

#### Editorial vol. 39 n. 2

## What if scientific journals editors stopped? Deterioration of academic works beyond pandemic

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On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared that the world was undergoing a pandemic caused by COVID-19. The alert was made for all countries to adopt measures to contain the virus dissemination and mitigate its impacts. The main strategy adopted by several nations was to implant, in different ways, social distancing and isolation, as ways to minimize the virus propagation, causing a huge and sudden transformation in the routine of millions individuals. In the field of work, particularly, the changes caused by the pandemic accelerated metamorphoses that were being gradually implemented, including in academic works, thus requiring from us to rethink what was before understood as consensual about practices and even concepts that are part of this universe.

In Brazil, the academic work was consolidated based on the inseparability of teaching, research and extension, materialized in the Federal Constitution of 1988, Article 207. The Brazilian Constitution also provides for the principle of university autonomy, with regard to the development of didactic and scientific practices, as well as administrative practices and management of financial resources and assets. The Constitution view of university teaching reflects well enough a historical moral that built and legitimated the academic work throughout Modernity, when it was associated to a moral attitude and scholars commitment with the society, historically understood for its vocation character rather than a formal work (ALLMER, 2018) until work recognition occurred. However, academic activities, in all their conceptions of the inseparable pillars of teaching, research and extension, in addition to the administrative pillar, such as configured in Brazil, have undergone deep changes based on institutional management models aligned to the structuring and insertion of capitalist logics. In fact, public universities are getting increasingly closer to a neoliberal attitude for the ordination of higher education and research policies as a subset of the economic policy (SLAUGHTER e LESLIE, 2004).

In Brazil, this model of academic capitalism, aligned to the policies for commercial opening in a global market, was combined with a privatization process. The State was gradually abandoning its role as main financing agent for scientific research and encouraging market behaviors aligned with the search of resources from external contracts, donations, incentive to industrialization of the university in competitive models for fund-raising and generation of incomes, among others. When that occurs in an integrated way, with the State as mediator of the relations involving university, companies and industries, there is a sustainable composition of the so called triple helix, where economic growth and social development are based on knowledge (ETZKOWITZ e ZHOU, 2017). Some later studies, particularly after the first decade



of the 2000s, started to incorporate other players in the development helices of the innovation system based on knowledge, among them the civil society and the media, forming fivefold helices (DO AMARAL e RENAULT, 2019) in the university management model.

However, these relations constitute spaces of tension, dispute and negotiation, where the State should exert strong moderating influence in the relations, with a significant position in the management of financial resources to provide and encourage scientific research and technological development in universities and an economy based on knowledge. However, since 2015, particularly, we are crossing a period of privatization of public universities and scientific institutions aligned to a process of loss of credibility of scientific knowledge and attacks to public universities and research institutions in Brazil. These attacks are not limited to the reduction of budget and contingency programs for the funds destined to public higher education. As example, in May 2020, the former minister of Education Abraham Weintraub stated that he no longer wants sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers with "his money", or with resources from taxes (REZENDE, 2020), as if the ministerial office was his property. University autonomy, one of the principles of the 1988 Federal Constitution, was also threatened due to the possibility of having the appointment of rectors and vice-rectors of federal universities without consultation to the academic community during the pandemic (MINISTRO, 2020), provisional measure revoked two days later after pressure by the academic community and opposition senators like Cid Gomes (PDT-CE), Humberto Costa (PT-PE), Jean Paul Prates (PT-RN), Paulo Rocha (PT-PA), Randolfe Rodrigues (Rede-AP), Rogério Carvalho (PT-SE), among others (GOVERNO, 2020). Led in this one and a half year of the current government of President Jair Bolsonaro (without party), these attacks are political and ideological, and research institutes and scientists have been discredited by the federal government itself, including during the pandemic.

A nodal point in this process occurs when the current president transgresses a series of medicalscientific guidance disseminated worldwide for contention of COVID-19. Going against scientists and physicians, the president insists on 1) not wearing face mask in public; 2) having physical contact with acquaintances and passers-by to the point of hugging people on the streets; 3) holding ministerial meetings disrespecting the two-meter physical distancing between individuals; 4) publicly declaring that, in most contaminations, COVID-19 is just "a little flu", 5) declaring that the virus is not "everything that the media spreads" and that 6) the concern with the pandemics "is a neurosis" (VEJA, 2020). Moreover, the delegitimization of science coordinated by the president goes beyond his individual practices. For example, even in face of scientific research in the whole world that do not confirm the efficacy of drugs chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine in COVID-19 treatment, he ordered mass production of the drug by army laboratories. The president uses science delegitimization as political tool. On one hand, he is strongly positioned in favor of the end of quarantine in Brazil, even when the numbers of death and contamination are growing every day, using, for such, the economic argument. This situation has attracted the support of businessmen and unemployed voters, who credit to pandemics their particular economic crisis. On the other hand, the president has created conflicts with state governments by criticizing and pressing the states that have taken scientific guidance seriously.

It is the modus operandi of the government itself, elected based on a lemma against epistemic institutions, among them media and science, but that is inserted in a much wider phenomenon that gathers political forces apparently divergent around a common action. The delegitimization of science as knowledge system, and the academic work as singular practice of management and sprawl of science, are both included in a powerful narrative construction outlined by different agents, among them neoliberal governments, economic conglomerates and the hegemonic media. Based on different references, these agents see in science a field of power that frequently questions and destabilizes the concrete and symbolic bases that ground and provide sense to these instances. It is, as we know, a view of deep historical relation, considering that the clash between science and other institutions like religion marked out even the institution of science as one of the prevailing views in Modernity. However, this contemporary



clash is occurring on a shaky ground traced by the rentier capitalism and its mechanisms that associate platformization and financialization (SADOWSKI, 2020). Within a common sense that is convenient for capitalist companies, neoliberal governments and hegemonic media, while questioning these instances the science would be weakening these institutions as strategy for power maintenance. Therefore, the narrative built to weaken science aims at, as indispensable fight tool, the economic argument. The speeches built by these instances on the deaths caused by COVID-19, for example, are displaced from their scientific aspects and reallocated in the economic field, thus emptying the place of science and legitimate discourse.

The hegemonic media in Brazil follows the economic primer as delegitimization of science and academic work. Even before the election that gave victory to Jair Bolsonaro, the media already published opinion articles and reports on uncommon theses supported by public money, all from the field of Humanities (CASTRO, 2017) or that the end of Human Sciences is intended to save humankind (FERRAZ, 2018). Newspapers were constantly publishing complaints on the deteriorated work conditions, indicating that the academic career is destined to depression (MORAES, 2017), suicide (MORAES, 2016), prostitution (VESPA, 2018) or to alternative works, like, for example, posing naked (SAYURI, 2018). Along with that, they stated that Brazilian public universities should be privatized (COSTA, 2016), aligned with data from the World Bank report, published in November 2017, which indicated that the solution of the financial crisis in Brazil lay on cuts in teaching, research and health, by means of tax adjustment programs, which has been the prevailing policy in the current government.

It is in this conjuncture of instability, threats, and budget reduction that the academic work is configured, seeking to resist to a scenario of academic capitalism and institutional disbelief disseminated by the government itself and the media in Brazil. COVID-19 pandemic accelerates, therefore, ongoing processes in favor of the capital, like remote work and distance education, with the consolidation of narratives that naturalize these conditions (as the "new normal", for example).

This context affects the academic work with its intensification, demand and control of activities and the growing dependence on digital infrastructures of large conglomerates to work. Google Meet, Microsoft Teams and Zoom became, in a short time, platforms well known by the academic community. Classrooms and meetings mediated by devices connected to companies whose main business is data extraction. The software systems, as shown by Yu e Couldry (2020), taken as central by academic institutions, re-inscribe new temporalities and spatialities in the academic work, legitimating surveillance through data and naturalizing new roles and responsibilities.

Carramenha e Cappellano (2020) research Trabalho Remoto e Isolamento Social, (Remote Work and Social Isolation) on workers from all areas who had to adopt remote work in São Paulo state, shows that the sectors, comparatively, that state to be suffering more at work during the pandemic are those of communications and education. The investigation, in general, shows intensification of work and pressure to be productive during the quarantine — which is also shown in a research coordinated by the University of São Paulo (USP)'s Center for Research on Communications and Work (CPCT) (FIGARO et al., 2020), about the work of communications professionals during the social isolation. The investigation reveals that 70% of respondents stated that the pace of work is much more intense and that most of them is emotionally shaken in face of the country's scenario.

It must also be considered the gender inequalities that fall on researchers who are women and establish a difference between the remote working experience during the pandemic of women and men (particularly white men). Historically, women face more difficulty to enter scientific and technological careers (LETA, 2003; MELO e OLIVEIRA, 2006), chiefly because they are the main responsible for domestic works and/or family care (OLIVEIRA, 2020). Nevertheless, women participation in the Brazilian scientific research has grown considerably in all fields of knowledge (MELO e OLIVEIRA, 2006), being accountable



for 72% of the scientific papers published in the country from 2014 to 2017 (TOKARNIA, 2019), according to survey by the Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI). Despite these achievements, COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced, once again, gender inequalities. Though some journals have identified fall in submissions, in general, the number of papers signed by women was lower compared to that of men. Moreover, research conducted with 15 thousand Brazilian researchers (men and women) during the pandemic observed that black women (with or without children) and white women with children were those that had their academic activity most affected. In parallel, men, chiefly those without children, were those that suffered less n this period (PRODUTIVIDADE, 2020).

### Distance education in times of exception

As teaching and research in universities become virtual and science mediatization is integral part of the professional work, several authors (ALLMER, 2018; PORITZ e REES 2017; OLIVEIRA, 2019) have discussed the impacts of implantation of digital media on scholars' works. Among the problems resulting from the transposition of academic and professorial activities, the lack of definition of the work space and other environments of human life and digital surveillance are some of the themes addressed by these authors. In Brazil, such elements are being loosened also for political and ideological matters, which impacts on the measures adopted to circumvent professors' work activities in the pandemic context.

The occurrence of COVID-19 has caused severe impacts worldwide, including, in some places, the emergency or complementary implementation of distance education, as provided in Provisional Measure 9.934, published in Brazil in April 2020. Despite this emergency situation, the search for expanding distance education and homeschooling practices has been promoted by the current Federal Government after the change in the competence of the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (Brazilian Common Core Curriculum) in order to add the use of technologies and new languages for the teaching of some subjects.

For a government that started in 2019 in favor of investing in distance education starting with elementary school and reaching post-graduation, justifying this position for being "cheaper" and also for "helping to fight 'Marxism' in schools" (BRESCIANI, 2018, p. ?), the pandemic intensified these speeches and made former minister of Education Abraham Weintraub press universities that did not adopt the Remote Education model during the pandemic (TURTELLI, 2020). On June 16, 2020, when the country was already considered as epicenter of COVID-19 in Latin America and the second country worldwide with the highest number of infected persons, O Globo (ALFONSO, 2020) published a story stating that over 210 thousand students were not having classes n public universities amid the pandemic, disregarding the Ministry of Education guidance to adopt emergency remote teaching for theoretical subjects. Such recurrence to this type of journalistic production shows how much the science relation with the media, one of the players of the fivefold helix of academic relations, is permeated by disputes where the academic work has been delegitimized and discredited.

Media framing like that resounds policies of persecution and curtailment of scientific thinking, which also led Brazil to be included among the countries considered risky for scholars, as indicated the annual report Free to Think which, in December 2019 stated that the "significant pressures in the Brazilian higher education increased on the eve and during the period after the presidential elections of 2018" (FREE, 2019, p. ?). In this same report, Scholars at Risk reminds that threats to freedom of expression and intellectual freedom of academic work also had the action of the regional Electoral Justice, which, among other things, determined cancellation of events, interruption of classes, removal of banners and posters and seizure of documents in several states. One of the examples was the removal of the banner "Antifascist Law" placed by students during the electoral period of 2018 on the façade of Federal Fluminense University (UFF) Law School campus. Judge Maria Aparecida da Costa Bastos understood that the demonstration



configured negative propaganda for the then candidate Jair Messias Bolsonaro and determined the removal of the banner, threatening to arrest UFF Law School director Wilson Madeira Filho, in case the banner was not removed. According to the director account, the agents of the Regional Electoral Court (TER), at the moment of seizure of the banner, without warrant, also questioned the professors about the content of classes, took photos of the academic center and removed the flag (OLIVEIRA, 2018).

It is in this scenario of uncertainties with regard to academic that the adaptation of teaching in face of the social isolation measures is established in times of pandemic. However, despite the urgency of the debate on control mechanisms over teaching in a government elected under the lemma "schools without party" (ALESSY, 2019), ordinance 544 published in the Federal Gazette by the Ministry of Education – providing for the substitution of in-person classes for classes through digital medium while the new coronavirus pandemic situation persists, until December 31, 2020 – brings other concerns associated to the platformization of the academic work and worsening of social inequalities and access to communication and information technologies.

On one hand, one of the concerns of universities is the access of students to the internet. Despite the advantages of distance education in a digitally inclusive society (MOREIRA et al., 2015), that is not the Brazilian reality. National (PESQUISA, 2018) and international research (for example, The Inclusive Internet Index, 2020) show that, despite the high levels of access in global scale, factors such as level of education, geographic localization and economic strata still represent big challenges for the country to be considered digitally inclusive. Research by the Regional Center of Studies for the Development of the Information Society showed that 30% of the population does not have access to the internet and only 44% has it via cable. The research also shows that 58% of the population access the internet only via cell phone, and in this group, 85% are from classes D and E. According to research conducted by the University of Uberlândia (UFU) involving over 420 thousand students from 63 federal universities of the country, in addition to the whole academic community, almost 77% of undergraduate students belong to classes D and E.

Moreover, the financialization of education in Brazil – with large educational conglomerates with shares in the Stock Exchange – has affected the academic work more intensely in the last five years and shows education inserted in the global logics of power. For example, the Laureate network, in NASDAQ since 2017, had former president Bill Clinton as honorary council member. Both him – along with Bill Gates, from Microsoft – and Tony Blair, former prime minister of the United Kingdom, have already given lectures at conferences in Brazilian universities linked to the network. In a report to the investor in the beginning of 2018, the company already informed that Brazil was a "model" for universities from other countries for having reached higher "efficiency" by reducing "academic costs and costs with professors" and higher investment in distance education. Laureate's major profits come from countries like Brazil, Mexico and Peru.

This picture gets worse during the pandemic. In a report published by Agência Pública in April 2020, teachers from the Laureate network reported the use of artificial intelligence to correct texts – and students do not know that it is not a teacher correcting their work. The educational company answer is symbolic, and states that it "analyzes trends of the educational segment to make available to the academic community what is most modern and innovative in the market, including the adoption of several communication and information technologies that support pedagogical activities and further potentiate the quality of teaching, like the use of artificial intelligence". The note also states to be compliant with the guidelines from the Ministry of Education and Brazilian legislation. That shows, in addition to a grammar of the capital – innovation, trends and digital transformation – how education conglomerates operate in line with the Brazilian government.



# The "diamond via" of the deterioration of the scientific editorial work

Other sphere of the academic work, still invisible, is scientific editing and reviews. We, researchers and professors, are also workers – as remarks Vieira Pinto (1979) while reminding that science in a product of men and women as workers. And under which work conditions? And how were they transformed over time, chiefly in the communication field?

Editing journals in Brazil - differently from other countries - is an activity added to all other tasks of the researcher involving research, teaching and extension. It includes a huge scope of activities and specialized knowledge that goes from the assessment of the scientific quality and wide knowledge of the area to the mastering of tools in the stages of formatting and review, techniques for scientific dissemination and strategies for indexation. Moreover, the lack of policies turned to scientific editing and work recognition drives different interpretations of the scientific editorial work by editors themselves, as pointed out in research conducted by the Federal Fluminense University's Forum of Editors and Scientific Communication (ALBUQUERQUE e DE OLIVEIRA, 2020). According to research made with editors through in-depth interviews, there is an unanimous understanding that the editorial work is considered an "extra", an addition to research and teaching activities. These results are in line with a research conducted by LatinREV from the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO) with 291 editors (FERRIER e CORDA, 2020). The data indicate that the main problems faced by editors are: 1) lack of time to dedicate to editing, given the need to attend to several work commitments, indicated by 54.3% of respondents; and 2) lack of remuneration specific to this editorial work. Another point to be emphasized is that the lack of adequacy of editorial management systems leads to the use of other complementary tools, and consequent work overload, time and specialized knowledge (idem , p. 18).

Among the results pointed out by the UFF Forum of Editors and Scientific Communication (ALBUQUERQUE e DE OLIVEIRA, 2020), many respondents informed to have initiated their activities as editors by pressure of the department itself, and only 20% of them view this function as professional growth or acknowledgement of their work as researchers. Around 85% of the editors interviewed indicated that motivation, associated to the fact that they believe in the journal project, the relevance of journals for the program or department or also the scientific importance of academic journals, is the main reason for them to remain doing the job of scientific editing of journals.

Interpretations like scientific editing activity as a common good in favor of scientific knowledge sharing and as a space for peers of the area to provide visibility to the research developed and so contribute to society, are recurring speeches in the voices of scientific editors, who make resound an imaginary of vocation rather than a formal work. It can be read after what Marcel Mauss (2003) stated as part of the paradigm of the gift to donate what we receive, dismissing compensation as the work acknowledgement itself. Other possible reading is the dimension of the work not paid/free claimed by Marxist feminists like Silvia Federici (2019) in the ambit of house work since the 1970s as not recognition of the work in the name of values like love. Though there are discussions in the ambit of Marxism about what would be this unpaid work in a digital context, we consider that the editor work in scientific journals in Brazil presents this dimension.

Other point associated to work recognition is the political influence, via social capital in the scientific field, of editors who are part of bureaucratic instances, aimed at subverting the order in the scientific system, as reported in the dissertation defended by Kamille Ramos Torres (2020) on editorial practice in scientific journals in the administration field. This lack of work recognition — or the limitation of having this "extra" recognized only as social capital in the scientific field — is one of the factors that lead to the deterioration of scientific editing work. Such deterioration is based on paradigms where the work



structuring is reinforced by the institutional assessment mechanisms themselves. Editors are essential workers whose activity supports a core portion of post-graduation programs assessment in the country. However, Brazilian post-graduation assessment policies do not consider this work as an activity that positively scores in programs' assessment mechanisms.

In Brazil, journals are "almost exclusively financed with public funds" (ORTELLADO, 2008, p. ?) as a way to balance inequalities in the circulation of national scientific production (ALPERIN, FISCHMAN e WILLINSKY, 2008), dominated by economic conglomerates whose profit is based on the commercialization of knowledge (LARIVIÈRI et al., 2015; OLIVEIRA, 2019). In addition to global hierarchies dynamics established based on the asymmetry of scientific circulation between North and South, center and periphery, other intersectional hierarchies established within the academic circuit in different situations, among them the scientific editorial system itself, as widely discussed in edition #CommunicationSoWhite, edited by Eve Ng, Khadijah Costley White e Anamik Saha (2020). The initial paper that inspired this edition was published by Paula Chakravartty et al. (2018), which evidenced the sub-representation of non-white persons in quotations and editorial positions. Starting from the fact that the payment of the editorial work represents symbolic power relations, such as previously discussed, asymmetries of the editorial board of journals indexed on the Web of Science are intensified with the prevalence of western institutions, particularly in the USA, at the expense of other sets of countries considered peripheral. The editorial board, in this sense, becomes a strategy for hierarchization of the communication field and adequacy to the "academic capitalism", since a significant part of these journals have access closed or have publication fees, one of open access modalities.

In Brazil, the open access model that prevails in the editorial scientific production is diamond (Diamond Open Access). This non-profit model of academic publication that makes of the academic knowledge a common good recovers the common character of the academic system, and is defended by an utopian understanding that enables the promotion of work opportunities (FUCHS e SANDOVAL, 2013) and brings a retake of the social justice philosophy about the open access as a way to produce equal opportunities and justice to the so called Global South countries, in order to face the structures that perpetuate injustice in the global scientific circulation (RAJU, 2018). This diamond open access is a model based on institutional support and collaboration networks where non commercial societies and other institutions make available infrastructure, while the professional work remains under the control of research communities, made exclusively by scholars themselves in their roles as editors or peer reviewers. However, the way the diamond model is structured, different from what has been announce as alternative sustainability model for scientific journals, causes social dynamics previously described and shows to be another extra academic work in face of many other demands from research, teaching and extension.

In face of an open access model defined based on a work similar to volunteer work, Brazilian scientific journals were constituted, for a long time, around this form of operation as a way to be inserted in a competitive international scenario for scientific production. However, the model has shown signs of exhaustion, because institutional funds are increasingly scarcer and Brazilian public universities face a severe economic crisis and privatization process, combined to significant budget cuts since 2015, under several threats by the Federal Government itself, as previously discussed. In the horizon of reformulations of forms of assessment of science, technology and innovation — which arise without any public debate or consultation to the academic community - , the editorial activity remains without acknowledgement in periodic assessments of post-graduation programs. Considering that this is a crucial phase for the process of knowledge production, journals should be acknowledged as part of the academic work by the assessment instances and also be seen as strategic spaces to communicate the national science.

Taking into consideration the context discussed in this editorial, the academic work, and more specifically, scientific editing, is crossed by a deterioration logic that is present in several other instances of work in a capitalist system. This has been further intensified after the platformization and datafication



observed in the last years. Thus, this second volume of the dossier on the work on platforms shows how the algorithm management of work and colonization of the game structure the capitalism of platform and the society platformization, which also means cooptation of practices considered "creative" based on a neoliberal ideology. Some of the answers to this context are work regulation considering labor rights, in addition to employment relationship, collective organization of workers and platform cooperativism.

We would also like to thank and acknowledge the dedicated work of Contracampo editorial team. It counts on many volunteers who have dedicated and dedicate, on a daily basis, to the journal so that we can deliver a final result with great contribution to the area. Our editorial team is mostly composed of students from the Post-graduation Program in Communications (PPGCOM) of the Federal Fluminense University, who follow and execute important stages of scientific editing, like editorial secretariat, grammar and orthography revision, copydesk, layout, dissemination, among others. Many students contributed to make of Contracampo a quality journal. In this edition, Lua Inocêncio, for years working with us as assistant editor, leaves the team to dedicate to the final phases of her thesis. Paula Fernandes also doctoral student at UFF PPGCOM will assume the position as flow coordinator, and we also count on a renewed team with new students of the Program, committed to continue the dedicated work Contracampo has made over its 22 years of history. So, we must also thank all past and present volunteers of Contracampo team, in addition to thanking reviewers who, even in such turbulent times as this, contributed and keep on contributing to the quality of our journal. Without their work Contracampo could not exist. We wish you all a good reading!

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