



2

Expanding Epistemic Capability in Participatory Decision-Making Processes: The Universidad de Ibagué Capabilities List

Diana Velasco and Alejandra Boni

Challenges of the University in Colombia

Colombia faces significant social and environmental challenges. With high economic inequality and disparities between regions, 25% of households with unsatisfied basic needs, and threats to biodiversity by the expansion of agricultural and illegal activities like coca planting and illegal mining, major transformations are urgently needed (ACCEFYN 2018). Additionally, the country continues to undergo a contentious implementation of the peace agreements signed between the national government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia on

D. Velasco (✉)

Universidad de Ibagué, Ibagué, Colombia

A. Boni

INGENIO (CSIC-Universitat Politècnica de València), Valencia, Spain

Center for Development Support, University of the Free State,
Bloemfontein, South Africa

© The Author(s) 2020

M. Walker, A. Boni (eds.), *Participatory Research, Capabilities and Epistemic Justice*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-56197-0_2

November 24th, 2016. Many opportunities come with the cessation of this civil armed conflict, such as progress in structural conditions for the improvement of the quality of life for Colombians and a deep and true reconciliation process for the whole population. Within this context, how can Colombian universities contribute? Universities should primarily contribute to more humane and sustainable development, along with the more traditional contribution to the economic development of the country. They are called upon to strengthen civic education and reform their teaching, research, and community outreach, with special emphasis on communities that have historically suffered the scourge of violence and injustice.

This chapter examines these issues in the policies of the Universidad de Ibagué (UI), a private, medium-sized university located in Tolima, one of the Colombian regions most affected by illegally armed groups. Throughout the year 2019, university leadership conducted an inclusive and participatory process involving 127 people in a first phase for constructing a capabilities list and 62 people in a second phase aimed at validating the list. The intention was to promote a university policy based on the declared capabilities list, as a working document. The participants represented different university community groups: faculty, students, alumni, technical staff, management teams, and business and social organisations that have projects with the university. The chapter describes how this policy-making process expanded the capabilities of the participants, especially the epistemic capability. The process itself contributed to greater cognitive justice, one of the necessary ingredients for a more just and democratic society (Sen 2009; De Sousa Santos 2014).

The chapter is structured as follows: in the second section, we describe the role of education in the capability approach and its contribution to democracy, as well as the relevance of an epistemic capability for higher education. In the third section, we reflect on the development of capabilities lists in the field of higher education by offering examples of lists of capabilities that have been significant in our process. In the fourth section, we illustrate the context and characteristics of UI. In the fifth section, we describe the methodology for the preparation of the list. In the sixth and seventh sections, we analyse the expansion of the epistemic capability and other related capabilities with the conversion factors that made this participatory exercise possible. Finally, we conclude with some

reflections on the implications of experiences such as the one in UI to human and sustainable development from the higher education.

Education and Epistemic Capability

As Sen states, capabilities are the real possibilities and opportunities of leading a life that a person has reasons to value. They refer to different combinations of achievable functions, where functions are “the different things that a person can value doing or being” (Sen 1999, p. 3). These, together, constitute what makes a person’s life valuable. The distinction between achieved functionings and capabilities is that the former refers to what is effectively possible and can be put into action, and the latter are the freedoms or valuable options from which one can choose (Robeyns 2005). In this vein, the main constrictions on freedom should be reduced or eliminated so that society can thrive as a whole.

McCowan and Unterhalter (2013) suggest different ways in which capabilities have a bearing on education and on ethical development. First is the distributional aspect of education. Thinking in terms of capabilities raises a wider range of issues than simply looking at the number of resources or commodities people have: “Because of interpersonal diversity, people need a different amount of resources in order to transform these into the functioning of being educated” (Unterhalter 2009, p. 166). In capability language, we refer to conversion factors, which are personal, social, and environmental characteristics that intersect through different dimensions. Learners could differ along (a) personal conditions (e.g. gender, age, class), (b) intersecting external environmental conditions (e.g. wealth, climate), and (c) interindividual or social conditions (Walker 2006). Furthermore, people with the same outcome may have had very different opportunities, so they should not be judged in the same manner. Apart from this distributional aspect, in our chapter the reference to conversion factors is crucial to understand the context in which the UI capabilities list was designed (the process aspect) as well as its content. As Robeyns (2017) suggests, we do not only ask about who has more or less capability and their corresponding functioning, but we also assess processes and the conditions of possibility under which functionings are enabled or limited by different conversion factors.

Second, education can be a capability multiplier. Education can develop skills that open up a wider set of opportunities in employment, leisure, family and social life, among others. Some of the opportunities enabled by education are derived from the certification provided by formal education, and some from learning itself, which can be gained from a wide variety of educational experiences (McCowan and Unterhalter 2013, p. 146). We illustrate in this chapter that the expansion of capabilities in higher education does not only happen in formal settings but also in other pedagogical encounters (Walker 2019).

Third, education is highly related and based on values. While education should not necessarily promote particular political and moral values, it is always inescapably charged with values (McCowan and Unterhalter 2013). Further, values are formed through the education process (Vaughan and Walker 2012). From a human development perspective, four fundamental values should be at the core of any development process: (1) empowerment, understood as the expansion of the capabilities of people (real opportunities to achieve valuable ends), the expansion of valuable functioning (valuable purposes achieved), and participation; (2) the equitable distribution of basic skills; (3) sustainability; and (4) the freedom of people to enjoy their opportunities and achievements (Boni and Gasper 2012). As McCowan (2015) points out, this approach to development has particular applications for education. First, educational systems should distribute their benefits in an egalitarian manner; second, educational processes should be multipliers of capabilities that empower the individual to understand, exercise, and defend their rights; third, educational practices should foster individual autonomy—the ability to choose between different life courses and to enhance agency. If we add a sustainable dimension, the distributional aspect should take into account that resources are not limitless. Moreover, rights to be defended could include future generation rights or even earth rights.

Connected with the importance of promoting autonomy and agency, the capability approach is linked with other participatory approaches to development in considering a deeply democratic way of making decisions, paying special attention to the most marginalised groups who have fewer opportunities to participate in the decision-making process (Boni and Wilson-Strydom 2018).

Related to the democratic and participatory aspects of the capability approach is the epistemic discussion. Sen (2009) states that democratic practice requires the inclusion of epistemic grounds because the demand of justice can be assessed only with the help of public reasoning. In similar terms, De Sousa Santos (2014) stresses the importance of cognitive justice to reach a global social democracy in which there is recognition of the multiplicity of social practices and experiences of the world. But there can be no global social democracy if there is no democracy between forms of knowledge. So, the epistemic capability, understood as the real possibility of producing knowledge in an inclusive way, is paramount for this understanding of democracy.

Miranda Fricker (2015, pp. 73–90) points out the importance of epistemic contributions from all citizens as contributors to the production and sharing of information (also see Chap. 1). However, she notes that this capability has not been sufficiently addressed in the capability approach literature. Hence, Fricker stresses that one of our most basic needs is to use our reasoning to discern the everyday facts and social meanings that condition, constrain, and make sense of our shared lives (2015, p. 76). This has implications for other capabilities; most notably, practical reasoning is dependent upon it, given that deliberation implies knowledge and understanding (Boni and Velasco 2019). Fricker's (2015) epistemic contribution capability can be operationalised by distributing informational and interpretive materials. The first comprises not only information itself but also anything bearing upon the question at stake, such as evidence, critical doubt, hypothesis, and argumentation. The second includes distributing interpretive materials required to make sense of a more or less shared social world (including not only interpretations themselves but also anything bearing on their justification and reasonability, such as the concepts used, alternative interpretations, or other relevant critical materials) (Fricker 2015). This is fundamentally a relational capability: it implies giving information with uptake or with a reasonable likelihood of uptake. Sen's approach would also emphasise the relational aspect of this capability in that public reasoning requires relationships of reciprocity and non-domination with others (Walker 2019, p. 224).

However, this epistemic capability can be frustrated by hermeneutical injustices. David Coady (2017, p. 64) points out that hermeneutical injustice occurs prior to communicative activity. The concept of hermeneutic marginalisation, in turn, is explained as a matter of belonging “to a group which does not have access to equal participation in the generation of social meanings” (Fricker 2013, p. 1319). Coady argues that Fricker’s account of hermeneutical injustice in terms of hermeneutic marginalisation is (at least implicitly) a principle of distributive justice:

The egalitarian principle according to which it is a requirement of justice that everyone should have equal access to participation in the generation of social meanings, that is, everyone should have equal hermeneutic power. To be marginalized with respect to a certain good is just to have less than an equal share of it. (Coady 2017, p. 65)

Hermeneutical injustice is also addressed by José Medina (2017, p. 42) who stresses that this kind of injustice occurs when subjects are not simply mistreated as intelligible communicators but also prevented from developing and exercising a distinctive “voice,” that is, prevented from participating in meaning-making and meaning-sharing practices. In this sense, Medina adds an active component to the epistemic capability (although he does not use this term), illustrating that is not only an issue of giving interpretive materials but also of having the possibility of participation in epistemic practices (Boni and Velasco 2019). Both the characteristics of epistemic capability and these different interpretations of hermeneutical injustice are useful in analysing our case study.

Capabilities Lists in Higher Education Settings

In the capability approach, there is a debate about whether to list capabilities (see Robeyns 2017). A central aspect of this debate is focused on the importance of aligning the construction of the list with the central assumptions of the capability approach: the centrality of agency, choice, and freedom, underpinned by a commitment to participation and public dialogue (Robeyns 2017). Sen argues that it is preferable to avoid

predetermined lists of capabilities and allow those affected by a list to identify their own capabilities based on participatory and deliberative processes (1999, 2006, 2009). On the other hand, Nussbaum (2000) argues that a list of capabilities is essential to avoid problems of omission. This could happen when groups overlook a capability that might be important to them (not least under conditions of hermeneutic marginalisation) and, therefore, having a list from which to start may be useful. To this end, in this section, we present two capabilities lists that have been influential in the capabilities list construction for UI.

Following Nussbaum's perspective, Walker (2006) developed an ideal-theoretical list of eight central capabilities for higher education contexts: (1) practical reason; (2) educational resilience; (3) knowledge and imagination; (4) learning disposition; (5) social relations and social networks; (6) respect, dignity, and recognition; (7) emotional integrity; and (8) bodily integrity. The list was produced after reviewing six existing education-related capabilities lists, as well as her empirical work and her experience working in higher education contexts. She provides three overarching reasons to justify the utility of her list. First, a targeted list is needed to focus the capability approach on the specificities of higher education. Second, this level of specificity provides the basis for arguing for educational practices that explicitly seek to foster capabilities and equality. Lastly, the formulation of a list could be useful to test the usefulness and possible applications of the capability approach in a higher education context (Table 2.1).

Another ideal-theoretical list of six capabilities that is especially relevant for our case because it is formulated by a Latin-American author is the one proposed by Maria del Consuelo Chapela (2004). Her list was based on her own understanding of how a universal and utopian university might be. Chapela argues that a universal and, therefore, inclusive university has two dimensions: an objective one, that is, material, practical, and technical, and a subjective one, that is, social, symbolic, and historical. The blend between these two dimensions gives the base for the list of six capabilities: (1) erotic capability, (2) sapiens capability, (3) ludens capability, (4) economic capability, (5) political capability, and (6) faber capability (Table 2.2).

Table 2.1 Key elements of Walker's list (2006)

Key elements of Walker's list (2006)

Practical reason: Making well-reasoned, informed, critical, independent, intellectually acute, socially responsible, and reflective choices; constructing a personal life project in an uncertain world, good judgment

Educational resilience: Navigating study, work, and life; negotiating risk; persevering academically; responding to educational opportunities and adaptive constraints; becoming self-reliant; having aspirations and hopes for a good future

Knowledge and imagination: Disciplinary and public knowledge, critical thinking and imagination to comprehend the perspectives of multiple others and to form impartial judgments and debate complex issues. Awareness of ethical debates and moral issues

Learning disposition: Having curiosity and a desire for learning. Having confidence in one's ability to learn. Being an active inquirer

Social relations and social networks: Being able to participate in a group for learning, working with others to solve problems or tasks, collaborative and participatory learning. Being able to form good networks of friendships and belonging for learning support and leisure. Mutual trust

Respect, dignity, and recognition: Respect for oneself and for others, as well as receiving respect from others; being treated with dignity; not being diminished or devalued; showing empathy, compassion, and listening to and considering others' points of view in dialogue and debate. Being able to act inclusively and respond to human need. Having competence in intercultural communication. Having a voice to participate effectively in learning; a voice to speak out, to debate, to persuade; to be able to listen

Emotional integrity: Not being subject to anxiety or fear that diminishes learning. Being able to develop emotions for imaginations, understanding empathy, awareness, and discernment

Bodily integrity: Safety and freedom from all forms of physical and verbal harassment in the higher education environment

Table 2.2 The capabilities of Chapela's (2004) list

Key elements of Chapela's list (2004)

Erotic capability: of passion, of anger, of tasting, of dreaming, of annoyance, and of pleasure

Ludens capability: to create, to dream, to imagine, to do the infinite, the impossible, the scripts, scenarios, and rules

Economic capability: to identify the limits and possibilities in finite material, technical, and practical contexts

Political capability: to evaluate, to build alternatives, to develop projects, to choose, and to decide

Faber capability: to act with intention, to conduct projects to modify the objective and subjective worlds through objective practice in the material world, to inscribe subjectivity in the objective world

Walker and Chapela's lists were highly relevant to guide the first draft of the UI capabilities list, giving the researcher's group a general perspective and a university perspective of the things that make life valuable to live.

The Universidad de Ibagué

UI is a medium-sized private university, according to Colombian standards, with around 5600 students and 330 teachers, founded in 1980 by a group of businessmen and civic leaders from the Department of Tolima.¹ UI's mission defines its aim as providing comprehensive training for leaders and entrepreneurs—solid scientific and professional training, deep-rooted ethical and moral principles, and being committed to social, cultural, and economic regional development. The characteristics of the region where it is located are especially relevant to understanding the mission of the university.

Tolima department has suffered from levels of high violence produced by the armed conflict between the state, civilians, and illegally armed groups. Conflict has negatively impacted the development of the territory, putting Tolima in the 14th place among 33 departments in competitiveness and in the 18th place in the tertiary education category, which includes coverage, quality, and rate of employment after graduation (CPC&UR 2019). Moreover, Colombia has had different stages of civil war during the second half of the twentieth century. First, civil war occurred through the 1960s as a dispute between the two traditional political parties. After a period of truce, in the 1980s, guerrillas emerged to fight for social rights, becoming economic organisations pursuing illegal businesses. During the 1990s there was a period of organised criminal business based on drug trafficking that permeated the state structure. In 2016, a peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces was signed, leading to a disarmament process in 2017. The signing of this peace agreement has given rise to a crucial moment in the country's development. In this new

¹ Colombia is politically divided into departments.

post-agreement scenario, words such as truth, justice, reparation, non-repetition, forgiveness, and reconciliation signal the possibility of political and moral pathways to conflict resolution.

In this particular context, UI has, since its foundation in 1980, assumed a commitment to regional development based on the enhancement of social wellbeing. UI has taken an active role to build sustainable peace processes by bringing together students with communities to enhance human development capabilities:

The Institution was created by a group of businessmen and civic leaders of Tolima with the support of the Corporation for Human Development of Tolima and the Association for the Development of Tolima, in order to contribute to human, cultural, economic, political and social development of the region, and to offer alternatives for higher education programs different from those offered until then in the region. (Universidad de Ibagué 2018, p. i)

The University was founded within an institutional framework aimed at bringing progress, making the region prosperous with a focus on social welfare, and creating a place for students to thrive within their personal and professional projection—a place worth staying. From its foundation, the notion and meaning of the region was considered a long-term collective project of a situated community. In this sense, the region is perceived as something unfinished, as something that is continuously being built. This university ethos strengthens and gives coherence to development based on the wellbeing of people in the territory. The highest government authority is the Founders' Board, followed by the Superior Board.² Both boards have preserved the founders' legacy and have supported a strong path dependency towards regional human development.

²The Founders' Board is the highest authority of the university. The members are elected by the current members by simple majority. The Founders' Board elects the members of the Superior Board and the University President.

Building a Capabilities List for UI

Aligned with the university ethos and the aim of giving coherence and directionality to the next decades of UI trajectory, there is a project to build an institutional policy in a bottom-up approach based on the capability approach. For this purpose, a contextual capabilities list can give stronger direction to university policies, practices, and projects. Moreover, a list directed towards the expansion of real opportunities valued by the university community is highly relevant for the Tolima region and is aligned with UI vision. It was essential to assure a high degree of ownership of the list, so the list was built following a participatory process that involved representatives of faculty members, students, administrative staff, service staff, directors, alumni, enterprises, and social organisations that work with UI. The proposal for the capabilities list construction came from the University Provost, who thought about and designed the process jointly with an international professor with expertise on the capability approach (the authors of this chapter). The support from a university authority was crucial to carry out the whole process.

The methodology to build the capabilities list followed the principles described in Robeyns (2003). As we will present later, the explicit list has been discussed and defended. Its methodology has been clarified and debated through phases 1 and 2. Its content is very contextual since it comes from the considerations of the entire university community. The list went through different phases in its preparation, always respecting its contextual nature and its alignment with the key values of UI. Finally, the list includes all the elements that the university community has reason to value. Each element is different, although there are relationships between them.

The other key inspiration in building the list has been the Institute of Development Studies who have developed policy-building dimensions (IDS 2006). These include the consideration of (1) the knowledge and discourse of participants and stakeholders, their narratives, and framings of reality and expectations; (2) the identification of actors and networks involved in the action context; and (3) the underlying power dynamics that configure the veiled and unveiled politics and interests of the policy

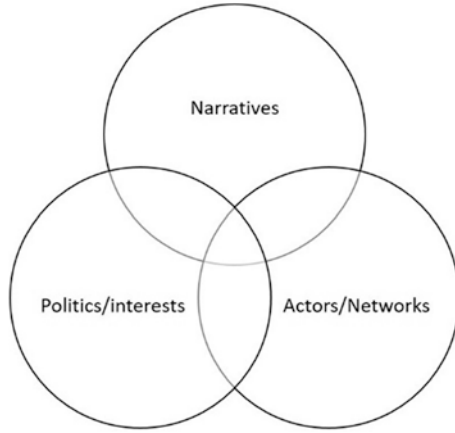


Fig. 2.1 Policy dimensions based on IDS (2006)

process (Fig. 2.1). This process was accompanied by an intentional vision for UI inspired by human development and a thorough process of identification of skills, incentives, resources, and action plans needed to produce real changes (Fig. 2.2) at UI (Knoster et al. 2000).

A three-stage process was planned, as shown in Fig. 2.2.

The capabilities list process was led by the UI Provost, with the support of a group of five researchers from the University Institute Pensad, which focuses on systemic thinking and complexity. Through the whole process, the support and advice from the international professor was fundamental. The designer group (the five UI researchers) was the most instrumental group in the process, constructing the capabilities list and expanding their epistemic capability. They designed the methodology, facilitated the workshops, and were part of the data analysis. Table 2.3 describes the core actors to carry out the methodology.

First Phase (May–October 2019)

The horizon phase objective was to build an initial consensual capabilities list by gathering the narratives and views of what is or should be valued by UI, taking into account the university identity. Nine workshops,

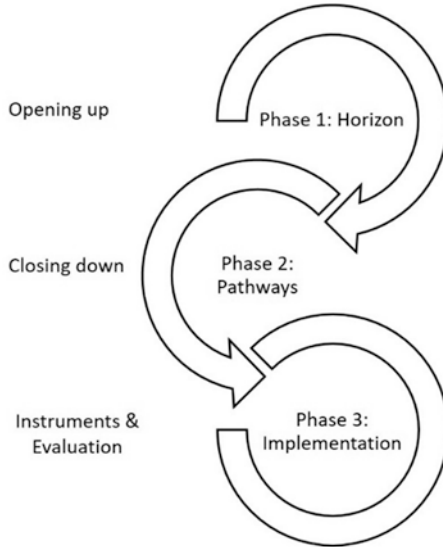


Fig. 2.2 Capabilities list-building methodology

Table 2.3 Lead actors of the participatory process

Pensad UI Institute—designer group	Five researchers trained in systemic thinking, complexity, and the capability approach. Their role was focused on the workshops' design, implementation, data gathering, and data analysis
Provost	Project leader and sponsor. Participation in the workshop design, some workshop implementation, and data analysis
International researcher	Professor, expert on the human development capability approach. Participation in data analysis and conducting interviews
Sociologist	Support in data analysis and capabilities final draft
Research assistant	Support at every research stage

designed and facilitated by the Institute Pensad, were carried out with internal university members differentiated by groups (faculty, students, administrative and service staff, executive leadership, students' welfare) and external partners that work with the university (enterprise and social organisation representatives). There were 127 participants—64 women and 63 men. Additionally, 13 interviews were conducted with regional

organisations and the University Rector. The workshops were designed by the Pensad Institute to be interactive and to trigger deep reflections about what is valuable individually and collectively.

The workshops had four central stations and three main sessions to identify the participants' lived experiences with UI. The first session was focused on bringing out valuable personal experiences with UI through a practical exercise of visualisation and breathing using mindfulness techniques. Subsequently, the participants individually, anonymously, and confidentially briefly identified those memories. The second session focused on a journey through four stations aimed at exploring meaningful and valuable elements that constitute UI identity at the personal and collective levels. The stations are described in Table 2.4.




The third session was the workshop closure, in which participants reflected collectively on the experience. It was also the moment when the whole capabilities list process was described to the participants. It was announced that a second workshop with a mixture of participants from different areas would follow this stage, and its purpose would be to share with them a UI capabilities list produced as a result of the workshops and also a list of enabling and disabling factors to expand UI capabilities.

In addition to the workshops, interviews were conducted with 13 representatives from social organisations that work with UI and also the University Rector. The questions focused on what is valuable in terms of the contribution of UI to the region and to their organisations as well as the obstacles in the relationship.

The data analysis was carried out by defining information categories gathered during the workshops and interviews from the participants' narratives. Results were analysed in terms of capabilities identification and enablers and disablers to expand the capabilities. By finding similarities in the results, the group defined four capabilities categories: training, territory, university community, and enterprise.


The result of the first stage was a list of eight capabilities: two in training, two in territory, two in university community, and one for enterprise. Enablers and disablers for these capabilities were also identified.

Table 2.4 Stations of the first stage

Station	Description	Picture
Collage	Large collage with pictures from different places in Tolima showing landscapes, cultural settings, population in context, and so on. Participants were asked to look at the collage and then in groups write how the university can contribute to regional development and vice versa	
Butterfly	Large butterfly image to reflect on what it means to be an integral trainer. Participants had to think of an example of what they consider an integral trainer by setting up a list of characteristics	
Press Headline	Press headline saying "Higher education crisis in Colombia." The content says: it is 2029 and there are only five universities still in service, one of them UI. Through a role play, in which the group is the Superior Board, participants have to determine what aspects they would maintain and also which ones they would change in order for UI to survive	

(continued)

Table 2.4 (continued)

Station	Description	Picture
Silhouette	In a silhouette, participants with different colour post-its identified values, knowledge, practices, and emotions of an autonomous and humanist leader of UI	

Second Phase (November–December 2019)

The objective of this stage was the validation of the capabilities list, identification of enablers and disablers for specific pathways to expand the capabilities, and the possible interconnectedness between the capabilities, thinking of them as a system. The base group was maintained, so the Pensad Institute led the design and facilitation of the workshops. For this stage, six workshops with mixed participants (admin staff, students, faculty members, directors, and enterprise and social leaders) were developed. There were 62 participants, 35 women and 27 men. The workshops were developed as four sessions.

The first session recalled the participatory process of the first capabilities list stage and the objective and meaning of the project. It also announced for the third stage, an open call to fund projects aiming to expand at least one of the capabilities defined by UI community. The second session had the format of a “Capabilities Gallery.” By reproducing an art gallery, the eight capabilities were exposed in an enlarged size relating them to an image that illustrated the purpose of each capability. Participants observed and experienced each capability and selected two affinities with which they felt most connected. Then, they recorded answers regarding the way they live and feel about the capabilities selected and the way these capabilities can empower and can be enhanced in the university community (Fig. 2.3).



Fig. 2.3 Pictures 1 and 2 (images of the capabilities gallery)

During the third moment, participants, divided by groups, proposed interrelationships between the capabilities in a systemic view, defined the system's purpose, and identified enabling and disabling factors affecting the whole system. For this section, the facilitators used cards that reproduced, in a smaller size, the art gallery images and capabilities definition as well as “joker” cards in case the group would like to suggest a new capability. Groups could also reject one or more capabilities for the system. Groups also had a wool hank, scissors, duct tape, and paper to represent the system (pictures 7, 8, and 9) (Fig. 2.4).

Once the system was designed, the facilitators gave the participants cards with enabling and disabling factors and joker cards to propose further factors. Then participants placed the factors in the system to complete the whole set (Fig. 2.5).

The third session was closed by providing a feedback forum so participants could raise their doubts, criticisms, and questions about the project and provide suggestions about the methodology and the objective of the capabilities list. The whole process was designed to empower and give voice to different groups from the university, so the community itself felt that the policy-making process and the future are in their own hands.

The fourth session consisted of the groups' systems presentations. They explained the system's purpose, demonstrated connections between capabilities, and presented new capabilities (if applicable) as well as the effect of the enabling and disabling factors in the system (with new factors if applicable). After the presentations, facilitators addressed the group

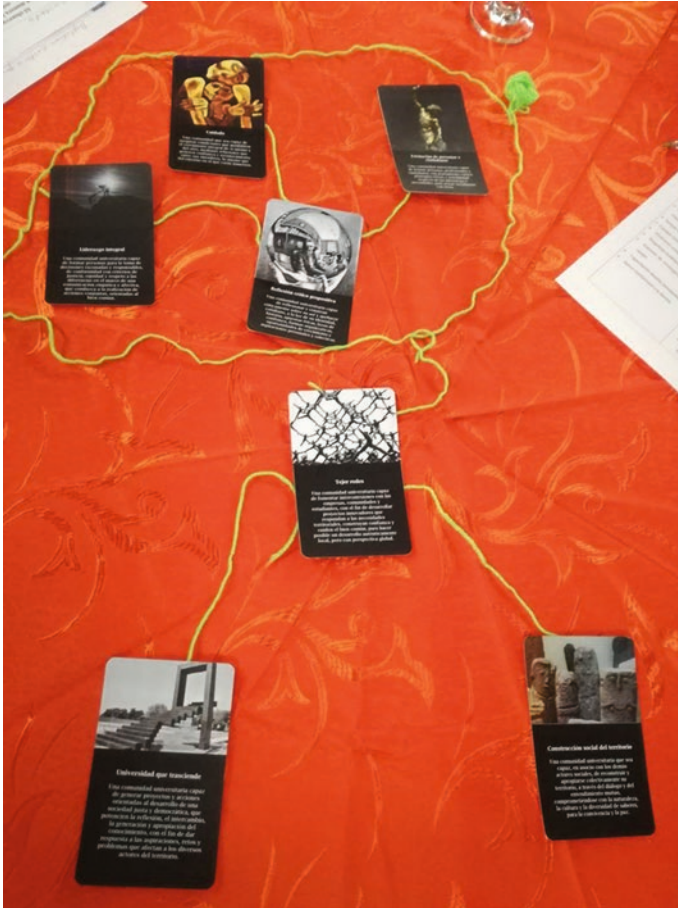


Fig. 2.4 Pictures 3, 4, and 5 (capabilities systems representation made by three different groups)

with two questions: Which of these human capabilities would your area or unit promote and enhance? How can the designed system help define the action routes that are realised through projects?

The second stage finished with a validated list of capabilities (presented in Table 2.5) and a list of enablers and disablers for expanding these capabilities.

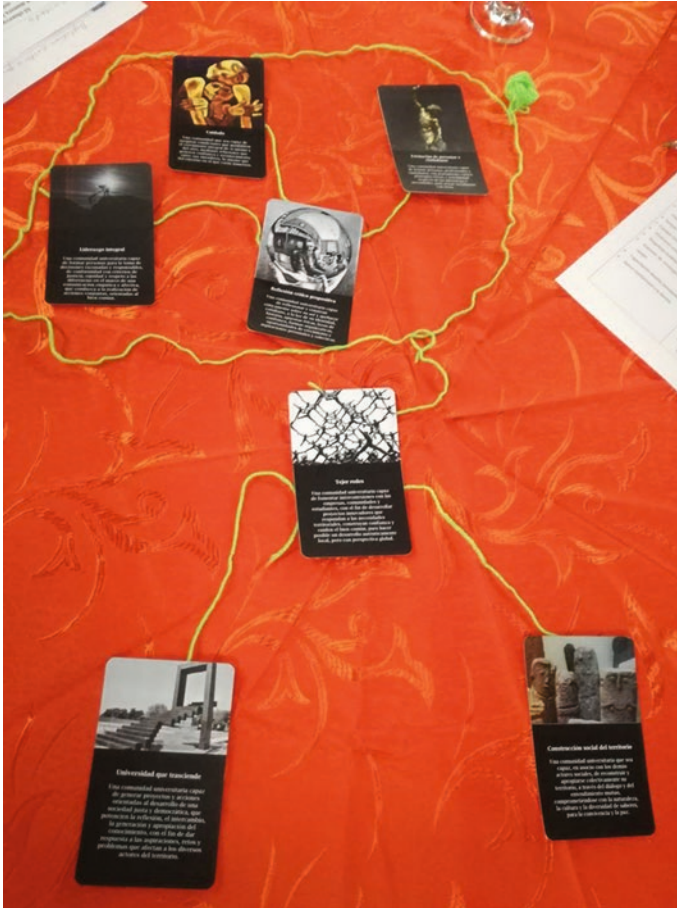


Fig. 2.5 (continued)

Third Phase (January 2020–Ongoing Process)

The aim of this phase is to enhance the capabilities list in each academic and administrative organisation unit. It is a long-term, challenging process. It will start with an official statement on the aim of a university policy based on the capabilities list that represents what is valuable for the UI community. As a first step, in order to get participatory and concrete

Table 2.5 Capabilities list

Category	Capability	Definition
Training	Training of persons and citizens	A university community capable of training people, professionals, and citizens with critical thinking, ethical principles, and sensitivity regarding social differences and needs
	Integral leadership	A university community capable of training people for reasoned and responsible decisions, in accordance with criteria of justice, fairness, and respect for differences (within the framework of empathic and affective communication) that leads to the realisation of joint actions oriented to the common good
Territory	Social construction of territory	A university community that is capable, in association with the other social actors, of rebuilding and appropriating its territory collectively, through dialogue and mutual understanding, committing itself to nature, culture, and diversity of knowledge for connivance and peace
	University that transcends	A university community capable of generating projects and actions aimed at the development of a fair and democratic society that enhances reflection, exchange, and generation and appropriation of knowledge to respond to aspirations, challenges, and problems that affect the various actors in the territory
University community	Purposeful critical reflection	A university community capable of reflecting and building critically on their being and daily work in the light of their identity, history, ethical stakes, bonds of trust, organisational forms, growth opportunities, and personal and collective aspirations
	Care	A community that is capable of ensuring conditions that allow the integral growth of the self and the other, through relationships that build trust and recognition among its members as well as of the environment in which they are immersed

(continued)

Table 2.5 (continued)

Category	Capability	Definition
	Constructive interaction	A university community capable of stimulating, allowing, and promoting a dialogue that is well informed, clear, transparent, and respectful of freedom and differences of opinion. It is oriented, on the one hand, to strengthen the social interaction between the members of the community, so that they develop the personal power to choose and act in the social and political environment. On the other hand, it favours participation, a good working environment, and individual and collective integral human development
Enterprise	Weave nets	A university community capable of fostering interconnections with companies, communities, and students to develop innovative projects that respond to territorial needs, build trust, and take care of the common good, to make possible a truly local development with a global perspective

initiatives and projects to expand these capabilities in different contexts, the whole university community will be invited to participate in an open call to support their proposals. The challenge for UI is to promote concrete actions that make the list dynamic and useful for the shared aspirational university.

Epistemic Capabilities and Epistemic (In)justice

The participatory process for the construction of the capabilities list allowed different pedagogical encounters (Walker 2019), expanding the epistemic capability of the participants in the different moments of the process.

For the representatives in the two phases of the list construction, the epistemic capability was expanded individually and in groups. Individually, in phase 1, when the participants evoked their experiences,

Table 2.6 List of conversion factors

Enabling factors	Disabling factors
– Effective planning	– Academic programmes that do not respond to society's needs
– General wellbeing	– Lack of regional advocacy
– Supporting programmes for the university community	– Lack of evaluation processes
– Students' retainment unit	– Power relationships
– Efficiency and quality culture	– Lack of recognition of the university capabilities by the founders and Board of Directors
– Autonomy and resilience	– Ambivalent notion of leadership
– Teamwork	– Noneffective communication processes and channels
– Link between the founders and boards with the university community	– Mediocrity
– Collaborators, facilitators, citizens beyond leaders	– Financial resources
– Good communication channels	– Weak linkage with the political and business sectors
– National and international networks	– Lack of trust from the business sector to the academic sector
– Self-evaluation processes	
– Relationship with the context	
– Curriculum updating processes	
– Trust	

moments, situations, and people that have been pleasant, valuable, and/or significant on their path at UI, they reflected on valuable achievements and the freedom to enjoy them. Collectively, in the four-station journey, they argued about how the university could contribute to the region and/or vice versa; the characteristics of a person they consider as a comprehensive trainer; the aspects of the university they would either retain or remove; and the values, knowledge, practices, and emotions that describe a humanist and autonomous leader. In the second phase, the epistemic capability was also enhanced when participants experienced the Capabilities Gallery. When each person observed, experienced, and reflected on the capabilities presented, he or she assessed the validity and representation of what is valuable for UI, both at the personal level and as a group during the creation of a capability system, with the

identification of the enabling and disabling factors for the expansion of the capabilities.

In both, the first and second phases, the epistemic capability was expanded through informational and interpretive materials. It is difficult to differentiate whether a material has been more informative or more interpretative. We believe that there is a direct relationship between the two since, by discussing information about the ideal leader, integral trainer, or contribution by UI, participants, both individually and collectively, generated an interpretation of what is and should be valued by UI.

The experience of the 13 people interviewed was different. They provided their vision on central issues for the development of the list of capabilities. In this sense, we can say that they expanded their epistemic capability when they critically presented their observations, arguments, and interpretations about UI. However, there was not a group interaction to collectively elaborate on an interpretation of the purpose of UI. In this sense, we can say that both techniques proved adequate for collecting details about the list. However, for expanding epistemic capability, participatory methodologies are better not only for generating informative materials but also interpretive materials (Boni and Frediani 2020).

The designer group, as mentioned before, had a main role in the data analysis of each one of the phases. The group collectively generated informational and interpretive materials—informational by organising and generating information categories and interpretive by analysing and presenting a capabilities list that captured what the members and external allies of UI value. This constitutes the most relevant functioning of the epistemic capability. In addition, as it was dependent on the participants in the workshops, the epistemic capability that has given rise to the interpretive materials was developed in groups, which discussed and agreed on the capabilities and their definition.

Regarding epistemic injustices, we can say that the participatory method chosen allowed groups traditionally excluded from decision-making power in the University to have a voice in this process. Students, support staff, social organisations, and entrepreneurs are rarely called to

participate in processes to define an institution's aspirational vision. In this sense, in tune with Coady (2017), the participatory process allowed a greater distribution of epistemic capability by recognising the voices of the traditionally excluded (Medina 2017).

Some might object to the power of the designer group to manage the process and create the list. While the group was powerful, there were three nuances. First, there was a concerted effort to not leave any important idea out (the principle of exhaustion and non-reduction). Likewise, the list was presented and discussed among all the participants in the second-phase workshops. In that way, the information was discussed and triangulated exhaustively. The second consideration is the heterogeneity of the designer group. Its members, with the exception of the provost and one of the most senior professors at the university, were not representative of the most powerful university groups. In particular, the presence of two external advisors to the university allowed the incorporation of a wide variety of visions from diverse participants. The third consideration refers to the fact that the epistemic capability is not only reflected in the content of the list but also in the production of informational and interpretive materials. In this sense, all the participants could exercise epistemic capability even if their influence on the content of the list was lower. Nevertheless, no matter how a project is designed, all participatory processes are always permeated by power relationships that influence the degree of participation (Frediani et al. 2019).

The following table summarises the involvement of participants according to the type of epistemic functioning (kind of materials produced) and the hermeneutical power that the different groups involved had throughout the process. We have characterised the type of power by the degree of expansion of the epistemic capability and influence on the content of the final list. In this sense, we have differentiated between the people who participated in the two workshops, those who were only in the first workshop, the people interviewed, and the designer group. These characterisations are our subjective interpretations as participants in the designer group (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Epistemic capability and hermeneutical power of the UI process

Participants	Interpretive materials				Individual	Collective	Degree of hermeneutical power
	Informational materials	Interpretive materials	Individual	Collective			
Workshop 1–2	X	X	X	X	X	XX	
Workshop 1	X	X	X	X	X	XX	
Interviewees	X		X			X	
Designer group	X	X	X	X	X	XXXX	

Other Expanded Capabilities and Conversion Factors

At the beginning of this chapter, we suggested that education can be a capability multiplier. In this case, we have verified that pedagogical encounters produced by the list creation process can expand epistemic capability. Moreover, as epistemic capability was expanded, so were other qualities. Following Walker's (2006) proposal presented in the third section, we can say that the groups involved in the process also expanded (1) practical reason, knowledge, and imagination; (2) social relationships and social networks; and (3) respect, dignity, and recognition capabilities. However, not all capabilities expanded in the same way for each group. Those interviewed expanded their practical reason, knowledge, and imagination since they provided their knowledge, which was informed by a reflective choice. For them, the capabilities of a relational nature (social relationships and respect) were not expanded. Participants that were only in the first workshop expanded the other capabilities but to a lesser extent than the participants of the two workshops. The heterogeneous composition of the second workshop allowed a greater expansion of the capabilities of respect, dignity, and recognition. Finally, the designer group had the greatest capability expansion, due to their interactions and participation in all the different portions of the process. Again, as we proposed in the previous section, the greater the participation in the different pedagogical encounters, the greater the expansion of capabilities.

Finally, we analysed the conversion factors that allowed the expansion of the epistemic and other capabilities. Regarding personal conversion factors such as gender and age, we did not observe any barriers. That was not the case for the different university groups. The participation of active students and representatives of social organisations that have a relationship with UI was lower. In both cases, there was not any intentional exclusion; for the students, it is related to academic obligations and a lack of motivation to participate in institutional projects, as we confirmed afterwards. To encourage wider participation from students, the designer group conducted interviews and extra workshops to guarantee their voices were represented. In the case of representatives of social

organisations, the fact that many of the social organisations are not located in the city of Ibagué but throughout the region was a limitation for their participation in the workshops. For this reason, we decided to conduct in-person interviews with them.

The social conversion factors were very important in this process. As described in the fourth section, the ethos of this University, characterised by a commitment to the region and an understanding of higher education from a humanistic viewpoint, made it possible to propose and execute such a process. Another key issue was the strong support of the university executive leadership that led the process from the outset and gave it legitimacy.

One potentially hindering social conversion factor, not only for the list of capabilities but of the influence that this list may have on future university policy, is the conception of the higher authorities on how to manage the university. There is no doubt that this participatory process is novel in a university context for both the South and the global North. Innovation has its risks, especially in conservative regional contexts such as the Tolima department (Velasco and Boni 2019). Although this does not invalidate the process itself, since it has already expanded different capabilities, it could certainly be a limitation for a greater impact of the list's dimensions.

Conclusion

Higher education should expand capabilities and promote values related to sustainable development (Boni and Gasper 2012; Boni and Walker 2016). The UI capabilities list shows the potential of higher education institutions to facilitate social justice and community outreach. It is an example of an expansion of epistemic capabilities among different participants, most of whom rarely have the opportunity to be part of epistemic practices like these in higher education. This is an example of how to challenge hermeneutical injustice and give the opportunity to practice real cognitive justice. It is also a good example of the multiplier effect of an educational environment; the participatory process expanded other capabilities such as practical reason, knowledge, social networks,

and respect and recognition. Perhaps most significantly, it is an example of a way to produce contextual and situational knowledge that takes into account the huge challenges that a particular Colombian region is facing. The content of the list itself shows a human-centred institution based on human development values that positively transforms society with the training of highly qualified and ethical citizens and that co-produces solutions to social problems. This is part of the obligation of every university, by virtue of its very existence, to the social contract.

Acknowledgements This chapter was inspired by the vibrant community of Universidad de Ibagué. The Rector, executive leadership, faculty members, students, administrative staff, general services staff, social organisations based all over Tolima, and business men and women were part of the capabilities list construction and saw an opportunity to raise their voice in a participatory policy-building process. To all of the participants, our greatest and special recognition. The Institute Pensad and the group of researchers that designed the whole methodology and data analysis with us were fundamental. The list construction would not have been possible without the vibrant and thoughtful contribution of Hernán López, Julio Mazorco, Carol Peña, Sergio Monroy, and Jonh Viasus. Also a special recognition to Jamith Hernández, who supported the entire process as a research assistant. Finally, Nidia Chaparro, former Provost of the University and sociologist, helped the group in different stages of the data analysis and to have the final version of the capabilities list. Alejandra Boni would like to thank the BEST/2019 Programme of the Generalitat Valenciana for the economic support to be in Colombia during the field work and the Network Mulibien (granted by CYTED programme) for its financial support to discuss the results of this research.

References

- Academia Colombiana de Ciencias Exáctas, Físicas y Naturales–ACCEFYN. (2018). *Desafíos para el 2030. Ciencia, tecnología, educación y medio ambiente*. Maloka.
- Boni, A., & Gasper, D. (2012). Rethinking the quality of universities: How can human development thinking contribute? *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 13(3), 451–470.

- Boni, A., & Walker, M. (2016). *Universities and global human development: Theoretical and empirical insights for social change*. Routledge.
- Boni, A., & Wilson-Strydom, M. (2018). Worthwhile education for ethical human development. In J. Drydyk & L. Keheler (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of development ethics* (pp. 188–199). London: Routledge.
- Boni, A., & Velasco, D. (2019). Epistemic capabilities and epistemic injustice: What is the role of higher education in fostering epistemic contributions of marginalized knowledge producers? *Global Justice: Theory Practice Rhetoric*, 12/1.
- Boni, A., & Frediani, A. (2020). Expanding Capabilities through Participatory Action Research. In E. Chiappero, S. Osman I and M. Qizilbash (Eds.), *Cambridge University Press Handbook of the Capability Approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chapela, M. (2004). La Universidad-sujeto. Utopía para el reencuentro. *REencuentro. Análisis de Problemas Universitarios*, 41. Retrieved from <https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/340/34004104.pdf>
- Coady, D. (2017). Epistemic injustice as distributive injustice. In I. Kidd, J. Medina, & G. Pohlhaus Jr. (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of epistemic injustice* (pp. 61–68). London and New York: Routledge.
- Consejo Privado de Competividad (CPC) and Universidad del Rosario (UR). (2019). *Índice de Competitividad Departamental 2019*. Retrieved from https://compite.com.co/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/CPC_IDC_2019_WEB.pdf
- De Sousa Santos, B. (2014). Más Allá Del Pensamiento Abismal: De Las Líneas Globales a Una Ecología De Saberes. In B. Santos & M. Meneses (Eds.), *Epistemologías del Sur (Perspectivas)* (pp. 21–66). Madrid: Akal, SA.
- Frediani, A., Peris, J., & Boni, A. (2019). Notions of empowerment and participation: The contribution of the capability approach. In D. Clark, M. Biggeri, & A. Frediani (Eds.), *The capability approach, empowerment and participation* (pp. 101–124). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fricker, M. (2013). Epistemic justice as a condition of political freedom? *Synthese*, 190, 1317–1332.
- Fricker, M. (2015). Epistemic contribution as a central human capability. In G. Hull (Ed.), *The equal society* (pp. 73–90). Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Institute of Development Studies, IDS. (2006). *Understanding policy processes: A review of IDS research on the environment*. University of Sussex.
- Knoster, T., Villa, R., & Thousand, J. (Eds.). (2000). *A framework for thinking about systems change—Restructuring for caring and effective education: Piecing the puzzle together*. Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing.

- McCowan, T. (2015). Theories of development. In T. McCowan & E. Unterhalter (Eds.), *Education and international development: An introduction* (pp. 31–48). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- McCowan, T., & Unterhalter, E. (2013). Education, citizenship and deliberative democracy: Sen's capability perspective. In R. Hedtke & T. Zimenkova (Eds.), *Education for civic and political participation: A critical approach* (pp. 135–144). New York: Routledge.
- Medina, J. (2017). Varieties of hermeneutical injustice. In I. Kidd, J. Medina, & G. Pohlhaus Jr. (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of epistemic injustice* (pp. 41–52). Routledge.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2000). *Women and human development: The capabilities approach*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Robeyns, I. (2003). Sen's capability approach and gender inequality: Selecting relevant capabilities. *Feminist Economics*, 9(2–3), 61–92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1354570022000078024>.
- Robeyns, I. (2005). The capability approach: A theoretical survey. *Journal of Human Development*, 6(1), 93–117.
- Robeyns, I. (2017). *Wellbeing, freedom and social justice: The capability approach re-examined*. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as freedom*. Oxford: OUP.
- Sen, A. (2006). What do we want from a theory of justice? *Journal of Philosophy*, 103(5), 215–238. <https://doi.org/10.5840/jphil2006103517>.
- Sen, A. (2009). *The idea of justice*. London: Allen Lane.
- Universidad de Ibagué. (2018). Informe de Autoevaluación Institucional. Ibagué, Colombia.
- Unterhalter, E. (2009). What is equality in education? Reflections from the capability approach. *Studies on Philosophy and Education*, 28, 415–424.
- Vaughan, R. P., & Walker, M. (2012). Capabilities, values and education policy. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 13(3), 495–512. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2012.679648>.
- Velasco, D., & Boni, A. (2019). Transforming policy design: The experiment of the Universidad de Ibagué (Colombia). *TIPC Conference*, UPV, Valencia, 4–5 November.
- Walker, M. (2006). *Higher education pedagogies*. Maidenhead: SRHE/Open University Press.
- Walker, M. (2019). Defending the need for a foundational epistemic capability in education. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 20(2), 218–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19452829.2018.1536695>.