Editorial

Current characteristics of the social practice of publishing science

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The publicity of knowledge is a scientific requirement. It involves subjecting research products to the scrutiny of the academic community, gaining a kind of social validation of them. The researcher´s subjective certainty and conviction are not enough; a certain consensus and social recognition of the value of produced knowledge are needed. However, this requirement is the result of a historical evolution that has undergone different stages.

The invention of the printing press in the mid-15th century undoubtedly marked a fundamental milestone in the distribution of knowledge regarded as true (we cannot speak of scientific knowledge in the current sense). The exponential increase in the extend of knowledge opened the doors to modernity, which began in the 16th and 17th centuries. Modernity initiated a process of secularization of knowledge, meaning that it relied on an immanent criterion of truth based on rationality and empirical data, rather than on external sources to the human being (such as divine revelation, for instance). This meant considering the scientific method as the only valid criterion for legitimizing knowledge. Of course, this did not have a univocal version; the classic dispute between rationalism (Descartes) and empiricism (Locke) in the 17th century attests to this. However, what is certain is that there was a search for immanent intelligibility of the natural order. The trust is this immanent rationality not only laid the foundations for material progress but also opened the doors to free and critical thinking, particularly regarding the questioning of the established social order.

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With modernity, we witness the emergence of various scientific disciplines, which increasingly gain autonomy, even at the cost of a fragmentation of knowledge and of reality itself. The new disciplinary epistemes are accompanied by forms of knowledge production and communication that are increasingly autonomous and involve growing developments.

Nevertheless, despite the optimism generated by the scientific method and the development of specific sciences, in the second half of the 20th century, there is a kind of exhaustion of the linear and continuous model of the progress of knowledge and of the very idea of progress. This exhaustion is greatly influenced by the positivist movement of the second half of the 19th century, which monopolized philosophical and scientific thought until the third decade of the 20th century. Regarding the social sciences, positivism promoted the epistemological autonomy of psychology, sociology economics, and other social disciplines, breaking the umbilical cord with philosophy, while always following the methodological model of the physical-natural sciences. At the same time, there is a sort of phenomenological reaction that claims the particularity of the human sciences in contrast to the "hard" sciences, distinguishing phenomenological understanding from naturalistic explanation.

Starting from the second half of the 20th century, there has been an increasing call for the transversality and interdisciplinary of knowledge, even coming from the physical-natural sciences. This is not just a demand for interdisciplinary, but a more complex, the idea of chaos, chance and indeterminacy, and the notion of emerging systems, concepts developed by Morin, Prigogine, and Maturana.

Speaking of the present, that is the current situation regarding the social practice of the production and dissemination of academic-scientific knowledge (because it is important to remember that is primarily a social practice), we can point out some distinctive characteristics.

First of all, in addition to the interdisciplinary nature already mentioned which invites collaborations from different specialties, we must highlight teamwork or collective work in the production of knowledge. It paves the way for shared authorship, especially in journal articles, where the authorship can involve more than two authors. This contrast with authorships in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century were typically individual and preferred in book format.

The co-authorship goes hand in hand with a strong democratization of production, where seasoned researchers and young academics and doctoral candidates converge, for whom publishing is a requirement for their professional development. This democratization is evident not only in the production of knowledge but also in its consumption by general public; the dissemination and communication of scientific knowledge in society has become an important sociological aspect.

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The globalization of knowledge, thanks to technological advancements, it allows for the overcoming of geographical, cultural, and linguistic barriers. The transnational influences are gaining ground over merely national ones, creating expanded frameworks for exchange and collaboration. For example, Latin American and Spanish-speaking social science journals generally feature contributions from different countries; in fact, several of them are bilingual, either fully or partially.

The proliferation of journals and other dissemination channels has led to a strong institutionalization of scientific production, creating universally applicable standards, such as APA guidelines. This strict regulation of scientific production often results in formal criteria being prioritized over content. External and anonymous evaluation of products (double-blind review) is one of the most significant institutional requirements.

The quantitative increase in scientific production has created a true marketing ecosystem around it, leading to the emergence of databases, collective management companies for journals, indexing bodies, networks for exchanging and sharing information about scientific production, manuscript management and access platforms, plagiarism detection programs, among others. The accumulation of existing bibliographic information is so significant that the review of the state of the art on a particular topic has become a type of research in itself. Often, the need to cite exhaustive and up-to-date references leads researchers to make simplistic and superficial readings of pre-existing production.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the significant role those technological developments in communication, especially virtual media, have played and continue to play. The traditional print book by a single author has been supplanted by books and, above all, by journals with shared authorships in digital format. Conference proceedings and doctoral theses, in digital format, have also become part of the available scientific production. Current developments in artificial intelligence are opening up an unforeseen range of applications for scientific production and communication.

In summary, the most notable features of the current social practice of scientific knowledge production and dissemination, particularly in relation to the social sciences concern interdisciplinary in both production and theoretical approaches which allows for the overcoming of narrow disciplinary boundaries. Furthermore, production tends to involve teams rather than individual contributors, making shared authorship in publications a constant. This collective practice often adopts democratic forms, bringing together authors of varying levels of experience, including young researchers. The globalization of knowledge, transcending geographical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries, it is another prevalent characteristic linked with a strong institutionalizing influence that manifests as a high degree of standardization in the production process and knowledge dissemination. The high level of knowledge offering on a global scale has created

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a quasi-scientific business management system for this supply, primarily through databases and access channels to this information. At the core of all these transformations is the impact of digital technologies which are still in the midst of development.

Like any social practice, the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge is a historical fact which means it is constantly evolving. This editorial serves as an attempt to outline certain prevailing current characteristics that are certainly not the only ones and it will be change over time.