

PRIORITIZING THE POINTLESS AND NEGLECTING THE IMPERATIVE: SCIENCE AND CLIMATE POLICIES AT RISK IN BRAZIL

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RESUMO

The warm discussion about the Brazilian electoral system is nothing but preposterous. After 25 years of massive use of the electronic ballot box and demonstrations of its auditable transparency and accountability (SALDANHA; SILVA, 2020), going backwards to the printed system makes no sense whatsoever. Despite this, political leaders insist on occupying key institutions with that, and taking this issue continuously to the media.

Also receiving lots of attention is the investigation about the government omissions in counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic. The opposition to scientific evidence over the sanitary crisis conveyed in a series of conducts that received criticism and were considered unethical by the parliamentary committee in charge of the case. This situation took place in a critical moment for the country, which is facing high mortality rates by SARS-CoV-2 and difficulty in containing the spread of the delta variant. The chaos in economy and the lack of vaccines, medications and overall healthcare for the Brazilian population is hidden behind pointless discussions.

Alongside, the National Council on Scientific and Technologic Development was under a long-lasting blackout, which made Brazilian researchers of all areas completely loose access to their own curriculum, research groups and scholarships for weeks. The delay in solving the problem also caused inconveniences to universities and research institutes, who are still struggling with international scientific collaborations, as the situation is not completely solved.

Moreover, the country has been facing its worst environmental crisis in decades, with a historical record of deforestation in the Amazon Forest in the first semester of 2021. Data from the National Institute for Space Research (INPE) account for extreme values during the present administration of the federal government, reaching up to 304.9 km² of deforested area in a single day (INPE, 2021). The first semester of 2021 is already in the spotlight by the deforestation record since the beginning of the registers in 2015.

Herewith, actions to strive global warming have been continuously neglected over the last years. Successive statements and attitudes of denialism on this issue have been challenging the Brazilian climate policy. While the population watched to a parade of military tanks involving the participation of the president, the 6th Assessment Report (AR6) of the Intragovernmental Panel on Climate Changes (IPCC) had just been launched, presenting the perspectives for Brazil and the world to confront this relevant problem (IPCC, 2021). The AR6 was published in a moment where the world faces extreme climate events, with records of high temperatures in the Northern hemisphere and waves of cold weather in South America (WMO, 2021). In addition, central Brazil faces a severe hydric crisis, endangering the Brazilian energy sector.

The report announced by IPCC brings information that point out to co-responsibility of the countries towards future climate change scenarios foreseen in the second half of the 21st century. It is definitely a decisive moment to articulate with civil society entities and dialogue with the Brazilian population about preventive actions to mitigate climate change. This has been conducted almost singly by the Brazilian scientific community and state agencies of research support (e.g., FAPESP in the state of Sao Paulo). International pressure may push Brazil to better decisions, likewise the agendas of developed nations (THOMAZ, et al., 2020).

It's been a couple of years since Brazilian science has been attacked with budget cuts and discredit (HALLAL, 2021). The dismissal of the former director of the INPE after presenting data on deforestation is an example. Undermining science when it is largely necessary, and neglecting climate policies when they are imperative, may take Brazil back to an unprecedented level of underdevelopment and scientific chaos.

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