A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF OPEN SCIENCE, ACCESS AND CIRCULATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN LATIN AMERICA AND AFRICA

Fernanda Beigel, Principal investigator
In collaboration with a team from GRIP based in
Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Sénégal and France

The transition towards open access of many of the journals included in the globally dominant indexes such as Clarivate Web of Science and Scopus presents a relatively new and complex dilemma for researchers based in semi-peripheral (Global South) countries. The dilemma rests on the development of current open access publishing practices where publications are immediately accessible without subscription or costs to the reader, and where the cost of publishing is transferred to the authors. The costs, referred to as author page charges or APCs, are becoming increasingly onerous, placing financial strain on authors and their host universities or, worse, precluding them from participating the production and dissemination of their research findings in the global science communication system. Journals such as *Nature*, for example, have published their intention to charge up to 9,000 Euros for each article published.

A recent survey found that most researchers in Latin America and Africa hold a positive view of open access publishing. In the case of Africa, 78% strongly agreed, while in Latin America, 71% of respondents strongly agreed with the statement 'Making research articles open access should be common scholarly practice'. From the perspective of science in the Global South, this situation is highly worrying because researchers may well be aware of the benefits that open access unlocks in terms of access but may not yet be fully aware of the risks. The example of Mexico is striking of the contradictions involved in the way OA is perceived. Mexico is the country of origin of three open access portals/indexation services with regional impact (Biblat, Latindex and RedALyC), which have contributed to defining good practices for the adoption of quality standards by scientific journals in the region ,; it has a law that introduces open access requirements and the development of a national repository (70% of researchers say they have published articles in open access. Nonetheless, it is a country where the scientific community has only 39% of scientists that consider open access to be a key aspect when publishing results. Moreover, one of the first Read&Publish agreements with commercial publishers was recently signed.

The general aim of the project is to understand the practices, perceptions and knowledge of the researchers in the Global South regarding scientific publications and open access. The proposed methodology is to perform an on-line Survey and generate productive cross-continental interactions, through an initial network of five countries: South Africa, Senegal, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico. Following on from an improved understanding of the publishing practices of researchers in the Global South, the project seeks to discuss and propose recommendations to stimulate non-commercial, scholarly open access publication.