

Project Title: Equality in Knowledge

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1th Interim Narrative

Report

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Country:

Brazil.

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Certification

All activities conducted by InternetLab were and are consistent with its non-profit status which remains unchanged since the proposal and related materials were submitted to Tides Advocacy. InternetLab warrants that it is in full compliance with its grant letter dated 08/04/2021 and that, if the grant was subject to any restrictions, all such restrictions were observed.

1. Impact and Assessment

This is the first report of the Fellowship project funded by the Wikimedia Knowledge Equity Fund in partnership with InternetLab. We will describe the activities carried out from November 2021, when the Fellow was hired, to July 2022.¹

InternetLab's goal is to contribute to discussions about the production and dissemination of knowledge produced by black and indigenous people in Brazil, providing input to the free knowledge debate and policy discussions. Our objective, in other words, is to build bridges between several social actors that are fundamental to the epistemological debate in the online and offline spheres but whose discussions are not yet connected. During the last decades, discussions on access to knowledge and racial discrimination have occurred intensely, but in parallel.

Although access and production of knowledge in Brazil is deeply unequal in Brazil, extensive qualitative and quantitative research shows that we have undergone significant changes in recent decades. In 2022, developing a research on knowledge production necessarily leads us to the consideration of the *Lei de Cotas no Ensino Superior*² - Law No. 12.711/2012, which, besides completing a decade this year, is expected to undergo a review process.³ This Law is important

¹ The project page is available at <https://internetlab.org.br/en/projetos/fellowship-wikimedia-internetlab-knowledge-equity/>.

² The law could be translated as "Affirmative Action in Higher Education Law"

³ In its original text, the Law indicates that, after 10 years of effectiveness, a revision should be carried out. Since it does not specify exactly the terms of this "revision", the current scenario of conservatism in the legislative branch has given rise to a number of bills aimed at alterations, which even propose the end of quotas for black, brown, and indigenous people and even the end of this affirmative action. On the other hand, there is a bill (PL 3422/2021) - the only one in urgent status to date - that aims, in addition to maintenance, to create a permanent scholarship for

because it is one of the main milestones in the public debate about structural inequalities of Brazilian society, which is closely related to knowledge production and the social legitimization of actors belonging to historically marginalized groups as intellectuals.

Approved in 2012, the *Lei de Cotas* guaranteed the reservation of 50% of places in universities for students coming from public educational institutions, including, in this quota, an ethnic subdivision of black, light skin black and indigenous people. Resulting from a long history of struggles and claims by social movements, the *Lei de Cotas* had the black antiracist movement as one of its main supporters, whose partial agenda even before the re-democratization (from 1988 on) was access to higher education.

As a result of this process, we have observed an increase in the presence of black and indigenous students in universities. The growth in the number of students, however, has not resulted in a greater presence of black and indigenous people in spaces of knowledge circulation and production, such as scientific events, university faculty, and publications in scientific journals, among others - only 16% of university professors are black, while indigenous professors do not even appear in the Higher Education official figures.⁴

In this scenario, the online environment has been considered one of the places where these young students could access knowledge closer to their life experiences. In the beginning of the 2000s, the proliferation of blogs that brought, for example, black academic thought and testimonials about what it was like to be a public university student not from white and middle class families contributed to these persons' feeling of integration. In addition, on the Internet, they had access to political agendas that were restricted to social movement spaces before. Gradually, the Internet facilitated the creation and dissemination of magazines, blogs, and websites that aimed to broaden the knowledge about and/or of black and indigenous people.

When considering the Brazilian context, it is therefore central to connect two agendas that rarely appear connected, although they should: free knowledge and equity in knowledge. To this end, in the period here reported, we carried out the following activities:

students entering through this policy. Available at:

<https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=2301467>. Accessed on 27 jun. 2022.⁴

Available at : <http://novosestudios.uol.com.br/desigualdades-raciais-na-carreira-de-magisterio-superior-e-as-cotas-para-negras-e-negros-nos-concursos-publicos-de-universidades-federais/>. Accessed on 12 Feb. 2022.

- The Fellow wrote a detailed research project and schedule, under InternetLab’s senior staff’s supervision;
- She carried out bibliographical search to understand how the free knowledge and knowledge equity debates are being conducted in the Brazilian context;
- She mapped social actors with recognized trajectories in the themes mentioned above, specifically in the third sector, social movements, and universities;
- She participated in seminars, public hearings, and meetings organized by the civil society and at universities, dealing with the revision of the *Lei de Cotas*, equity in knowledge for the black and indigenous population, and free knowledge;
- We organized and promoted the first meeting between intellectuals and academics on February 23, 2022. The meeting was essential for us to concretely realize that the agendas related to affirmative actions, barriers in the production/circulation of knowledge, and the demands for free knowledge add up substantially. We heard positions and questions of intellectuals and academic experts on the theme. After the meeting, we published [a summary](#) of the discussions on InternetLab’s website and promoted it on social media;
- After obtaining this first set of inputs, we promoted a closed conference called “10 years of the Affirmative Action Law: mapping connections between other epistemologies and free knowledge”, which took place on March 22 and 23, 2022. Here, the goal was to build bridges between different social actors that work or participate in social movements, universities, and the third sector. 19 people were present, from different regions of the country: 8 representatives of black movements; 6 representatives of indigenous movements and 5 representatives of the movement for free knowledge, all with recognized experience among their peers in the debate and struggle for equality in knowledge. We stimulated free discussion and active listening guided by questions: “1) What have been the main successes and transformations for the access, production and circulation of knowledge of black and indigenous people? How has the Internet been placed (or not) as part of this process; 2) What are the main difficulties for accessing, producing and circulating knowledge of black and indigenous people? How has the

Internet been placed (or not) as part of this process?; 3) Which paths and strategies can we point to in order to reduce these inequalities? How can the Internet, and platforms like Wikipedia, become allies in this process?”. Considering the importance of the visual representation of black and indigenous people as intellectuals, during the Seminar we had an artist depicting the participants, creating images that we used are using in the reporting material we developed as a follow up to the event. You can access the images [here](#).

- We elaborated a report gathering the points raised during the meeting and the Conference, enriching it with numbers and figures and with dialogue with the existing literature. We organized the document in three axes: 1) victories and social transformation, 2) difficulties and 3) strategies for the future. We believe that the effort to systematize this process of listening and collective dialogue, as well as to enrich it with bibliographic material, is a concrete step toward materializing the bridges between these theoretical and political fields. Besides the systematization effort, the report aims to procure impact on the public debate on the subject and the current revision of the Lei de Cotas. At this moment, the report is finished and revised, and is being worked by a designer.
- Organization of the “*Desigualdade e Conhecimentos: Transformações, desafios e estratégias após 10 anos da Lei de Cotas*” Dossier for the Internet & Society journal (academic journal organized and edited by InternetLab, available at <http://revista.internetlab.org.br/>). In addition to the public call, we invited 6 authors who were present at the Conference to submit papers, upon receiving a small grant. Thus, the dossier will count at least with 2 articles from intellectuals who reflect on inequality in the knowledge of black people in Brazil, 2 on inequalities of indigenous people and 2 on how free knowledge can contribute to reducing these inequalities. Identifying that income is a major barrier for the production of knowledge by and about historically vulnerable populations, we provided scholarships to allow them time to produce academic reflections. The Fellow is running this process, and the dossier is scheduled to be published by the end of the second semester of 2022;

- Parallel research: InternetLab's theme, in collaboration with the Fellow, is developing research on algorithmic discrimination on Spotify, aiming to reflect on the relationship between streaming platforms and structural inequalities. We established the following research questions: "1) Does Spotify's recommendation algorithm recommends music differently depending on the genre of the listener?; 2) Does Spotify privilege artists of any genre (men/women/non-binary) in its recommendations?; 3) What are the differences in recommendation between music genres?". We collected data related to 5 musical genres that have different histories and territorialities: Rap; Gospel; Brazilian Popular Music (MPB); Sertanejo; and Funk. Then, for each musical genre we selected two artists (one male and one female), with close follower/listener numbers, which we understood as representative of the musical genre, to analyze the results.⁵ We are now in the first analysis of the collected data. In the second semester, we will amplify the research to other streaming platforms and consolidate the findings by comparing them with top lists of most popular singers in different platforms;
- Dialogue and partnership with the [WikiMovimentoBrasil\(WMB\)](#) movement. The Fellow and other members of InternetLab's staff met with the WMB representatives João Peschanski and Érica Azzellini to present the research project and ideas on possible partnerships with the Wiki's community in Brazil. We established a partnership for the construction of [WikiConBrasil](#), and the Fellow became part of the Conference's programming committee. During the Conference, aiming to establish more direct dialogues with the Brazilian Wiki's community, we carried out activities such as the presentation of the research in the "Diversity" Panel; Organization and mediation of the strategic discussion "Implementing a Wikimedia with equity in knowledge"; participation in the strategic meeting with Maryana

⁵ Six bots were created for the collection of each artist: 2 male bots; 2 female bots; 2 non-binary bots. Total 60 bots created: 60 accounts created with Temp mail. Weekly collections: Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 9am and 9pm. Data scraping. Data collected: song name, artist name, order in playlist.

Iskander; participation in the meetings of the WikiMulheres group and the project [“Mais Teoria da História na Wiki”](#).

2.Challenges

It is also worth mentioning that in the literature review carried out at the beginning of the research we found that the intersections between free knowledge and equity of knowledge are not brought up in the intellectual and political context in Brazil. Because of this methodological challenge, we designed an exploratory plan, starting with a mapping of the actors that research and work with this theme in Brazil, to understand what these researchers have perceived as barriers to the production and circulation of knowledge for black and indigenous people. We also organized a study group, involving researchers and coordinators from other areas of InternetLab, in which every week we discussed productions about free knowledge, algorithmic discrimination, equity in knowledge, race and ethnicity in the Brazilian context.

Another important challenge is that the numerous difficulties that black and indigenous intellectuals face when trying to occupy traditional spaces of knowledge production, such as: material difficulties (income); lack of qualified digital access; discrimination in academic spaces, and epistemicide, aggravated by the effects of the pandemic of COVID-19, were not only present in the narratives of the stakeholders and in the literature, but in the process of organizing the activities. Some of the guests reported financial difficulties to participate in the activities or lack of internet access and quality electronic devices, which could lead to instability during their participation in the online activities. Therefore, we decided to provide financial support for the participation in the events, as well as financial support and guidance for the 6 authors invited to publish in the Dossier.

3. Evaluation and lessons learned

As mentioned earlier, inequalities in the equity of knowledge of black and indigenous people in Brazil are structural. Although issues of knowledge equity and issues of free knowledge have not been discussed in the same spaces, the struggle for access and production of knowledge by and for black and indigenous people in Brazil is not recent. Thus, reflecting and researching this theme demands understanding a broad history of action and performance of social movements, as well as subjective processes that involve identities, trajectories and collective political action.

The structural barriers established for equality in knowledge presented themselves right at the beginning of the Fellowship selection process when we required a doctoral degree in conjunction with fluent English – a very unrealistic requirement for Brazilian non-white people. As already stated in this report, the *Lei de Cotas* and other educational public policies in Brazil in the last decades have increased the number of black and indigenous people with a Ph.D. title today. However, the barrier to speaking a foreign language remains. According to studies,⁶ only 1% of the Brazilian population is fluent in English. Thus, to ensure that the research was carried out by and for people from historically vulnerable populations (black and indigenous people, for example), we decided to eliminate the English fluency requirement, in addition to guaranteeing and encouraging the Fellow to study English during the fellowship, as well as offering technical support for translation of texts and in meetings with partners and the Wikimedia Foundation.

The interconnection of the Fellow with other projects and researchers linked to InternetLab presented itself as fruitful for the research and for InternetLab itself. Furthermore, reflecting on equality of knowledge in conjunction with the broader field of digital rights instigated several ideas and thoughts among the team. Thus, the collaboration of the Fellow not only with coordinators and directors but also with researchers and interns, contributed to qualifying the and expanding the project as a whole.

As already mentioned, we see the connection of equity in knowledge production with free knowledge agendas as a huge potential. By choosing the framework of the *Lei de Cotas* as our

⁶ Available at: <https://www.mundorh.com.br/por-que- apenas-1-dos-brasileiros-e-fluente-em-ingles/>. Accessed on 14 July 2022.

policy landmark for discussion, we sought to understand the main transformations, challenges, and perspectives for the future. The report we wrote after the Conference, currently under design, was organized based on the “answers” given by the guests at the seminar. We enriched these inputs with extensive research, bringing in data, references of projects, and literature. Listing initiatives, laws, public policies, black and indigenous press references, and statistical data, seems to us a way to potentiate what was already put fundamentally in the speech of the participants of the conversations that were organized. This collection of data and other materials is, in our view, quite original – and we hope it will be used as a reference document in the discussion about public policies in education, such as the *Lei de Cotas*, but also to contribute to the understanding that free knowledge initiatives, if appropriated by historically marginalized communities, can lead to the construction of a distributive form of relating to information technologies.

An important strategic point raised by the stakeholders with whom we engaged was the importance of networking. To “circumvent the epistemicide” and defend digital rights as Human Rights, a joint effort is necessary among different social movements and actors. Thus, besides the meeting and Conference having been important for our research, they were extremely rich for the construction of networks and dialogues for future actions among the participants and their organizations. During the two events, contacts were exchanged (email; social networks) among those present with the objective of keeping the dialogue. In other words, bringing together individuals from different perspectives within the intersection we are working with means something beyond this project.

In the coming months, we will publish this material and keep on working on our calendar of activities.