evaluation processes in science and ICT; studies on the relationship between Science-Technology-Society; textbook analyses.	Document analysis, interviews, and experience studies.
Linguistics, Literature, and Arts	Reading; literature; culture and continued teacher training.	Studies on the practice and importance of reading; textual analysis of literature; and studies on continuing training of teachers in education networks.	Document analysis and interviews.

Source: Systematization made by the authors based on research notices (2021).

It is clear that the research themes, objectives, and methodologies used, in addition to being in line with what has been discussed in the country and abroad, in the respective areas of knowledge, present an articulation of the challenges of the regional reality, which can be seen in Table 3, which presents the priorities and actions proposed by the Regional Councils for the Development of the Missões and the Fronteira Noroeste regions in their Development Plans.

Quadro 3 – Prioridades e ações propostas pelos Coredes em seus Planos de Desenvolvimento: 2010-2030 e 2015-2030

Corede	Priorities	Proposed actions
Corede Missões	Cultural heritage; training of managers; tourism; ecology; family farming; agroindustrialization; basic sanitation; entrepreneurship; basic, technical-professional, and higher education; health and hospital structure; social assistance; public security; asphalt, rainwater, air and communications network and internet infrastructure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inventory the existing cultural and natural heritage; ● Develop tourism and ecotourism in the region; ● Strengthen family farming through courses and support for demands and commerce; ● Strengthen basic and higher education in the region; ● Improve the hospital structure and health care; ● Guarantee and qualify asphalt access to municipalities and the region; ● Qualify communications and internet structure;
Corede Fronteira Noroeste	Food industrialization; family farming; worker training; tourism; ecology; basic sanitation; waste recycling; renewable energy; irrigation; logistics; science and technology; technical and higher education; health; housing and security.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training in family farming; ● Support for food agroindustrialization; ● Tourism and infrastructure projects; ● Support for basic sanitation; ● Assistance for recycling agricultural waste; ● Renewable energy projects; ● Logistics support for regional development and international trade; ● Improvements in the health sector; ● Housing projects; ● Local and regional security support;

Source: Systematization made by the authors based on COREDES (2021).

Table 3 shows that the priorities highlighted and the actions listed as necessary for the development of the two regions are similar, with emphasis on the areas of agriculture and agroindustrialization; the provision of infrastructure for production processes, especially in the transport network and information and communications technologies; the qualification of social services in education, health, security, housing, basic sanitation and social assistance; and the development of tourism. These are questions that are already corroborated by technical studies (BOOZ ALLEN; FIPE; HLC, 2005; FÓRUM DOS CONSELHOS REGIONAIS DE DESENVOLVIMENTO DO ESTADO DO RIO GRANDE DO SUL, 2014) and a wide range of scientific research carried out on these regions (ROTTA, 2007; FILIPPI; SILVEIRA; ALLEBRANDT, 2015).

When confluences are sought between the research projects developed within the scope of the UFFS Campus Cerro Largo, the scientific production resulting from them and the priorities highlighted by the Coredes of the Missões and Fronteira Noroeste regions in their Development Plans, a consistent interaction is perceived (TREIB, 2021) highlighting the University's social commitment and the search for qualification of diagnoses and the construction of responses to regional problems.

These interactions and commitments can be seen in the different areas of knowledge that were the subject of this study. In the area of Exact and Earth Sciences, contributions to the qualification of basic education stand out, based on tools that assist in the didactic issue of teaching physics, chemistry, and mathematics, as they are problematic areas in education; and in the qualification of diagnoses, processes and products linked to the dynamics of nature, agricultural practices and

other production processes, especially via chemical analysis of compounds, construction, and improvement of tools used in family farming, conservation of water resources, chemical analysis of toxic components, and assistance for mitigating and treating impacts.

In the area of Biological Sciences, the contributions offered by studies of regional fauna and flora, maintenance and preservation of biodiversity in the Atlantic Forest and areas of permanent preservation, springs, rivers and their tributaries stand out. Or even in research carried out to seek alternatives for using flora and its extracts to reduce soil and water contamination, as well as in the production of food, medicines, and tourist products.

In Engineering, research works towards designing effluent treatments from industries, agricultural activities, and urban housing; analyzing the use of pesticides and their harmful effects on nature and human health; thinking about the use and/or treatment of construction waste; designing alternative and renewable energy sources; and seeking alternatives for the urban infrastructure of municipalities. It is understood that the engineering area is essential for thinking about technological innovation processes that help production processes and the construction of infrastructure necessary for people's quality of life.

Agricultural Sciences seeks to study the use of soil and water and their relationships in food production; traditional agriculture, family farming, agroecological transition and agroecology; meteorological conditions; experimental units such as laboratories for crop development, plant health, new varieties, and invasive control; production systems and structure of rural properties. It is important to bear in mind that the Missões and Fronteira Noroeste regions have a productive matrix dependent on agriculture, and it is essential to think about their viability and sustainability.

In the area of Applied Social Sciences, researchers have sought to study public and private administration; planning structures; the presence of rationalities in the management and planning process; the role of governments in providing public services, especially social services; the availability of information and public transparency; the technical training of local and regional institutions, especially in understanding and participating in the processes and dynamics of development in the regions. It is understood that the two regions studied are mostly made up of small municipalities that have the State as a central actor in development processes.

In the area of Human Sciences, the studies developed mainly include basic education and, in this, the continued training of teachers, in order to assist them in the construction of methodologies and the elaboration of didactic-pedagogical materials that qualify their work and produce better results. student learning outcomes. The articulation between research projects and teaching and extension programs makes the University a privileged partner of different education networks, especially public ones, in order to contribute to the understanding of the realities of schools and the teaching-learning processes, pedagogical mediations, and the participation of different subjects.

Another important contribution to education studies comes from the area of Linguistics, Literature, and Arts, as, in addition to studying training processes, construction of methodologies and pedagogical materials focused on the Portuguese language and literature, it constitutes a space for studies of the Spanish language. The Missões and Fronteira Noroeste regions are located on a border

territory with Argentina, in which the Spanish language is part of people's daily lives, being essential in the development dynamics of local societies and the people who inhabit this vast border region.

Therefore, the research developed within the scope of UFFS, throughout the analyzed period, is in line with what Schwartzman (2015) refers to, highlighting that public higher education HEIs are the basis for the development of research that addresses the population's desires and so that the needs of their territories are effectively met.

4 Final Consideration

In the tradition of national and international studies regarding higher education and Universities as institutions linked to it, reference is always made to research as one of the essential elements. It constitutes, together with teaching and extension, the basic tripod of support, action, and mission of Universities. UFFS, as a public higher education institution, has a recent history of just over a decade. However, even though it is an institution in the process of construction, it has been making rapid progress in consolidating its activities in teaching, research, and extension.

The study carried out shows that research has established itself, throughout the period analyzed, as one of the basic pillars of UFFS's operations, via the Cerro Largo Campus, in the Missões and Fronteira Noroeste regions. Most of the teachers, from the moment they arrived at the Campus, began to develop research projects and participate in internal and external funding calls, seeking resources and scholarship quotas for the development of their research. Likewise, they maintained or expanded their activities in research groups and internal and external partnerships.

This active participation of teachers and institutional support guaranteed a significant number of projects awarded scientific and technological initiation grants, as well as resulting in the qualified production of scientific articles, book chapters, books, and works presented at events and published in their annals. Campus teachers submitted 735 projects for research notices during the period studied (2010 to 2019), 357 of which were awarded scientific or technological initiation scholarships in different areas of knowledge. These scholarships were awarded in internal notices from UFFS, statewide with FAPERGS, or nationally with CNPq.

The significant number of teachers involved and the number of projects submitted and awarded research grants demonstrate the quality of the projects submitted and carried out on the Campus, which indirectly strengthens the other institutional pillars: teaching and extension, as the demand for research favors and encourages students to develop scientific studies with teaching guidance, as well as an interest in science, while extension demands the practice of researched studies, helping to disseminate knowledge within the regional community, thus fulfilling its social role.

The research carried out on the Campus demands scientific action in different areas of knowledge, being multidisciplinary in the subjects studied, encouraging and providing interest in what would not be the subject of study, if there were not the presence of a public University in the region carrying out university activities in its three pillars. Most of these studies require participation in scientific events,

publication of articles, books, and book chapters, and offer support for other institutions, especially higher education, to also improve their scientific research rates. As a result, not only the regional community grows and receives the fruits of research, but also the scientific community, through publicity and dissemination of the knowledge constructed and researched.

The research carried out on the Campus was able to reflect and produce knowledge about the challenges and demands proposed in the different areas of knowledge, as well as responding proactively to the priorities and actions highlighted in the Regional Development Plans. In its plans, Corede Missões demanded 88 priorities and proposed actions, while Corede Fronteira Noroeste demanded 64 priorities and proposed actions. It was found that several areas, priorities, and actions demanded by the analyzed Coredes were detected and inserted, directly or indirectly, into the study base of research projects developed on the Campus, demonstrating that the research actions carried out are linked to the activities and demands of the regional community, based on its themes.

It is understood that the Coredes analyzed, based on their priorities and actions proposed in the development plans, seek to serve the regional community, based on the demands highlighted in the various areas essential for their development, seeking, in this way, to improve the quality of life and enhance productive activities and social services carried out in the region in which they are located. This broad and integrated understanding of development means that different local and regional actors can be aware of the realities experienced and the needs that arise, serving as a contribution to project their actions on the state, national, and international scene, in order to seek better conditions of life, guarantee of rights and development prospects.

Carrying out new studies, more detailed and specific by area of knowledge, could mean a step beyond that carried out in this study, contributing to highlighting how UFFS has been responding to its mission of building knowledge, preparing citizens for social insertion, and actively participating in regional development dynamics. Perspectives for new studies could still be pointed out, capable of seeing how the Regional Development Councils have taken advantage of the studies developed by research carried out within the University, translating the knowledge generated into improving diagnoses and propositions in favor of the development of the regions.

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