

The drama of artists in the Brazilian pandemic

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Abstract *This paper aims to present the dramas experienced by Brazilian artists during the COVID-19 pandemic. This investigation is nested in one of the axes of broader research on the social impacts of the pandemic in Brazil. Initially, we argue that a pandemic is a critical event with multiple scales, which affects populations unevenly, as is the case of art world professionals, an unorthodox field in terms of specialties and remuneration, which was already suffering from the impacts of reduced investments in public policies in the cultural sector since the mid-2010s. Given the measures to face the pandemic, among which are restrictions on gatherings, artistic events were prohibited, and professionals could not act conventionally, generating economic problems and psychological distress. This paper explores the dramatic report of some of these professionals, highlighting the strategies adopted to cope with the crisis due to the impossibility of performing, the scarcity of public policies for the sector, and the national political and economic elite disdain for the arts and culture. In-depth interviews were conducted with scenic artists, musicians, and DJs from August to December 2020.*

Key words *Art, COVID-19, Infrastructure, Economy, Internet*

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Critical events, scales, and the artistic world

From a socio-anthropological viewpoint, pandemics are an unplanned mega-event modality that disrupts the flow of ordinary life on different scales and triggers crises of varying nature and extent. The concept of scale that we will use here incorporates something more than the simple idea of breadth – of geographic, economic indices, diagnosed cases, and deaths – or any other variable with a quantitative connotation. Quantitative data are essential for understanding pandemic events and their impacts or ways to remedy them. However, a reality accompanies them because a pandemic does not happen concretely among populations any longer situated from a social, economic, and cultural viewpoint. That is why the more extensive the scale from a quantitative perspective, the more diversified the effects of a pandemic on populations.

As we operationalize it here, the concept was forged by Tsing¹ in a scaled-up globalization context, where different approaches were confronted. One of these approaches focused on the supposed homogenization of identities and traditions – resulting from the increased exchange of people, information, and things. Another affirmed local resistance and even the enrichment of these traditions from the allocation of exogenous resources. With the concept of scale, Tsing intended to escape from Manicheism and emphasize the discursive aspects, the connections between varying events, and emerging controversies.

The pandemic is a multiple-scale critical event² that affects populations unevenly. Thinking about the pandemic from the viewpoint of critical events implies transcending the most apparent routine changes, which for specific segments of people did not require more than a temporary re-accommodation of lifestyles. Some events are critical precisely because they imply a disruptive potential whose effects can be prolonged and even irreversible – as in the case of death. Using the concept inspired by Das³ suggests a more accurate perspective on the violence inherent to disruption and the unequal ways in which people and social groups are reached – or not – by reparatory biopolitics. From the outset, we could say that professionals in the art world, in itself an unorthodox field in terms of specialties, skills, and remuneration, were among the groups most impacted by the necessary measures to face the pandemic. The restricted gatherings and, by extension, the cancellation of artistic events hindered the conventional performance of artists.

This paper explores the dramatic report of some of these professionals, highlighting the dilemmas and the main strategies adopted to face the crisis due to the impossibility of performing and the scarce public policies for the sector. As would be expected, the prolonged pandemic and the substandard working conditions of many of these professionals generated anguish and illness, confirming a finding already explained by Das³, that the potential for distress and corrosion of daily life varies significantly when the same event – the pandemic, for example – finds already frail settings. While Das³ work explores the relationship between illness and poverty and its impacts on daily life, we aim to show the distress that the pandemic event, threatening in itself, generated among artists who were prevented from performing, with enormous hardships in adapting their work to the digital environment and unassisted by public policies, in a Brazilian political and cultural context of art and culture devaluation.

This paper derives from one of the research fronts of the COVID-19 Humanities Network project (<https://www.ufrgs.br/redecovid19humanidades/index.php/br>), which aims to identify the social impacts of the pandemic among health professionals and previously defined vulnerable social groups – older adults, the homeless, and cycle delivery workers. Artists were incorporated into the research as the duration of the pandemic and, by extension, restrictions on events that promoted gatherings were extended. The interviews that support the reflections presented here occurred from August to December 2020, through synchronous videoconferences or asynchronous audio messages, through messaging applications (WhatsApp). The interviews followed a combination of the “narrative interview” technique, which is “an unstructured, in-depth interview with specific characteristics”⁴(p.95) and “episodic interviews”⁵. The dialogue’s common thread was respondents’ reflection on the pandemic’s impacts vis-à-vis their professional trajectories from an autobiographical perspective, encoded with the NVivo 12 software. The interviews were prepared through a survey of journalistic material about the pandemic impacts on the entertainment sector to list the topics that would structure the dialogue.

Performativity, infrastructures, and transpositions

One of the main issues raised in the interviews, which impacted almost all the interlocutors, was the difficulty of adapting the perfor-

mances to the remote infrastructures. Although remote work has become routine with the pandemic, with more or less successful strategies, some peculiar specificities of the art world must be considered to understand why transposing the conventional format to the remote faced multiple resistances on this scale. In a classic text on performance, Zumthor⁶ noted that performance does not depend solely on the artists' performance, techniques, or instruments. The performance setting is part of the show, as it contributes to the mobilization of artists and the public. Even street artists, when starting their presentations, demarcate such settings – forming a water circle, for example – as an indispensable condition for inscribing their space-time, indispensable for the artists and their show, but also the public, urged to an emotional, imaginary and interactive aesthetic transition. Without this transition, artistic achievement does not take off; spectacularity is not realized, and the performance does not reach the resonance it deserves.

Infrastructures are thus essential to compose the settings. It is not enough to have a computer with internet access for the environment to acquire a component conducive to the realization or assistance of specific performance. There is a need for cameras, sometimes more than one, with smartphones converted into auxiliary cameras, which sometimes requires technical knowledge in computing that is not part of the artists' routine. A remote class can support noisy sounds, distorted images, and even occasional crashes, but this is not tolerated in the case of a musical performance. We should also consider that one of the reasons why spectators are led to seek live shows is precisely interaction – with the environment, the artist, and the public. If it is the case of choosing a recording, the internet and streaming platforms already have a number and variety of qualified productions, which discourage from the outset the initiatives of non-established artists, as in the case of some bar musicians or Disc jockeys (DJs) we interviewed.

More sensitive than other professional activities, those in the art world demand a setting. DJs, musicians, and artists generally require equipment and instruments unavailable in their homes. In this sense, there was a need for investments to acquire devices suitable for online performances or time to learn how to handle audio and video in digital environments. In this regard, the DJs' experiences are different from those of musicians and scenic artists, since DJs, to a certain extent, already inhabited the digital space

before the pandemic, a situation that ended up favoring them in this forced migration. Despite this, the DJs faced other problems related to copyright.

Another challenge imposed by digital technologies in synchronous online activities was the delay caused mainly by the quality of the internet signal and the platforms' instability. This issue was not the privilege of artists who tried to transpose their performances to the digital medium. Many of them also struggled with their teaching activities – instrument classes, theater classes (especially for children), and body expression – to supplement their income. The issue of infrastructure for transmitting audio and video to the internet has added a layer of difficulty for classes in which there is a need for observation, correction, and adaptation of specific body techniques, such as adjustments in the positions of children's fingers on the violin neck so that they can play the right note or chord or in the execution of a bodily expression movement. The delay and the difficulty of direct communication hindered and even discouraged the performance of many activities, with the cancellation of private lessons and consequent loss of income. In general terms, the difficulties with the technological infrastructure attached more challenges to the already unstable financial condition of the artists.

The delay escalated the fatigue due to excessive digital activities, as highlighted by Personal Kid (43 years old, scenic artist and theater, dance, and physical education teacher); the challenges of adapting dance classes to the online context were almost insurmountable, as the student did not follow the teacher's demonstrations. If, for other activities, the delay was not an unavoidable problem, it made dance, theater, and music classes/rehearsals activities boring, tiring, and disheartening for both teachers and students.

The difficulties raise a debate about digital exclusion, very much in vogue at the outset of internet mainstreaming^{7,8}. At that time, the focal point had an international geopolitical dimension. People thought about how relationships with digital technologies would occur – in the confrontation between those of the Global North and South – with technological transfer policies in place, which did not mean producing complete equalization. Castells⁹ outlined the dimension of technological inequalities designed this way: “global networks [which] included some people and territories and excluded others, thus inducing a geography of social, economic, and technological inequality”(p.II). The debate

in “developed” societies focused on those who were “digital natives” and the “naturalized digital”, those who had to adapt to emerging changes⁸(p.25). The pandemic urged the need for an accelerated digital literacy in the face of the massive migration of work activities, which is an excellent opportunity for big-techs in technopolitical and economic terms¹⁰. More often than not, the result is psychological and cognitive exhaustion for workers, and the planet has become a testing laboratory for the limits and possibilities of the attention economy in informational capitalism¹¹. In this sense, we can infer that the rise of attention economization is accompanied in the opposite direction by a depoliticized relationship with technologies, especially digital ones. As noted by Morozov¹⁰, about the current condition of the relationship between humans and technologies: “[...] sensors, cell phones, and applications: these are our generation’s earplugs. The fact that we no longer notice how they eliminate everything that smacks of politics in our lives is, in itself, revealing: deafness – injustice and inequality, but above all, our lamentable state of affairs – is the price we pay for this dose of immediate comfort”(p.80).

What is evident is that technical infrastructures are fundamental both for the development of artistic and pedagogical skills and the distribution of inequalities, as Personal Kid highlights:

I was in social projects where I had to master everything to explain to the student. I didn’t know either. [...] Then, I come across a machine that I have to know all the commands and what to do, and still help the other who is on the other side of the screen by showing how to do it.

Added to this digital literacy dimension is the economic investment and adaptation of the space to perform professional activities, as Diana (25 years old, singer and teacher, graduated in music and master’s in education) highlights:

I spent a lot more money now with my online classes [...]. I had my space there with a piano; I came in and taught my class. Now I had to buy a good keyboard, a frame, a microphone, and a ring light (which I didn’t know could be so expensive!). So, it’s an investment.

Monetization: the transformation of artistic marketing agencies

In the art world, marketing agencies¹² did not cross the pandemic unscathed. On the contrary, they contributed to constituting it a critical event². All these forms of performing in the artistic market demand different activations or

reactivations of market assemblages, how a given performance is liable (or not) to become a commodity or, to get straight to the point, be monetized.

Artistic productions are not born ready for the market; they need to be adjusted from a series of assemblages, which are generally heterogeneous and variable per different circuits regarding nature, quality, and specificity. In the pre-COVID-19 world, many scenic artists’ main tool to realize their work activities was the public promotion of culture, adjusted to circuits linked to schools and social projects maintained through public investments. On the other hand, DJs are less susceptible to such arrangements, except for those linked to hip hop culture, in which their performance is linked to the production of cultural events that seek to consolidate this urban culture expression. Among musicians, a distinction is made between those with authorial work and independent performance and those without. This distinction is valid for proposing projects that benefit from public funding mechanisms, although non-authorial musicians act as guests in projects ranging from recording a renowned artist’s album to narrating or singing in children’s audiobooks.

Therefore, the State is a central agent in establishing the market of the performing artists, either through the direct promotion of culture or through education, shifting between the educational circuits – with state support – and those focused on entertainment, brokered by the cultural industry, in which the State is restricted to a regulatory role. The symbolic good offered as a product differentiates the type of composition. Authorial musicians tend to resort to public mechanisms for financing culture, while musicians who work primarily with covers tend to establish their market in the entertainment circuit, as is the case with DJs. Thus, DJs are more connected to what would be the entertainment market, which, in general, is articulated without state funding, albeit not completely.

The need to reconfigure the already established agencies emerged in the pandemic context. The success in the digital environment – of influencers, for example – is still a challenge to the understanding of social sciences since some apparently banal performances manage to monetize large sums without a precise strategy. Monetizing cultural goods is not impossible, but the paths are rocky, and competition has increased with the pandemic. In the migration to digital, which is one of the few alternatives available,

people had to adapt the asset passivation process; in other words, transformations that provided the conditions for objects to be valued positively and attracted a public willing to pay for consuming these products¹²(p.356-357).

The material conditions of artistic life were already a challenge before the pandemic. In general, supply outnumbers demand or a concentrated demand, which produces abyssal gaps between the different earning possibilities. Even artists who already had their activation circuits and marketing agencies established faced hardships. However, we could say that the impacts were more drastic at the base of the pyramid, where those who depend on state funding combined with participation in private, public notices published by the Rouanet Law (Law No. 8,313/1991), besides transiting in different social events, fairs, and community activities. The Rouanet Law is the primary mechanism for promoting the Brazilian cultural sector. It works through tax incentives, moving a significantly higher volume of funds than state culture funds or the National Culture Fund (FNC). The law was enacted in 1991 by the National Culture Support Program (Pronac) to encourage fundraising by artists with the counterpart of tax exemption for individuals or legal entities that subsidize cultural activities.

The monetization tactics¹³ of the artists at the base of the pyramid are primarily based on the articulation of local agencies, which, in turn, are strongly linked to the normal flow of life. People did not stop listening to music during the pandemic. However, local fairs (in which there are concerts) and community parties (balls, matinees) were canceled, and even burial rituals were abbreviated – offering musical performances to honor the dead is current among funeral services in large urban centers¹⁴.

How do we transfer this conventional circuit to online production? Digital space offers a wide range of free content, which results in resistance by the public to pay for content, especially if it is of dubious quality. Monetization through digital platforms demands audience scales, clicks, and hours of content that many artists do not have or did not have at the onset of the pandemic; their audiences were more localized, a type of market that did not demand the production of digital content for its maintenance.

The experience and perception of technological exclusions are not homogeneous among DJs, musicians, and scenic artists, and how they stand in the face of forced migration to the digital environment. DJs are more familiar with digital tech-

nologies and did not report any issues with the ambiance but emphasized their concern with live streaming platforms since their performances could be blocked by copyright. The interviewed DJs argued that their performances contribute to disseminating the work of other artists and that digital platforms must adopt different copyright policies regarding them. An alternative thought for this conflict in the DJs-streaming platforms-recorders triangle was a specific registration for DJs, different from the other users, that allowed playing the songs less restrictively by copyright. From the DJs' viewpoint, musical performances would help to publicize the work of the artist who produced the song. In other words, it would not just be an appropriation for one's benefit but a contribution to the construction and strengthening of the cultural field in a broader way: it would be a kind of cultural dissemination work.

At first, the DJs underwent a period of experimentation with the different platforms to build parameters of pros and cons, as monetization, easy access, and copyright regulation go hand in hand. The presentations moved between the leading platforms and social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube; Twitch (owned by Amazon, focused on live broadcasts of electronic games and competitions <https://www.twitch.tv/p/pt-br/about/>) and Shotgun (a platform dedicated exclusively to broadcasting festivals, concerts, and parties) came soon after came to compose this online broadcasting ecosystem. On this platform, viewers can select events, parties, groups, and artists from their geographic, national and municipal location (<https://pro.shotgun.live/pt>). Shotgun soon established itself as a favorite among DJs, who started to rely on viewer-contribution tactics through QR code funding platforms or e-wallet apps.

The combination of more permissive platforms regarding copyright and the associated financing and e-wallets formed the uninterrupted streaming ecosystem with high monetization potential. Another possibility added to this ecosystem was multi-stream platforms and software, such as Restream and OBS Studio; that is, services that allow the transmission of live streams on all social networks and video platforms simultaneously, which circumvented two issues in one go: access democratization and the use of copyrighted material without making the transmission unfeasible. That is perhaps why Twitch has established itself as the leading streaming channel. Besides its permissive stance regarding copyright

and superior audio and video quality, the platform provides a tool called the raid, which allows those who broadcast to transfer their audience to another live indicated by them. Such a tool has been influencing the organization of broadcasts by DJs and creating support networks. After all, not all DJs are publicly recognized, but in some cases, they are recognized by their peers, which allows more famous DJs to support their peers by transferring their audience to less-famous peers.

DJ Trance (39 years old, from Porto Alegre; in September 2020, he had 47 million plays on Spotify) points to a possible future of streaming platforms in which the experience provided is based on musical content:

My perception, [...] is that there will be a party Netflix. [...] Today, if I go live, I won't be able to monetize it, but I see that this is the movement that starts with the majors.

In a sense, Twitch and Shotgun prefigure this movement. After all, they offer streaming services for specific audiences by musical preference; producing the content does not depend on the platforms but on their users, who can even create paid subscriptions for their produced content, generating direct monetization.

These are the challenges that DJs have faced and are in part shared with musicians. For scenic artists, the setting is more adverse, as many had, in the pre-pandemic context, the monetization of their activities resulting from the provision of service to the local public powers, independent productions, and performance in events, fairs, and on the streets. With the migration to digital, many did not have the scale of followers and hours of content required by online platforms for immediate monetization, nor the possibility of making them feasible in the short term. The alternatives were developed with the available means, such as physical education classes with theater for children and daily poetry recitation through WhatsApp. However, the focus turned to public and private funding notices. Nevertheless, these alternatives follow the selection and implementation processes with temporalities not compatible with the urgencies of a global pandemic in which all, or almost all, income sources were abruptly cut or restricted because cultural activities are considered non-essential.

Besides public and private notices to monetize their activities, artists were forced to dedicate themselves to transforming their know-how into pedagogical content. Courses and other artistic products with continuous flow, such as daily poetry sent by a messaging application, manage to

establish a constant flow of monetization while activating new circulation networks for the artistic work, but gains have been generally limited.

Concerning monetization, performing artists had to adapt the language and specific formats to integrate into the digital world, competing ingloriously with a large amount of free content already available. The first challenge was regarding the aesthetic issue, as in the case of theater artists, who were encouraged to transpose the stage experience to the space of a screen without this being confused with experimental cinema. The second was the dispute for the audience with free content, already available in a digital format, also regarding monetization – through advertising sponsorships, for example.

The precariousness of artistic work

In 2016, British film director Ken Loach released the movie *I, Daniel Blake*, which portrays the saga of a carpenter who, after suffering a heart attack, is advised by doctors not to return to work, and such a condition makes him have to resort to state benefits, which is where his saga begins, as all the procedures for accessing and keeping benefits are in the digital world; that is, the state bureaucracy of social assistance is digital, assuming that its users are equipped with the technological means of access and digital literacy to access it, which is not the case. The dramatic struggle for survival between daily urgencies and digital bureaucracy ends with the character's death, a victim of a second heart attack. Daniel Blake's drama illustrates, to a large extent, the drama of Brazilian artists in the pandemic.

First, it brings to light the substandard working conditions that have been consolidating in recent decades through an ideological war and sedimentation of platform work processes^{15,16} from the applications of ICTs in mediating and managing almost all work forms in the contemporary world. The precariousness, financial uncertainties, and the impossibility of relying on social welfare mechanisms that were already part of the daily lives of artists before the pandemic were enhanced with it – not for celebrities, who obviously have their savings. Although many of the respondents were reluctant to address their psychological distress cases, many reported the suffering of colleagues and friends, given the lack of support during the pandemic and the art and culture devaluation that devastated the country in recent years. The Street Art respondent, unlike many of her colleagues, reported her illness expe-

rience associated with working conditions in the social distancing period:

So, I sought psychological help, right? To bear the strain. Then I've been trying to take care of myself a lot, but it's very stressful. I developed other things, such as skin disease, and my immunity was deficient. Several physical things [...], a lot of back pain, [...]. All things now happen through the computer. Contrary to what other people think, the artists couldn't stop working. They migrated all their performance to this place. So, we spend hours sitting in front of the computer [...].

Secondly, we have poor technological conditions for framing the selections to obtain project funding and the specific digital literacy these requirements demand. Such challenges are evident in the statement by Bertolt (38 years old, actor, director, and theater teacher):

So, what happened to me, for example, I got some projects online, and I ended up having nothing left because I was paying for other professionals to record and edit the material. When I saw it, I did the project; I almost died working. I created as an artist, did everything, and didn't get anything. [...] It's a strange thing.

To avoid the type of adversity presented by Bertolt, DJ Trance says, "today the artist has to know a lot about video too, streaming, fundraising. He has to expand his range".

Independent careers in the artistic world emerged in Europe around the end of the 18th century and the early 19th century¹⁷, and they were seen as an achievement at the time, since until then, the artists were employed by the courts or churches and, thus, subject to the discretion of such institutions, both from an aesthetic and economic viewpoint. Currently, independent performance is the rule of this professional field, regardless of artistic specialty, and the trend is a pyramidal structure market, where a few reach the top and concentrate the public's interest and amass the available resources. At the same time, most artists struggle for survival, often reconciling an artistic career with another job. Living exclusively from art is a challenge and, in most cases, a renunciation of material goods that other occupations allow.

In a crisis such as the one caused by the pandemic, the naturalized and sometimes even romanticized vulnerability associated with independent artistic careers was blatant, with entrepreneurship turning against entrepreneurs. Contrary to the supposed glamour that has been tried to attach to the term, vulnerability stands out in this case. The discourse of self-entrepreneurship

self tends to escalate competition between individuals while eroding the collective solidarity mechanisms¹⁸.

The precariousness of artistic work meant that very few artists had any financial reserve at the onset of the pandemic, an essential condition to make the necessary adaptations to the digital world. The few cases in which artists had economic reserves, they were built in works outside the art market, except for a group of celebrities, who are the exception to the rule, as we have emphasized. In this context, the first reaction was despair, motivated by the lack of knowledge of what a phenomenon such as a global pandemic meant and also the awareness of the substandard working conditions. Time was a decisive factor in controlling despair through a new routine, as highlighted by N. Rodrigues (51 years old, from Porto Alegre, artist, and theater company director):

After two, three months, when you understand how everything is happening around you, you need to understand what you are really going to do, in a practical sense.

Adaptations emerge from the combination of adversity with the need to keep professional activities, such as Wonderland (55 years old, scenic and visual artist) highlights:

I started a bit locked up, and I have to learn a lot. I'm here teaching myself in this virtual area. It's another way of working. Not that I'm enjoying it 100%, but [...] I can see that there are other possibilities. [...] We are discovering them.

Then, later, and with no alternatives, an attempt was made to reorient activities and skills. Some chose to focus on activities outside the art market, such as crafts, design, exclusive dedication to academic research supported by scholarships, and producing content for third-party social networks. As DJ Marley (28 years old, works in the Porto Alegre and Serra Gaucha region) emphasizes:

I started studying design and small video editions. And then, I make these materials for two friends from São Paulo.

This situation is corroborated by musician Bethânia's choice (27 years old, an authorial artist from Santa Maria):

I chose to work in my other occupation, which is to make handmade cosmetics.

At the same time, solidarity networks began to form for mutual support to ensure that artists had the minimum conditions for subsistence during that social distancing moment, with a crisis with no prospects of ending.

Even before the pandemic, some artists were already part of the public and private funding ecosystem. However, simple participation in any public notice required delivering high-quality audiovisual materials already finished, besides written projects. Such processes were cruel according to the artists. After all, in a moment of urgency, they put the artists in dispute with each other to evaluate which ones are more deserving of receiving the public budget. N. Rodrigues described the competition this way: “It’s almost like the “The Hunger Games”, right? Where one is competing with another to stay alive. It’s very cruel!” Or, as Street Art (27 years old, master’s student in visual arts and street artist), who questions the conception of success of the selection processes adopted by managers and the previous work involved in participating in these processes:

And they did another [public notice] now, which is for workshops, with the same idea: film it, send it to us and then we approve it, right? [...] Then we looked at it and said: no! The guys made a public notice with five hundred million subscribers; they understand it as a success! They view despair as success! It makes me very angry!

The dimension of technological disembodiment is completed with the dimension of technique and state procedures. These two layers of the same issue are manifested in specific ways, such as misunderstanding the bureaucratic procedures of public selections, aesthetics, and the previous work necessary to participate in these processes, even before any sign of a possible consideration under the public policy. After accessing them, if the project is selected, it is yet another complaint regarding the “peculiarities” of public notices. The mere existence of a policy does not mean that it can alleviate the difficulties for which it was designed. So, even if, to some extent, the municipal public authorities made an effort to solve the technical difficulties related to the selection processes, there still was a gap between the artists’ ability to respond to the demands of the public notices and what was actually being evaluated for granting the benefits. The public authorities did not invest in developing alternative forms of compensation for artists that were unrelated to the digital environment or swifter and inclusive selection processes in all their stages, something that has been built in selections by private institutions that make use of fiscal incentive mechanisms, such as the Rouanet Law.

Conclusion

Professionals in the artistic field were the most affected by the pandemic restrictions. Suppose such restrictions were indisputably necessary, per the very respondents. In that case, we should highlight the deteriorated economic conditions and the psychological distress exacerbated by the lack of adequate public policies and art and culture devaluation that has devastated this field of work in recent years. As or more desperate than the loss of occupation and income, prolonged by the pandemic’s resilience, was the perceived lack of support from the public power or its slowness and bureaucratization.

Despite the adversities coupled with psychological distress, migrating to the digital world emerged as an alternative, but with few results. The offer of artistic assets is already consolidated in digital media, so neophytes who engage in this venture face established competition, not having the time, skills, and resources required for satisfactory reconversion. For artists who lived in locations further away from urban centers, with substandard network infrastructure, the problem was addressing the limitations and obsolete equipment.

Therefore, in many ways, the disruption triggered by the pandemic in the “artistic world” highlighted the deficiency of a segment doubly impacted by the neoliberal policies that plague contemporary workers¹⁹. On the one hand, left to their own devices, like other workers in the service sector, victims of individualizing neoliberal policies; on the other hand, victims of another facet of these policies, which disdain reflexivity, art, and culture to the detriment of so-called “productive” activities and which feed the complex self-destructive machine called Anthropocene, from which the COVID-19 pandemic is, to a large extent, a very illustrative by-product²⁰.

Efforts to reconfigure the languages and the monetization format were marked by individual initiatives in a segment already renowned for its independent performance, and the results were disappointing from the viewpoint of remuneration. However, investing in learning digital tools is seen as a positive initiative. The lack of adequate public policies was claimed by almost all the respondents – to a lesser extent among the DJs, already used to the entertainment circuit – indicating the difficulties inherent to a vast health crisis and a disdain for the arts and professionals

who are dedicated to them, a bleak picture in a country adrift, ruled by an elite guided by the rearview mirror.

Collaborations

RS Malhão worked on data collection and analysis and the final writing. AS Damo worked on the elaboration of the methodology and the final writing.

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