

ARTICLE

Peripheral internationalization at a crossroads: traveling, publishing, and careers

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Abstract

The present article examines internationalization in a peripheral academic context by looking at graduate Sociology professors in Brazil. We focus foremost on research stays abroad and foreign publications, using mostly descriptive statistics. We aim to understand the elements that structure the choice of destination, how they express center-periphery dynamics, and their relation to a research grant called Bolsa Produtividade. Engaging in the debate with the literature on centers and peripheries, especially with the understanding that these are relational and condition each other, we observe the various dimensions and how internationalization strategies are presented. We distinguish between more or less prestigious graduate programs while comparing how they overlap with Brazilian regional inequalities. This sheds light on the pitfalls of the rising pressure to internationalize, and how it takes shape in the recent context.

Keywords

Internationalization; Brazil; center-periphery dynamics; sociology; dependency.

INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The expansion and intensification of mobility systems as an effect of globalization have contributed towards the increase of flows, travels, and circulation of people, symbolic and material goods, information, and technologies, among others. In the science and education fields, these mobilities were driven by the creation of an international market of work and professional training for researchers, professors, graduates, and Ph.D. students (Healey 2008; Martins 2015), a process that has also influenced the commodification of knowledge and education (Altbach 2002).

Although academic life is often seen as an intrinsically internationalized environment, this process results from a myriad of social, political, and economic factors and disputes (Bourdieu 2002). These circulations are mostly dependent upon symbolic and material elements that structure the global geopolitics of knowledge. By this, we mean the concrete processes that, globally, structure knowledge production. One presupposition concerning this debate is that, to understand scientific dynamics, it is necessary to consider its global connectedness and exchanges, both of which have been established over recent centuries but are constantly being reconfigured.



These processes have to be accounted for, especially considering Brazil's peripheral position regarding sociological production. Moreover, the meanings attributed to internationalization and its role in academic careers vary according to the country's internal and external conditions. For instance, different from other countries, data show that Brazilian researchers does not suffer significantly from brain drain: it is more accurate to speak in terms of circulation (Lombas 2017), which means that the majority of those who go abroad to study or do research do return and pursue an academic career in Brazil. Our paper proposes to understand how academic travel structures scientific careers among Sociology graduate programs in Brazil, looking at a number of mobility indicators. These indicators take into consideration the efforts toward Brazilian scientific internationalization, as shall be discussed in more detail below. The main goal of this article is to examine if and how the careers of Sociology professors in Brazil rely (or not) on traveling abroad. We also tentatively address internationalization patterns, including comments on whether other forms of internationalization have been sustained besides traveling abroad.

Therefore, we focus on how travel reflects career success in terms of publication, recognition, and resources. The main criterion adopted to analyze this relation among researchers was whether they were awarded a *Bolsa Produtividade* — a distinguished grant offered by a Brazilian federal agency to prominent researchers. It is important to highlight that this specific resource not only configures a financial gain but also represents an accumulation of symbolic capital that translates into status among peers. Many authors have extensively discussed the pitfalls of North-South cooperation (Gaillard 1994) and knowledge production (Connell 2012). For our analysis, we combine concepts and perspectives to investigate how center-periphery dynamics structure forms of academic exchange. Returning to the understanding of countries from the “center” being considered the most usual destinations for doctoral and postdoctoral stays abroad, we rely on the analytical model proposed by Wiebke Keim (2010). Keim investigates this differentiation through three dimensions, each associated with two characteristics that mark the separation between center and periphery, as follows:

- (i) infrastructure and internal organization (developed/underdeveloped);
- (ii) conditions of existence and reproduction (autonomous/dependent);
- (iii) international position and recognition (centrality/marginality).

These dimensions ensue a relational understanding of center-periphery dynamics since they allow a country or institution to be better seen as autonomous or, at times, dependent, central, or marginal. Such an approach is verifiable in the Brazilian case since its institutions rank as central in the Latin American context, while their overall self-understanding, as shall be elaborated below, is more marginal (and dependent). Following the same reasoning, we reject the idea that the international can be either passively or ontologically defined. As such, a negotiation process is fundamental when it comes to establishing which “type” or “array” of strategies are recognized as legitimate forms of internationalization. Concerning the overall pattern, Raewyn Connell, Fran Collyer, João Maia, and Robert Morell stress:

Negotiation also occurs concerning the circulation of knowledge, which has become an acute issue for researchers. The institutional pressure to publish in elite Northern journals is enormous. However, some of our respondents' publication strategies try to combine publication in such journals with publication in local journals that have no prestige but do have an informed local readership. So it is not an either/or dilemma (Connell *et al.* 2017: 31).



As we will argue later on, this is a relevant trait for Sociology in Brazil. Although there is intense pressure to internationalize, it is not seen as an alternative to engaging in local or national debates. In fact, both actions are necessary when it comes to gaining prestige since there is relative autonomy in terms of the research agenda. At the same time, as outlined by Fabrício Neves, this (relative) autonomy is marked by subordination when it comes to the way Brazilian researchers understand their own work. Neves argues this could be understood as a form of *managing irrelevance*, as detailed below:

In other contexts of scientific practice, ‘contextualization’ means ‘peripheralization’ [...] it refers to attributing a negative value to what one does and how it is done, leading to expectations that are not recognizable, not publishable, of restricted circulation, frequently limited to its own context [...] In these practice contexts, irrelevance is managed when combining contextual expectations of insignificance and generalizing them. I shall synthesize these practices as a ‘regime of managing irrelevance,’ thus reinforcing local expectations through interaction in the same local practice space or intersecting in global practice spaces, such as international congresses (Neves 2020: 7).

This is what we see as a crossroads for internationalization when it comes to Sociology in Brazil. Historically, there have been several authors and approaches from Brazil that gained foreign recognition, e.g., dependence theory. However, these are frequently seen as studies concerning a specific region or country, without achieving the level of generalization that characterizes central or canonical works (even contemporary classics, such as Bourdieu).

To some extent, by fulfilling this peripheral position in relation to most of the Global North (Connell 2012), Brazilian sociologists also structure the forms of internationalization. As we shall see in more detail when discussing our data, Neves mentions that in the Brazilian context, international circulation is foremost identified with the US and Europe, recognized as “centers of relevant scientific production” (Neves 2020: 12). Therefore, even for those who study Brazil or Latin America, the trend is to focus their research stays on these regions.

Asymmetry concerning researchers’ mobility leads to the ideas of ‘methodological update,’ ‘theoretical update,’ and ‘modernization,’ very common in the vocabulary of programs for international scientific mobility offered by countries supposedly peripheral in science (Neves 2020: 12).

Thus, understanding the strategies of internationalization has to take into account the specific field we are discussing, as well as overarching pressures related to the evaluation of graduate programs in Brazil. As such, center and periphery have to be taken as the “idea of a relational periphery, articulated in terms of lack, understood as a reference to institutional, financial, technical, cultural and also cognitive problems” (Ferreira 2019: 83). In other words, the explanation for the Brazilian peripheral position is a perceived lack of adequate conditions to produce relevant, recognized science. However, we may ask: what underlies internationalization? After all, research stays in foreign countries can be seen as a path to internationalize scientists, but they do not necessarily translate to a wider circulation of knowledge. The interpretation outlined by Leandro Rodriguez Medina refines this understanding:

STS literature has long ago shown that internationalization is not related only to the circulation of some hypotheses or ideas as a neutral, geographical phenomenon with no epistemic implications. On the contrary, moving knowledge requires a set of material and social practices



that have to be internalized by scientists throughout their formative years: they must learn how to be first-rate international scientists (Medina 2018: 216).

Hence, in the periphery, the presupposition of cooperating with foreign countries is perceived in a specific manner. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider that different forms of mobility present distinct advantages and limits. To do so, our article is divided into three main sections, followed by final remarks. The next section presents a contextualization of the Brazilian case, along with a short discussion of the concept of internationalization itself, in order to understand this debate more rigorously and situating our findings. After that, we present our empirical corpus and the methodology, looking at the data from professors in Brazilian graduate programs in Sociology to assess if this stance is valid. Furthermore, we indicate how this internationalization is conditioned in terms of travel destinations. Finally, we outline how these travels and publications in foreign journals present themselves in this context, specifically related to the *Bolsa produtividade* grant.

CONTEXTUALIZING THE BRAZILIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

To better understand the data and the analysis below, we outline a panorama of the higher education and graduate programs in Brazil, focusing on the case of Sociology - since certain traits distinguish its career patterns from anthropology and political science¹ (Lima 2019: 8–29). As an undergraduate course in Brazil, Sociology has accompanied the constitution and expansion of the academic system as a whole, going through a new wave of expansion and deep changes in the last quarter of the century (Lima 2019: 8–29).

Our proposed outlook sheds light on the established understanding that regional differences are the most important ones in Brazil. The country is divided into five regions — the South and Southeast present the best infrastructural conditions, along with more funding, while the Northeast, Center-West, and especially the North encompass younger institutions. Most states in the North still have no graduate programs in Sociology. The regional disparities have different origins, one of them being the distribution of the population across the country, but their main aspect relies on the industrialization process throughout the 20th century, and its contemporary ripple effects.

Maps 1 and 2 show the division of Brazil into states and regions, with the corresponding labels, as well as the distribution of federal universities across the country, allowing for a better understanding of the territorial concentration.

Brazil has 51 graduate programs in Sociology/Social Sciences that are distributed among the five regions: Southeast (23); Northeast (13); South (9); Central-West (5); and North (1). The Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes) is a funding agency, which is in charge of evaluating Sociology programs. During the last 25 years, programs were ranked from 1 to 7, with seven being the highest score. For a program to be accredited, it has to obtain at least a grade of 3, and programs that achieve 6 or 7 are considered excellent. The evaluation occurs every four years and is conducted by a pool of professors from different universities. Besides certifying the quality of the graduate courses, another goal of the evaluation is to identify the

¹ In terms of graduate programs, the social sciences in Brazil are split among Anthropology, Political Science, and Sociology, as well as some programs in Social Sciences. However, for matters of evaluation, the federal agency Capes considers the last of these as part of Sociology, and therefore they are also part of our empirical corpus.

asymmetries between regions and knowledge fields to guide strategic actions for creating and expanding graduate programs throughout the country.

Among the graduate programs in Sociology, nine are considered excellent, with four obtaining the highest grade (7) UFRJ (Rio de Janeiro); IESP/UERJ (Rio de Janeiro); UFRGS (Porto Alegre) and UnB (Brasília) and five in the second rank (6) USP (São Paulo); Unicamp (Campinas); UFMG (Belo Horizonte); PUC-RS (Porto Alegre) and UFSCar (São Carlos). Among these, only one is located outside the Southeast and South regions. Thus, although accounting for 64% of all programs, 88% of those considered excellent are located in these two regions, showing a discrepancy between the overall distribution of programs, and the location of those that are better evaluated, which hence, receive more grants and financing. Another 15 programs obtained grade 5, with the following distribution: Northeast (5), North (1), Southeast (5), and South (4). It is to be noted that the programs do not show significant differences when it comes to student enrollment.

Figure 1: Brazilian States and Regions



Created with mapchart.net

Source: Prepared by the authors using the website <<https://www.mapchart.net/brazil.html>>.

The deep inequalities among Brazilian regions and the respective institutions are certainly relevant but present different roots. The center-periphery dynamic is constituted in terms of the

concentration of resources and the qualifications of researchers, leading us to expect similar patterns on the way different forms and levels of internationalization are distributed, which partly derives from a heterogeneous dissemination of the Brazilian population versus its territory, with the Northern region the extreme case, since it encompasses roughly 45% of the country's territory and only 8.7% of its population. In comparison, the Southeast region has 11% of the territory and 42.5% of its population.

Figure 2: Distribution of Federal and State Universities in Brazil, Source: Dados georreferenciados dos campi das universidades federais como instrumento de gestão da informação pelo Forcampi. Available at: <https://litoral.ufpr.br/observatoriolitoral/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2019/09/DADOS-GEORREFERENCIADOS-DOS-CAMPI-DAS-UNIVERSIDADES-FEDERAIS-COMO-INSTRUMENTO-DE-GESTÃO-DA-INFORMAÇÃO-PELO-FORCAMPI.pdf>



The other relevant federal funding agency for our analysis is the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), the main contributor in terms of individual and group research grants. The aforementioned *Bolsa Produtividade* is conferred by this agency to researchers that fulfill an array of distinguishing criteria. Specific aspects are considered for each area, another reason to focus on Sociology instead of Social Sciences since there is no homology between how



Anthropology and Sociology distribute these grants. Although Anthropology mentions aspects of internalization, its outlook is more national-oriented. For its turn, Political Science evaluates the projects alongside International Relations, and these areas specify the necessity of citations among the main indexes, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science etc. In Sociology, the main entry criterion is to be part of a graduate program, since only those who have supervised master theses or doctoral dissertations are eligible as grantees, although further criteria, such as showing one's participation in foreign congresses, must also be fulfilled. And the expectations in terms of internationalization rise along with the levels, advancing towards exchange and cooperation with foreign institutions. This competitive grant is distributed based on reviews among peers, and after obtaining it the researchers receive a monthly payment. On the entry level (2) it lasts 36 months, and on the higher level (1), 48 months, subject to renewal. The entry level is unitary and transits upwards — one can proceed into levels 1D, 1C, and 1B, up to the highest: 1A. Every applicant has to start on the entry level (2) and, if selected, can only advance to the next one after the period of the ongoing grant finishes. Thus, if a professor has chosen not to apply for this grant throughout her/his career, deciding to do so as a senior scholar will necessarily force this person to start at the lowest level, even if the submitted application is excellent, and then (slowly) move onwards, since the next level can only be applied for after three years.

Although gender and racial/ethnic aspects certainly structure inequalities in the academic context in Brazil, it is not elaborated in our analysis. In the case of gender, the first comparisons did not indicate a significant discrepancy; when it came to race, neither we nor the programs have the necessary data. We recognize the necessity and importance of advancing a specific study on this, but it will be more feasible after organizing the first level of analysis, as is the goal of this article. The way internationalization structures Brazil's sociological debate has changed in recent years. At the end of the 20th century, there was an increase in investigations aimed at mapping, evaluating, and measuring the forms and strategies of internationalization, as well as the challenges, barriers, and problems that exist within this process (Maia & Medeiros, 2020).

Celi Scalon and Richard Miskolci (2018) observe that, throughout the last century, graduate programs have become an important structure of the Brazilian higher education and research landscape. If up to the 1970s, a significant number of Brazilian professors obtained their Ph.D. abroad because of the lack of possibilities in Brazil, the creation of a so-called national graduate system contributed towards inverting these dynamics. It thus led to a new form of internationalization at the start of the 21st century — where publishing one's work in international journals or foreign publishing houses became a more vital trait.

In the 21st century, therefore, the number and quality of graduate programs in Sociology have increased, our formative connection with the old centers of sociological production has changed, and there has also been an expansion of postdoctoral and senior internships abroad, which has contributed to updating our staff and their insertion in international research networks (Scalon & Miskolci 2018: 124).

This implies a reorientation of initiatives that internationalize research or the researchers themselves, since Brazilian Sociology has already presented an internationalization of its production for quite some time (Ruvituso 2022). The main novelty consists in more recurrent incentives and pressures to establish international cooperation and networks, and to publish in foreign journals. Hence, regarding Brazil, we observe a structural change that so far has been looked at only in a preliminary form. For instance, attracting foreign professors and researchers has been seen as a



central aspect of internationalization. However, we disagree that this is an interesting alternative for Brazil in the short term. Allowing for more significant participation of the English language — in lectures or texts — would put in jeopardy the democratization of higher education that took place in the last two decades, since most undergraduate students, and several graduate students, do not speak English. Other initiatives such as language learning programs and workshops that teach how to write and publish scientific articles in foreign journals should be prioritized, considering the present state of affairs concerning this matter.

To situate our analysis, it is necessary to briefly outline the definitions of internationalization since there is no consensus in the literature. To name only a few: spending time abroad while obtaining a degree; being a visiting researcher or professor; publishing in foreign journals; publishing in another language, especially English (where it is not one's native language); establishing international collaborations for research projects or academic student exchange (undergraduate and graduate); and so forth. Knight (2004: 213) draws attention to “the way in which definitions can shape policy, and also how practice can influence definitions and policy.” In this sense, it is important to understand the rationale underlying the definition of internationalization.

While some internationalization strategies are simpler to implement, others demand greater political and economic articulation. It is possible to assess, even if preliminarily, that certain actions can generate a greater dialogue than others, contributing to the idea that there are different levels (or categories) of internationalization, which will be discussed further along this article with the empirical data.

As pointed out in recent literature (Maia & Medeiros 2020), internationalization has become an important trait for evaluating graduate programs and competing for research grants in Brazil, meaning that now there is an institutional incentive — or rather pressure — towards internationalizing, changing the place of this practice and discussion. Francisco Marques (2022) stresses that, although there are critiques to this emphasis, it effectively conditions academic careers in Brazil.

Consequently, the internationalization of Brazilian Sociology has occupied a central space in the goals of the graduate programs, being directly demanded by the federal agencies responsible for evaluating the courses. Therefore, the international circulation in Sociology is an institutionalized process happening mainly in federal and state universities that, through higher education policies, finds ways to develop globally. This happens since almost all graduate programs — in our case study, just over 86% — are in public universities. Therefore, not only does the funding for research, through grants and fellowships, come from public (federal and state) funds, but the institutions themselves are also largely public ones. It is important to stress that this is also valid for other areas: the main point is that academic research is done chiefly in public higher education institutions, and the internationalized research even more, since the percentage of public graduate programs rises when we look at the ones with a better evaluation — in Sociology they make up almost 89%.

This last point is especially important since Brazil has seen relevant changes regarding the forms of internationalizing in its social sciences (Madeira & Marengo 2016). Due to the lack of graduate doctoral programs in Brazil in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, a considerable percentage of professors and researchers did their Ph.D. abroad. This trend was reversed from the 1990s onwards, having as its more immediate replacement shorter doctoral fellowships (e.g., for fieldwork), as well as postdoctoral and other short research stays at foreign institutions.



Broadly speaking, there are currently four areas in which internationalization is expected to take place (Brasil 2021a): (a) research: mainly around forms of international cooperation such as projects with international teams or financing; (b) intellectual production: published by professors or students, revealing concrete results of international cooperation; (c) academic mobility: research stays of professors and students, inbound or outbound; (d) institutional performance: admission of international students, courses taught in foreign languages, and international visibility of the graduate program.

Our effort in this article moves towards understanding how professors of graduate programs in Sociology in Brazil are operationalizing the myriad of internationalization strategies and *loci*, and, to some extent, how achieving a certain level of internationalization is a requisite for advancing one's career. The following section extends the specifics of our methodological choices and research design.

EMPIRICAL CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY: ANALYZING THE DYNAMICS OF RESEARCH STAYS ABROAD

João Maia and Jimmy Medeiros (2020) carried out an investigation similar to ours but examining a broader set of disciplines and using different data. They studied all graduate programs in Social Sciences, encompassing Anthropology, Political Science, and Sociology, and chose a representative survey to obtain information concerning different forms and strategies of internationalization. In contrast, our contribution takes up a more specific field – Sociology graduate programs – while looking at all professors associated with a graduate program without relying on a sample. Furthermore, while they looked at internationalization in a broader sense, we also aim to investigate if there are differences concerning the forms of collaboration or the destinations of international mobility, between institutions located in the Global South or the North.

For our database, we decided to take a censal approach, looking at the curricula of all professors who work in graduate programs in Sociology in Brazil². Choosing graduate programs relates to the fact that Capes has established internationalization as a relevant aspect of its evaluation criteria. At the same time, a hierarchy is consolidated between the different programs, given that since the 2010-2012 Capes evaluation (Brasil 2013, 2017), a Master's or Doctoral course without a deeper international integration would not achieve a higher grade.

Fortunately, the maintenance and updating of websites has become a part of the process for evaluating graduate programs, allowing us to have a (long) list of professors and researchers throughout the country, raising the reliability of our data. In addition, focusing on professors of graduate programs allows us to use a consistent and reliable source for our database – the Lattes platform <<http://lattes.cnpq.br>>. Professors and researchers who work in a graduate program or who wish to apply for public funds are obliged not only to fill out the curriculum as specified on this platform, therefore presenting a unified model of grouping academic information, but are also asked to continually update it with their publications, and any periods as visiting professor or researcher in Brazil or abroad, among other accomplishments. Hence our database comprises 937 professors,

² This does not mean social scientists cannot work academically in other contexts. There are a number of state-financed think-tanks, such as INEP and IPEA, that also employ sociologists and other professionals from a diverse academic array. However, these are small in number compared with the universities and are not spread throughout the country, as is the case with higher education, thus allowing us to gain a concrete perspective on the inequalities from this viewpoint.



distributed accordingly through the five regions: 36 in the North, 225 in the Northeast, 85 in the Central-West, 428 in the Southeast, and, finally, 163 in the South.

In methodological terms, we articulate statistical descriptive data with a qualitative analysis to focus on qualitative criteria, competitive scholarships, relevance (or not) of certain international experience/cooperation towards obtaining a *Bolsa Produtividade* and the destination countries. We collected information about the professors' publication records, international experiences, and in which step of their career these took place. Regarding the timeframe, it is essential to point out that our analytical focus on the forms and possible outcomes of internationalization depend on the dynamics of recent decades. However, since we look at all professors currently linked to a graduate program, the data concerning travel, education, and publications take into account professors who obtained their Ph.D. since the 1970s.

In the next section, we present a general overview and then go into more detail about the cross variables. What has stood out so far is the clear predominance of certain forms of internationalization among the more prestigious institutions. It is possible to ask whether the prestige of these institutions enabled professors to obtain better funding, or if the fact that they were able to attract professors with broader experiences (regarding traveling or publishing) contributed towards raising institutional prestige.

When analyzing the data regarding the role and forms of internationalization, in recent years, throughout graduate programs in Sociology, we found no significant differences across the regions concerning the percentage of professors who obtained their Ph.D. abroad, remaining between 12% and 14%, which contradicts our initial hypothesis. As expected, the historical relevance of the Southeast in preparing for an academic career is still very palpable: besides the Southeast itself, where 84% of the graduate professors did their doctoral studies, the percentage of professors from other regions who have obtained their Ph.Ds. in the Southeast varies between 42% and 47%. Nevertheless, because of the general inequality in distribution, overall, 62% of all professors obtained their Ph.D. in the Brazilian Southeast.

This enables us to establish a relational notion of centers and peripheries, as put forward by Ferreira (2019) when analyzing the field of human genetics studies: "Centers and peripheries are, here, taken not as cartographic, but rather as relational notions, allowing to approach the existence of peripheries localized in the centers, as well as centers constituted in the periphery" (Ferreira 2019: 89). This is important for understanding why, although programs such as those at the UFBA³ and the UFPA are not among the best-ranked in Brazil, they represent a — relationally structured — central position in their regions, attracting several intellectuals and researchers from smaller, more peripheral institutions in other states.

Concerning qualitative aspects of taking a doctoral degree abroad, there is a clear-cut trend towards the Global North, distributed among a number of countries, as Table 1 shows. A significant part of these travels focuses on three countries: the US, France, and the UK. The most interesting aspect here is how the linguistic barrier is not that important since, in this regard, it would be easier to choose Portugal and Spain. One could trace this back to two factors: on the one side, the relevance of a classic canon and the roots of how Sociology developed in Brazil, at first markedly influenced by

3 UFBA (Federal University of Bahia) and UFPA (Federal University of Pará) both have graduate programs in Social Sciences, composed of Sociology and Anthropology, that present regional importance. UFPA nowadays is the only graduate program in Sociology in the Northern region, while UFBA is the third most relevant graduate program in the Northeast.

the French and the German perspectives, and more recently, by the US authors. Conversely, the prestige gained by higher education institutions in these countries throughout time is also relevant⁴.

Table 1: Countries of Ph.D.s done fully abroad

Region of the graduate program	Country of the Ph.D.						Total of Ph.Ds.
	USA	France	UK	Germany	Latin Am.	Others	
Central-West	4 (40%)	2 (20%)	1 (10%)	1 (10%)	-	2 (20%)	10 (100%)
North	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)	-	-	5 (100%)
Northeast	7 (22%)	7 (22%)	7 (22%)	3 (9%)	2 (6%)	6 (19%)	32 (100%)
South	2 (10%)	5 (25%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)	-	7 (35%)	20 (100%)
Southeast	20 (36%)	16 (29%)	8 (14.5%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	9 (14.5%)	56 (100%)
Total	34 (27.7%)	31 (25.2%)	19 (15.4%)	12 (9.8%)	3 (2.4%)	24 (19.5%)	123 (100%)

Note: each Ph.D. done fully abroad corresponds to a single professor, which results in a total of 13.1% (123/937) of the professors having done their Ph.D. entirely abroad.

Table 2 shows part-time doctoral stays abroad, known in Brazil as “sandwich” mobility, since the student starts the Ph.D. at their Brazilian home institution, then goes abroad, returning to complete the Ph.D. in Brazil. Here we can see a significant difference regarding the destinations, with France being the leading country of choice by a large margin, followed by the US, and with a lesser participation of the UK.

In comparison to the data concerning those who took their whole Ph.D. abroad, it is interesting to see how the main destinations remain the same – France, UK, and the US – but part-time stays lean significantly to France. As discussed, we understand that this reflects many aspects concerning center-periphery relations, as it relies on a certain tradition and reference that France maintains as the birthplace of Sociology while also expressing ties in terms of cooperation with Brazil in the long term, as exemplified by the Capes-Cofecub mobility agreement. These ties also present themselves, for instance, through Brazilians who work as professors in France, or even more deeply institutionalized academic aspects, as is the case of the journal *Brésil(s)*. Meanwhile, the broader diffusion of the English language makes it relatively easier to write a dissertation in English compared to French. As such, when considering doing the whole Ph.D. abroad, the US and the UK are more frequent destinations, whereas, along with the abovementioned reasons, France is a more popular destination for part-time stays.

⁴ It is important to highlight that hierarchies among universities may also influence one’s career. This means that attending top-tier institutions rather than less prestigious ones – even if they are located in a central country – might result in different gains. The same occurs when publishing in more or less renown journals. Still, considering the data we produced and worked with, it was not possible to evaluate or measure these impacts. This way, we are not able to assess if this axiom can be sustained for careers in Brazil, and further research ought to be considered.

Table 2: Countries of part-time stays

Region of the graduate program	Country of the part-time stay						Total of part-stays
	USA	France	UK	Germany	Latin Am.	Others	
Central-West	7 (33.2%)	6 (28.6%)	-	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	6 (28.6%)	21 (100%)
North	-	1 (33.3%)	-	1 (33.3%)	-	1 (33.3%)	3 (100%)
Northeast	5 (12.8%)	18 (46.1%)	1 (2.6%)	3 (7.7%)	3 (7.7%)	9 (23.1%)	39 (100%)
South	7 (17%)	21 (50%)	3 (7%)	2.5 (6%)	1.5 (4%)	7 (16%)	42 (100%)
Southeast	20 (23%)	32 (37%)	15 (17%)	4 (5%)	1 (1%)	15 (17%)	87 (100%)
Total	39 (20.3%)	78 (40.6%)	19 (9.9%)	11.5 (6%)	6.5 (3.4%)	38 (19.8%)	192 (100%)

Note: each part-time stay corresponds to a single professor, which results in a total of 20,5% (192/937) of the professors having done part of their Ph.D. abroad. Also note that in the South, half a stay has been attributed since one professor divided the time abroad between Germany and Mexico.

Leandro Rodriguez-Medina and Hebe Vessuri (2021) looked into the role exerted by personal bonds in Latin America towards internationalization. For Brazil, this can be seen as especially relevant since a significant number of openings for fellowships to spend research time abroad are public and depend upon individualized applications. As such, knowing someone abroad, or having a local advisor who does so, makes a difference. Looking deeper into the data of professors who spent time abroad during their Ph.D., it becomes clear that there is a mutual attraction between this kind of travel and successful careers, at least in terms of prestige. The success of careers is partially implied, since being part of a graduate program already means a distinction in comparison to peers. And being awarded the *Bolsa Produtividade* further characterizes such a distinction. The data do not allow us to establish if these researchers chose prestigious graduate programs or if having this kind of internationalization raises their chances of being hired, or if it contributes to increasing the program's grade. Below we concisely detail our findings on the implications of obtaining the Ph.D. abroad and undertaking part-time stays.

The interconnection between professors who took their whole Ph.D. abroad and more prestigious — that is, better ranked — graduate programs is evident. To make this more understandable: in the South, there are nine programs, and only one (with the highest grade at the Capes evaluation) concentrates 50% of these professors; in the Southeast, there are 23, and six of these present 60% of the professors who obtained their Ph.D. abroad; in the Northeast, among 13 programs, two are responsible for just under 50% of this type of internationalization, and among the Central-West's five programs, one — another highest-graded — concentrates 60% of these Ph.Ds.

Conversely, besides the Northern region, part-time stays across Brazil are clearly less concentrated among the professors of central graduate programs. It is not possible to speak of a significant diversification, but in the Southeast, eight programs were counted to arrive at 50%; in the Northeast, with three programs, we had just 25% of the total stays abroad; in the South, we raised the number of programs from one to two and obtained 43%, while the same highest-graded program in the Central-West now accounted for only 43% (versus 60%) of the stays abroad.

All three dimensions presented by Keim (2010) contribute to explaining why France, the US, and the UK appear as the three main destinations during the educational trajectory since they present possibilities to access literature and sometimes even offer a better working environment. Focusing on central institutions in part relies on their international recognition and prestige: the rising role of academic rankings led to a number of fellowships in Brazil encouraging researchers apply to a high-ranked universities.

Table 3 presents the total postdoctoral stays abroad and their destinations. It is important to stress two aspects. First, since one professor can have multiple travels of this kind throughout their career, the total amount is significantly higher than Ph.Ds. or part-time (sandwich) doctoral stays. Second, in Brazil, the concept of postdoctoral still encompasses any research stay after obtaining the doctoral degree. Therefore, unlike the US or Europe, it is not restricted to the first three, four, or six years after completing a Ph.D.

Table 3: Countries of foreign post-doctorates

Region of the graduate program	Country of the post-doctorate						Total of post-doctorates
	USA	France	UK	Germany	Latin Am.	Others	
Central-West	13 (27.7%)	9 (19.1%)	3 (6.4%)	3 (6.4%)	5 (10.6%)	14 (29.8%)	47 (100%)
North	-	5 (33%)	-	3 (20%)	-	7 (47%)	15 (100%)
Northeast	23 (16.8%)	35 (25.5%)	18 (13.1%)	4 (3.0%)	9 (6.6%)	48 (35%)	137 (100%)
South	13 (14%)	23 (25%)	7 (7.5%)	11 (12%)	8 (8.5%)	31 (33%)	93 (100%)
Southeast	85 (29.5%)	81 (28%)	40 (14%)	10 (3.5%)	5 (2%)	67 (23%)	288 (100%)
Total	134 (23%)	153 (26.5%)	68 (12%)	31 (5.0%)	27 (4.5%)	167 (29%)	580 (100%)

Note: the same professor may have done more than one post-doctorate. The total number of professors with at least one post-doctorate is 407, which corresponds to 43% (407/937) of the total of professors of our databank.

In contrast, the distribution of postdoctoral stays presents rather significant changes and expresses the imbalance of research funds in Brazil. If overall, the US, France, and the UK remain the most frequent destinations, each region of the country presents certain differences concerning the destinations. For instance, in the Southeast, Spain (9.5%) and Portugal (5.5%) appear more frequently compared to the doctoral stage, surpassing Germany and Latin America, while the South and North bring Germany to the forefront. On table 4, it is possible to observe (a) overall types of experiences abroad and, (b) the most frequent destinations. As expected, more than half of all international stays were conducted in France (29.3%) and the US (23.1%), followed by the UK (11.8%), Germany (6.1%) and the Latin American countries (4.1%).

Table 4: Experiences abroad (Full Ph.D + part-time stays + post-doctorates)

Region of the graduate program	Country of the experience abroad						Total of experiences abroad
	USA	France	UK	Germany	Latin Am.	Others	
Central-West	24 (30,8%)	17 (21,8%)	4 (5,1%)	5 (6,4%)	6 (7,7%)	22 (28,2%)	78 (100%)
North	1 (4,4%)	7 (30,4%)	1 (4,4%)	6 (26,1%)	-	8 (34,7%)	23 (100%)
Northeast	35 (16,8%)	60 (28,9%)	26 (12,5%)	10 (4,8%)	14 (6,7%)	63 (30,3%)	208 (100%)
South	22 (14,2%)	49 (31,6%)	12 (7,8%)	17,5 (11,3%)	9,5 (6,1%)	45 (29%)	155 (100%)
Southeast	125 (29%)	129 (30%)	63 (14,6%)	16 (3,7%)	7 (1,6%)	91 (21,1%)	431 (100%)
Total	207 (23,1%)	262 (29,3%)	106 (11,8%)	54,5 (6,1%)	36,5 (4,1%)	229 (25,6%)	895 (100%)

Note: the total (895) represents the number of experiences abroad considering Ph.Ds. done fully abroad, part-time stays and post-doctorates. The number of professors who have at least one experience abroad (disregarding the level) is 580.

Finally, as previously stressed, staying abroad is not the sole form of internationalization. On the contrary, publishing and circulating internationally have become some of the more standard strategies. Notwithstanding, this process takes a particular form for researchers located in peripheral countries. The world's division of Sociology is indeed constituted within the hierarchies and dynamics of the global geopolitics of knowledge (Burawoy 2010). In the next section, we expand on this debate, presenting and analyzing our data on publications as an internationalization trend and its possible impact in one's career success.

INTERNATIONALIZATION, PUBLISHING, AND CAREERS: FOCUSING ON THE BOLSA PRODUTIVIDADE GRANT

When taking into account internationalization criteria and looking at the publication patterns of the professors in graduate programs in Sociology in Brazil, there is an evident trend toward the heightening of publications. This is a reflection of the increasing pressure of federal evaluation agencies to achieve this goal. This should, however, be looked at somewhat critically. On the one hand, several relevant national journals still represent the most important forms of circulating knowledge, therefore showing an effort to guarantee the connection to local discussions. On the other hand, the pressure for internationalization appeared in our research data through relatively frequent publications in predatory journals⁵, something that can be found more commonly in less prestigious graduate programs. Our data confirm that publishing abroad has become a fundamental aspect of the career since the great majority of professors have at least one publication in a foreign country

⁵ Predatory journals are those that do not adhere to peer review and evaluation criteria and tend to request payment for publishing. They also frequently publish across an extensive rather than specific field or discipline, and many tout for business by sending e-mails to potential authors declaring an interest in their work.

(whether in a journal, a book, or a book chapter⁶), as can be seen in Table 5. This means that publishing abroad has become one of the most common forms of internationalization in Brazil for professors of Sociology⁷, as nearly 81% of the total of our database have at least one foreign publication, while 61.9% have had an international stay at a higher education institute or research center.

Table 5: International publications and experiences

Regions	Professors with foreign publications	Professors with experience abroad	Total of professors
Central-West	58 (68.2%)	54 (63.5%)	85 (100%)
North	25 (69.4%)	17 (47.2%)	36 (100%)
Northeast	165 (73.3%)	133 (59.1%)	225 (100%)
South	139 (85.3%)	101 (62%)	163 (100%)
Southeast	372 (86.9%)	275 (64.2%)	428 (100%)
Total	759 (81%)	580 (61,9%)	937 (100%)

Note: all the percentages are in relation to the total number of professors.

We understand that this finding is a consequence of the material and social aspects of academic life in a peripheral country. First, publishing can be far more economical than traveling in terms of money and time. Secondly, publishing does not depend on established networks and contacts to the same extent as arranging a stay abroad, for the latter requires an invitation, an institutional link, funds, among other requirements. Moreover, traveling abroad evokes a greater language barrier than does publishing in foreign journals, considering the possibility of hiring a translator⁸. Participating in a mobility program, on the other hand, demands a deeper knowledge of a second language and, in many cases, even an international proficiency certification.

Other findings from our study show that the correlation between having an international mobility experience and publishing abroad, as pointed out by Maia and Medeiros (2020), might be better expressed in terms of the number of publications and relevance of the journal and not only of publishing itself. As Table 6 shows, while 78.2% of the professors with experience abroad have published more than three pieces internationally, only 39.2% of those who have never stayed abroad have done the same. Hence it appears that more consistent internationalization depends highly on ties that rely upon a more profound foreign experience.

6 We limit the publications to journals and books because these are peer-reviewed and are more prestigious than publishing on Annals of academic events or magazines, for instance.

7 Another point we will not be able to expand on in this article is how there seems to be a trend of publishing in other languages—especially in English—in Brazilian journals. On the one hand, this reflects a strategy of predatory paid journals designed to appear international so as to receive more contributions. On the other hand, relevant local journals have been publishing texts in both English and Portuguese, and researchers have been looking at this dynamic as an opportunity to integrate the international community and circulate knowledge in further latitudes while staying connected to Brazilian readers.

8 Nonetheless, it is relevant to note that “Even if we consider that a large part of social scientists publish articles translated to English by third parties, the opportunities for publication still demand conversation and network formation in the English language” (Maia & Medeiros 2020: 493).

Table 6: Number of international publications

Number of international publications	Professors with experience abroad	Professors without experience abroad
None	49 (8.4%)	130 (36.4%)
One or two	78 (13.4%)	87 (24.4%)
Three or more	453 (78.2%)	140 (39.2%)
Total	580 (100%)	357 (100%)

When applying a Spearman's rank correlation test⁹, this association becomes even more explicit. Even though the correlation between having an experience abroad and having a foreign publication is positive, it is presented to be moderate (0.348). In its turn, the correlation between periods abroad and the number of foreign publications is relatively stronger (0.438) which means there is a trend toward publishing more in foreign journals among those with more experiences abroad.

On another note, it is vital to highlight the regional differences since the rate of professors with international publications varies greatly, as shown above in Table 5. Approximately 68% and 70% of the professors have published internationally in the Central-West and the North, respectively. In the Northeast, the rate is 73%, and in the South and the Southeast, it is up to 85% and 87%, respectively, thus showing the predominance of the South-Southeast axis. However, observing the number of professors with experience abroad, we can infer that the proportions are not necessarily sustained: the North and Northeast hold the lower numbers (47% and 59%), while the other three regions all float between 62% and 64%.

Accordingly, the multiple ways internationalization presents inside the country sheds light on the different ways universities respond to its demands while confronting specific barriers in practice. At the same time, since being evaluated and ruled by federal regulations, professors' careers are subjected to criteria that do not always take this into consideration. Thus, our data reveal the necessity of deepening investigations concerning the intertwining of the types of publication, especially concerning journals, and the distribution of grants along with the evaluation of the programs. If we were able to tentatively show the overlapping of publication in foreign journals and forms of academic recognition, there are more levels to this analysis, once again taking into account regional disparities. Being divided into five strata, as mentioned above, the *Bolsa Produtividade* grant also appears as a relevant indicator of academic stratification. As Table 7 shows, the distribution of the overall figure of grants is not overly concentrated compared to the distribution of programs around the country, which changes as we move into the top tiers of the grant¹⁰. The table highlights the three highest levels of the grant, and this selection answers to the criteria established by the discipline of Sociology. Its call for grants states that a researcher with this profile should:

⁹ This test was taken through with the Google Colab platform < <https://colab.research.google.com/> >.

¹⁰ Although our data do not allow us to sustain this hypothesis, it seems that achieving these levels without a more consolidated internationalization is virtually impossible. Almost all grantees combine multiple research stays abroad with a wide array of foreign publications, and those in the top level 1A published in prestigious journals. Considering that established and senior professors occupy these top tiers, we can take into account the idea of a generational change since the professors with a less consolidated internationalization last obtained their Ph.D in 1995. In contrast, seven professors with a Ph.D from the 2000s have already reached this grant level.

Have maintained regular and productive exchange with the international academic community, shown through the publication in journals and books of relevant foreign editorial houses in the discipline, the organization or participation in academic congresses, the coordination of agreements concerning the preparation of human resources and the exchange of researchers as well as lecturing at foreign institutions, among others (Brasil 2021b).

Table 7: Distribution of the *Bolsa Produtividade*

Regions	Professors who obtained a Bolsa Produtividade	1C	1B	1A
Central-West	22 (8.5%)	-	2 (6%)	1 (6.25%)
North	6 (2.3%)	-	-	-
Northeast	49 (19.1%)	2 (12%)	4 (12%)	1 (6.25%)
South	47 (18.3%)	3 (18%)	5 (15%)	1 (6.25%)
Southeast	133 (51.8%)	12 (70%)	22 (67%)	13 (81.25%)
Total	257 (100%)	17 (100%)	33 (100%)	16 (100%)

If overall, the Southeast has just over half the grants, among the 17 professors in the 1C tier, 70% work in this region, and there is not a single grantee in the Central-West, with 18% in the South and 12% in the Northeast. The distribution is similar for the 33 professors holding the 1B level, with 67% of the grants in the Southeast, 15% in the South, 12% in the Northeast, and 6% in the Central-West. Finally, in the highest tier (1A), totaling 16 professors, the concentration rises further, with the Southeast holding 81.25% of the grants, while the South, Northeast, and Central-West having 6.25% each. There is not a grantee in the North in neither of these cases.

To illustrate this further, we mention that a sole graduate program in the Southeast, evaluated as 6 by Capes and thus roughly ranked among the top 10% of Brazil, has five researchers with a 1A CNPq grant. Adding up the North, Northeast, Central-West, and South regions, comprising 29 programs, we arrive at three researchers with this type of grant, showing a deep divide. It is relevant to stress the *Bolsa Produtividade* implies individual academic prestige, on the one hand, and is considered when evaluating graduate programs, on the other. Moreover, it offers financial resources that foster research, and since the grant can be used with a high degree of flexibility, for different purposes, it covers costs like Article Processing Charges (i.e., APCs) and the translation of articles, reinforcing the possibilities for internationalization.

Hence, assessing the distribution of this grant, the evaluation of graduate programs, and more detailed elements concerning the traits of publication, should be a lasting endeavor when we consider this first glance offered by our study. After all, the advancement of publication as a centerpiece of internationalization will certainly affect how this effort is structured. Our understanding is that, possibly, the criteria for selecting grantees may also be affected in the long term, depending on the pattern of these publication records. Moreover, we identified a correlation between the number of stays abroad and publications, and illustrated through our data the deep disparities and concentration when it comes to the highest tier of the *Bolsa Produtividade* in terms of regions across Brazil. When also considering the relevance of internationalization to achieve such levels of recognition, it is possible to present concrete aspects concerning the forms of academic inequality. We expect such diagnosis to contribute towards conceiving forms of mitigating these

imbalances. This goes hand in hand with the dynamics mentioned above of *dependency* and *lack* and allows us to perceive how the alignment of these asymmetries reinforces the existing inequalities when it comes to knowledge production. In a nutshell, those with better material conditions concentrate the scarce resources even more since when applying for grants and funding, they usually fulfill or surpass the requirements compared to their peers from other regions and less prestigious graduate programs.

FINAL REMARKS

The peripheral condition has been under scrutiny throughout our reflection in this article. Taking up the factor of internationalization, we cannot separate it from the idea of a peripheral science. We pointed out that what produces a peripheral condition for certain scientific investigations and results is linked to the possibility of its circulation and reception (Neves 2014). Therefore, the mobility of researchers is not enough to prevent such a structural condition. In fact, it may even be reinforced through these travels.

When Paulin Hountondji (1996: 33–46) points out the problem of extraversion concerning what was deemed as and presented — by Europeans — as African philosophy, he is dealing with a similar issue: what exactly is the meaning of internationalizing science? Thus, our investigation shows an ambiguous pattern: the pressure of internationalization tends to reproduce the established dynamics, which bears a twofold expression since the aforementioned structural aspects condition different forms of traveling. On the one side, a pressure to look for prestigious and well-ranked institutions, which are generally located in the Global North, and on the other side, an effort to compensate for the lack of resources (Keim, 2010), such as access to literature or even the equipment to analyze certain quantitative data.

Our data show an established circulation of researchers through part-time doctoral research stays abroad or at the postdoctoral level. The countries of destination express a significant concentration in the Global North, especially the US and Western and Central Europe. Therefore, we can refer to a dependent form of internationalization, with only a few instances of South-South mobility. We also identified a growing relevance of adopting publications in foreign journals as a strategy among Sociology professors in Brazil, at least in part associated with the research stays abroad, but also independently of it, which means incorporating the established division of scientific labor, as well as recognizing and reaffirming the relevance of these countries. Nevertheless, albeit internationalization through publishing is a notable nationwide trend, further research and variables crossing are needed to better understand the regional differences in this pattern and their impact.

Finally, incentives towards internationalization are a vital aspect of academic and intellectual life since circulating knowledge can contribute towards richer and more diverse perspectives, be it theoretical or in terms of the main themes. Nevertheless, we can also see that this diversity has been limited by reproducing the patterns pointed out above. Therefore, it may constitute a relevant challenge to design grants and other forms of cooperation that specifically address South-South relations.



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