

Special Issue 2021

IV International Seminar on History of the Present Time

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Presentation

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Presentation of the dossier with papers from the **IV International Seminar on History of the Present Time**, an initiative of the Graduate Program in History of the Santa Catarina State University (UDESC), held online between March 17 and 19, 2021.

Historical knowledge-making in pandemic times

In the Passages project, the philosopher Walter Benjamin (2018, p. 759) opens convolute N, entitled “Theory of knowledge, theory of progress,” with the assertion that “in the domains discussed here, knowledge exists only as flashes. A text is the thunder that goes on resounding for a long time.” The assertion that knowledge exists as images that are hard to confine in time seems strikingly current in the scenario of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that ravaged the planet in 2020. During this period, knowledge, especially that built by the so-called human sciences, was harshly attacked and vilified and its transmission, another key issue for Benjaminian reflection, has been increasingly isolated in our society. If we think through our experience in organizing and attending face-to-face academic events, where debates were carried out by direct action along with the academic community, affections, projects, and partnerships were consolidated, and learning went beyond the formal content presented, we notice a considerable impact on both the production and dissemination of scientific research.

It is true that through digital platforms we are also able to better disseminate scientific knowledge, but what does happen when, instead of a partnership, the virtualization of activities imposes itself on academic work, taking the contours of an imperative with no return? If we learned how to handle virtual platforms, if we had to become literate in the applications and social network services to better communicate personally and professionally, we know that this virtualization of everyday life has been a complete blurring of the boundaries between workplace and private life. The impact of all this on physical

and mental health has been taking shape in the dropout rates of schools and undergraduate and graduate course subjects, in delays imposed on graduate research. It is not the case of opposing distance activities to in-person activities, after all, thanks to technological advances, we are able to provide a veneer of normality to work and reinvent ourselves as researchers and professors.

It was as an online meeting that the IV International Seminar on History of the Present Time took place, an event held by the Graduate Program in History of the Santa Catarina State University (GPH/UDESC) since 2012. Change was not limited to the structure of the seminar's presentation, the reflections and activities themselves proved to be different, including the set of videos with reports of GPH/UDESC's students commenting on the effect of the pandemic on research, the classroom, and personal life¹. Still impacted by the sanitary catastrophe, the event included a tribute to our colleague Luís Felipe Falcão, who passed away in April 2020².

The virtualization of academic life, through synchronous lectures, even if recorded and made available online in an open and unrestricted manner, may contribute to quantitatively increase access to the activities carried out but, on the other hand, it has left an open door to hacker invasion (increasingly frequent in events related to recent history), train of thought losses due to connection problems, individualized ways of following events, isolation and loneliness in relation to what is seen, read, and apprehended. The consequences of this type of social relationship with academic knowledge, produced and shared among peers, are yet to be estimated by future generations. But it is worth noting that participation in a scientific event listening to the auditorium's buzz, engaging in common side conversations in cafes and restaurants, dealing with the complex and contradictory coexistence of bodily presence (and all its peculiar affections and interaction patterns) is different from that experienced by people who watch

¹ The videos are available on the YouTube channel and can be accessed at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnpF1aU1Dyk&ab_channel=ProgramadeP%C3%B3s-Gradua%C3%A7%C3%A3oemHist%C3%B3riaUDESC. Accessed on: August 26, 2021.

² To honor the colleague, GPH/UDESC's professors read fragments of his intellectual production. The audios are available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rM7kXLDwtrA&list=PLYybs2o3fDHHGcKEA4Oo2L4RcV345fLYi&ab_channel=ProgramadeP%C3%B3s-Gradua%C3%A7%C3%A3oemHist%C3%B3riaUDESC. Accessed on: August 26, 2021.

an online event at home, sharing their attention with an environment of family activities, TV set on, and other sources of distraction. A possible solution to remedy the harm caused to knowledge production and transmission in the work virtualization era is to make it in written text.

The organization and presentation of reflections at the IV International Seminar on History of the Present Time, embodied in the structure of a scientific article, takes, in the current context, a political role of paramount importance. The first aspect to highlight is that the ideas arising from the debate are structured and organized in an academic text with footnotes, quotes and references much clearer than in the oral presentation. Second, this reaffirms the role of human science journals as major spaces for dissemination, debate, and maturation of scientific reflections. And, in this scenario, the journal **Tempo e Argumento** has established itself as one of the periodicals of national and international reference in the field of History of the Present Time. Thirdly, taking into account the absence of investments in the production of knowledge that does not have a technical-pragmatic nature aimed at the market, to publish a dossier with reflections by historians attentive to the past times that inhabit the present time, who emphasize their commitment to thinking about ethical and political responsibility towards the memory of the dead and the needs of the living, proves to be crucial for a social and political development that meets the challenges of today. Fourthly, making these reflections available in the form of a scientific article reduces the impact of that dispersion arising from the condition of virtual spectator. In front of a text, a viewer becomes a reader; in front of a text, it is possible to follow the argument's structure, annotate it, clip from it, cite it, and make other uses of the same reflection.

In line with the above, it is noteworthy that when publishing in scientific article format some of the reflections presented at the IV International Seminar on History of the Present Time, held between March 17 and 19, 2021, we do not have here a reproduction of what was exposed orally. The lectures, arranged in the form of conferences and roundtables, are available on the GPH/UDESC's *YouTube* channel. They comply with other presentation and organization rules that do have a relevant social and political role, but which are not to be confused

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with the written text. To deserve space in an academic journal, the reflections initiated in the seminar had to undergo some changes, especially when structured in text format, but also because the professors included provocations made during the synchronous debate in the articles, including those that were not possible to answer at the time of discussion. In addition, there are discussions provoked by the ad hoc reviewers, who suggested changes and insertions after careful reading, presenting constructive criticism, putting arguments that lacked further theoretical foundations into question, and inviting the authors to rethink certain ideas and their consequences for the evolution of historiography.

The reflections presented during the international seminars on History of the Present Time, since their first edition, have always taken the format of a dossier for publication in the journal **Tempo e Argumento**. In 2012, texts by François Dosse, Michèle Lagny, Leonor Arfuch, Pablo Pozzi, and Hernán Ramírez were published. Debates from the 2nd seminar, which took place in October 2014, gave rise to the dossier published in volume 7, in 2015, mostly with texts by researchers who are members of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) from various countries in Latin America, among them Gerardo Necochea, Patricia Pensado Leglise, Igor Goicovic Donoso, and Mauricio Archila. The 3rd dossier was born from the 2017 Seminar. This is volume 10, number 23, published in 2018, containing texts by Christian Delacroix, Marieta Moraes Ferreira, Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta, Marina Franco, Verónica Valdivia Ortiz de Zárate, Mariana Joffily, Ana Maria Maud, Ricardo Santhiago, Viviane Borges, Javier Campo, Marcelo Róbson Téó, and João Quartim de Moraes.

The publication introduced herein is an integral part of the aforementioned constellation and it reinforces the commitment of the GPH/UDESC and the journal **Tempo e Argumento** to keeping the debate alive by means of the most recent discussions on research in the field of History of the Present Time. We open this issue with the articles by the two lecturers. First, introducing the state-of-the-art of History of the Present Time in Mexico, through the transdisciplinary and transnational approach of Eugenia Allier Montaño (Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [UNAM]), in partnership with César Iván Vilchis Ortega and Laura Andrea Ferro

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Higuera, entitled “History of the Present Time in Mexico: challenges and the building of a field.” Then we have the reflection proposed by the French historian Christelle Taraud (NYU Paris & Centre d’Histoire du XIX^e Siècle – Paris 1 et 4), “Théorie(s) féministe(s) et histoire(s) du temps présent: intersectionnalité, subalternité et décolonialité.” The author traces a genealogy of the experiences of feminist intellectuals to analyze the categories of intersectionality and decoloniality as major tools to renew the discussions and approaches in History of the Present Time. Next, we have the text “Fear, intolerance, resignation: some readings on contemporary immigration in Italy,” by Prof. Luiz Fernando Beneduzi (Università Ca Foscari Venezia).

The second set of texts addresses the issues raised in the roundtable Memory Politics and Poetics, coordinated by Prof. Janice Gonçalves (GPH/UDESC), who is also the author of the article entitled “Memory policies and poetics: views and passages.” Then, there are the articles “The ‘Marches of Silence’ in Uruguay: poetics and memory vindication through images,” by Prof. Ana Maria Sosa Gonzalez (Uruguay), and “Phantasmagoria: image of contradiction in a suspended time,” by Paola Helena Acosta Sierra (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional – Colombia).

Politics and Religion: Interface for the Study of History is the title of the roundtable that gave rise to the articles by Prof. Caroline Jaques Cubas (GPH/UDESC), “Religion, time and memory: interfaces for studying the History of the Present Time,” and by Claudia Touris (Universidad Buenos Aires), “Slum priests in present-day Argentina: between the Third World Catholic heritage and Pope Francis.”

We close the dossier using the texts written after the debate provoked in the round table History of the Present Time and History Teaching, initially the article “As if History teaching were also history: considerations in light of the tools we use to understand the past,” by Prof. Ana Zavala (Centro Latino-Americano de Economia Humana, Uruguay), followed by “History teaching: temporality, post-truth and poetic truth,” by Marcelo de Mello Rangel (Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto [UFOP]). Finally, we have “Now-time (Jetztzeit), History of the Present Time and Contestado War,” by Rogério Rosa Rodrigues (GPH/UDESC).

It is worth noting that we have herein only a snippet of the discussions that took place at the IV International Seminar on History of the Present Time. For those interested, it is worth referring to the event proceedings. There readers find almost a hundred articles containing reflections by researchers from all over Brazil. I cannot fail to register herein the presence, albeit in between the lines of this dossier, of the organizing committee that played a key role so that the seminar could take place: Mariana Joffily, Luciana Rossato, Janice Gonçalves, Caroline Cubas, Glaucia Assis, Fernanda Oliveira, Kelly Noll, Carlos Alberto Oliveira (Kadu), Carolina Witt, and Igor Moreira. Although the texts of some of these colleagues do not appear in this dossier, their support, reflections, and intellectual positions permeate much of what is introduced herein. It was along with this committee that the themes were brainstormed, the scholars were invited, the structure of online and synchronous presentation was arranged. These reflections will also be published in a book, scheduled for 2022, organized by the colleagues Caroline Cubas and Fernanda Oliveira and the PNPd scholarship holder Leonardo Conedera. It will evaluate the themes addressed in thematic symposia having their research axes on History of the Present Time. I would also like to acknowledge the CAPES, as it was thanks to the financial support from the 'Edital PAEP Auxílio' No. 3118/2020 that we have managed to deploy many of the services provided at the event.

I finish by returning to Walter Benjamin's quote that opens this presentation, i.e. knowledge exists as flashes, therefore, hard to be apprehended and confined. Structuring it in text format allows the debate to be prolonged, no longer in the form of a flash, but as a sound that echoes in time. I hope that this dossier you are receiving, once published and made available for open, free, and unrestricted access, allows the ideas shared at the IV International Seminar on History of the Present Time to reverberate beyond social network services. I hope that the texts resonate in time and space to gain momentum in reflections that can advance discussions on the epistemological, political, and ethical status of the History of the Present Time that we want, and must do, in the midst of so many attacks on knowledge. I hope to amplify the discussions on the social role of a historian in face of the – sanitary, environmental, political, social, and moral

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– catastrophe that threatens our planet. I hope that this set of texts serve as a testimony to the reflexive action of historians during the pandemic, they can make the noise needed to record that we have been together, that we have not remained silent, that we have fought using the weapons at our disposal.

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