Throughout this week, during the national Poliempreende contest and the SEAS UP conference at the University of Madeira, fatigue was a constant presence. The endless hours of presentations, the side conversations as we tried to absorb new ideas, and the pressure to stay focused on such a packed agenda all took their toll. The days dragged on, filled with stimuli and challenges that, at first glance, seemed to drain our energy more than replenish it. Many times, I found myself in an almost automatic state, driven by anticipation and adrenaline, trying to balance physical and mental exhaustion with the desire to live up to the responsibilities. I was always attentive to conversations and opportunities, ready to respond to every request.

Now that it is all over, the void left by the absence of that intensity is palpable. The silence that follows these days of tension brings with it an unexpected longing — not only for the people and conversations, the joy of the students, the intellectual challenges with colleagues, but also for the very tension that kept us connected. The exhaustion, which once seemed unbearable, is now remembered with a certain fondness, as an integral part of what united us. It is paradoxical to miss something that, at the time, felt so demanding and exhausting.

This longing mixes with a sense of accomplishment. During the event, there were moments when the thought “when will this end?” echoed in my mind. But now, looking back, I realize that behind the exhaustion, there were encounters that increased our power to act, as Spinoza would say. The side conversations, while ideas were debated on the main stage, now echo in memory, intertwining with the very experience of the event, giving it a meaning far greater than the awards or results obtained. And of course, the connections, the glances, the smiles, the embraces — all these moments remain vivid, filled with a mix of emotions.

At the time, exhaustion seemed to obscure the true meaning of the interactions and learning. But now, despite the short time that has passed since those intense days, I realize that this very effort made each encounter more meaningful. Even in the most exhausting hours, there were hidden smiles amidst the challenges. And now, in the midst of longing, sadness and joy blend together, like inseparable sides of an experience lived in its entirety.

It is important to clarify: the “sadness” I feel now is not real sadness, but rather a longing born from the joy we experienced and the absence of the people who made it meaningful. It is not a sadness of loss, but rather a “sadness” that stems from the joy and friendships we built together. It is this absence that transforms joy into longing, a reflection of the depth of

the bonds we created.

The parallel reality we built over these days, outside of competitions and papers, remains as a memory of collective growth — a space where, even in exhaustion, we grew as individuals and as a group. The feeling of “joy or sadness” seems, thus, inseparable. The joy of having shared these moments is now tinged with longing, and both emotions coexist as reflections of what it means to live an experience intensely.

May this parallel reality we created together remain alive in our future meetings, outside of competitions and papers, where true collective growth happens. The feeling of “joy or sadness” will always be part of our journey — and may we continue to walk this path together.

I sincerely thank all of you for these intense days. I truly hope you were happy in Madeira, and that this happiness accompanies you on your way home. Safe travels to all, and until we meet again, when our journeys cross paths once more.

I already miss you, but García Márquez said it best: “Life is not what one lived, but rather what one remembers, and how one remembers to tell it.” May the stories we lived together continue to be told, and may we create new memories soon.

With my heartfelt thanks,

Eduardo Leite, Ph.D.

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