

## **When reality hits: the demands brought by Covid-19 and the lack of guaranteed**

### **Internet access in Brazil**

**Abstract:** Although the topic of digital divide is already part of the discussion agenda around the Internet and its governance, being present at events such as the World Summit on the Information Society (2003) and the Net Mundial meeting, the recognition of the right to the Internet as a essential service is not yet widespread, and universal access, as well as the expansion of this concept, encounters obstacles and asymmetries around the world. In this paper, the dynamics imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic is approached as a turning point that exacerbates the problems of the absence of this generalization, on the one hand, and the lack of correspondence between existing normative principles and the effectiveness of public policies, for another. This discussion is based on the Brazilian case, with a focus on the country's history in this area, as well as on two empirically experienced and existing situations: the implementation of emergency remote learning in elementary education and the government income-transfer program applied in the pandemic context.

### **Introduction**

The debate over the statement of the Internet as a fundamental human right, as a universal right or as a right connected to citizenship is extensive in the academic specialized field (REGLITZ, 2019; SZOSZKIEWICZ, 2020) and in the Internet governance ecosystem (UNESCO, 2003; 2005). The aim of this paper is to propose, discuss and investigate the hypothesis that the Covid-19 pandemic has represented the emergence of a concrete situation that accelerated and revealed the consequences of the non-recognition of Internet access as a fundamental right and an essential service. It seeks to demonstrate that the sudden and evident mandatory necessity of digital connection in all dimensions of human life has exacerbated the mismatch between a perspective that still sought to assert itself in the normative and theoretical ground, but has not been sufficiently established as a widely recognized norm and an effective practice. This research question, which forages to investigate directly whether there is a causal relation between this incompatibility of the normative parameter and the concrete reality, and what its consequences are, is analyzed with the Brazilian case.

Brazil is a country whose population is significantly present on the Internet, as demonstrated by its amount of users and time spent online (WE ARE SOCIAL, 2020). It also has a certain organizational structure in Internet governance, through institutions

such as the Internet Steering Committee (CGI), a multistakeholder committee responsible for coordinating Internet-related actions in Brazil. In addition, there is a vibrant movement of civil society entities, as occurred in the process of elaboration and approval of the Marco Civil da Internet<sup>1</sup> (SAMPAIO, BRAGATO, NICOLÁS, 2013; 2015) and of the Lei Geral de Proteção de Dados (LGPD)<sup>2</sup> (VALENTE, 2019). Thus, there is already a normative discussion on the essentiality of the Internet and normative parameters that addressed it as a right connected to citizenship, as proposed in article 7 of the Marco Civil and in the CGI principles:

CHAPTER II: USERS' RIGHTS AND GUARANTEES  
Art. 7. Internet access is essential for the exercise of citizenship rights and duties, and users have the right to (...) (BRASIL, 2014, translated)

Universality - Internet access must be universal so that it becomes a tool for human and social development, thereby contributing to the formation of an inclusive and nondiscriminatory society, for the benefit of all (CGI, 2009).

Around the world, the affirmation of the Internet as a right in itself does not constitute a consensus, as exemplified by arguments like technology being an enabler of right (CERF, 2012) and not a right itself. Even so, aspects like the ones pointed above allow us to realize that there was an ongoing process of considering this guarantee as an important component in the Internet governance ecosystem, as demonstrated in the first discussions on Internet governance, already mentioned at the World Summit on the Information Society, for example, and a principle already registered in Brazil, a country that integrates the ecosystem.

However, considering the political, economic, social and cultural specificities of the analyzed country, it is a question of understanding the Brazilian case as representing one of the nations that could fit the concerns expressed in the WSIS, even with certain nuances, since it is a relatively strong economy in global terms and has already achieved relevant diffusion of access. As stated in the Summit:

We are also fully aware that the benefits of the information technology revolution are today unevenly distributed between the developed and developing countries and within societies. We are fully committed to turning this digital divide into a digital opportunity for all, particularly for those who risk being left behind and being further marginalized.

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<sup>1</sup> Digital Bill of Rights.

<sup>2</sup> General Data Protection Law.

According to data from ICT Households 2019<sup>3</sup> (CETIC/CGI.br), 28% of Brazilian households (20,180,002 households) do not have Internet connection and 26% of individuals (47,240,271) are non-users, that is, individuals who declared they had not accessed online network in the last three months. It is not, therefore, a case of complete lack of connectivity and the gap, when compared to the level seen in other countries, is not particularly prominent in global terms. Therefore, the objective of this paper is not to support its conclusions on an extreme and restricted case, but to investigate how the limitations indicated in the data, which express dimensions of non-inclusion (voluntary or involuntary) of a considerable number of houses and individuals, become especially serious and urgent due to a demand from reality. A demand that was already diagnosed due to the increasing relevance of the Internet in accessing information and other requirements to citizenship, but is put in new terms in the landscape of 2020. In this scenario, even proportionally small or not so expressive rates of non-access in general or, mainly, internal inequalities and qualitative insufficiencies in this relationship between society and the Internet, can result in irreparable damage to material survival or social equality, even more exacerbated by current dynamics.

With the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the adoption of social isolation practices, there was an exceptional situation in which the guarantee of Internet access not only needed to be defended as a normative horizon, which inspires and guides the practice of public policies and actions of the sectors involved at the institutional level and in the governance ecosystem. In concrete terms, the guarantee of access and the dissemination of digital knowledge became, more specifically, an ultimate need for citizens. In addition to the implications that can be logically deduced, such as the use of the Internet to pay bills, to have access to live culture and entertainment, we highlight two situations in the Brazilian case: 1) The suspension of face-to-face classes in the primary education, since March 2020; 2) The Emergency Basic Income Program, a national income distribution program. With remote learning and the need of a mobile application to request and withdraw the financial aid, access to the Internet becomes an essential asset as the exclusive way to reach those resources.

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<sup>3</sup> The data showed in the research was collected from October 2019 to March 2020. The aim population was private permanent households and individuals with 10 or more years old. Sample size was 23.490 households and 20.536 individuals (CGI.br, 2020). Comitê Gestor da Internet no Brasil (CGI.br). (2020). Pesquisa sobre o uso das tecnologias da informação e comunicação no Brasil: TIC Domicílios, ano 2019: Relatório metodológico. São Paulo: CGI.br.

Faced with the aggravation of the dependence on digital technologies for the execution of basic functions in terms of education and survival, this paper proposes the identification of a potential turning point in the relationship between rights that are still unrecognized and not yet effective, digital inclusion, Internet access and digital abilities, and the demands brought by COVID-19. This hypothesis is discussed through the recovery and brief description of the scenario of connectivity and inclusion policies in Brazil followed by an overall review of official materials associated with the two selected examples and, finally, the survey of news and reports about problem situations related to them, in the online base of the newspaper Folha de São Paulo.

### **A country in legal terms: normative principles in Internet governance ecosystem and digital inclusion policies**

With 211,049,527 million inhabitants (WORLD BANK, 2019), Brazil is a country located in Latin America with a trajectory still considerably recent in terms of independence (since 1822), urbanization (mainly since 1970, when the urban population surpasses the rural), even though, based on 2019 data (WORLD BANK), it ranks as the ninth economy in terms of Gross' Domestic Product (GDP).

In addition to creating an environment with a high presence and use of the Internet and already with an urban and telecommunication structure, it is possible to say that the national reality favors studies on the use of these tools because it is a democracy inserted in the third wave of democratization, that reached countries in Latin America and Eastern Europe at the end of the 20th century, with a political culture that presents institutions and behaviors typical of incomplete citizenship, with traces of authoritarian periods (MOISÉS, 1995), inattention to education and the political formation of citizenship (CARVALHO, 2011). In this sense, it has elements that allow to qualify and understand different dimensions of the digital inclusion process, especially in a scenario in which the non-affirmation of the Internet as an essential right incurs an irreparable damage to utilize services.

The Brazilian telecommunication structure has its beginnings dated in the 1950s, with substantial development until the 1970s, with the country entering the circuit of data circulation since this period as well. The origin of the Internet in Brazil goes through attempts to establish an academic connection network and, subsequently, the implementation of an already commercial network in the 1990s (CARVALHO, 2006;

DEMENTSCHUK, HENRIQUES, 2019). In turn, the digital exclusion, inequality or gap has been a target of public policy since the early 2000s (SILVA, 2020; IRIS, 2019). The programs and records that can be retrieved indicate that the country had as its objective the expansion of the connectivity infrastructure, reducing the prices of equipment such as computers and distributing them in public schools, as well as creating telecenters or digital inclusion centers, among other initiatives, which were compiled by Silva (2020).

Board 1: Public policies for digital inclusion

Year	Public policy
2002	Gesac Program - Electronic Government / Citizen Service (Ordinance n° 256/2002 of Ministry of Communications)
2003	Decree No. 4.733 / 2003 establishes, among the aims of public telecommunications policies, the need to guarantee Internet access for the entire population.
2005	Digital Inclusion Program (Law No. 11,196 / 2005)
	Connected Citizen Project - Computer for All (Decree n° 5.542 / 2005)
2007	One Computer per Student (UCA) project, part of Proinfo.
	Special Regime for the Purchase of Computers for Educational Use (Recompe), regulated by Law No. 12,249 / 2010.
	Start of coverage commitments in radio frequency announcement for the expansion of t 3G and 4G network (Anatel's Bidding Documents n° 002/2007/SPV, n° 002/2010/PVCP/SPV, n° 004/2012/PVCP/SPV e n° n.º 004/2012/PVCP/SPV)
2008	Digital Territories Project (Ministry of Agrarian Development)
	Program Broadband in Schools (Decree No. 6,424 / 2008)
2009	National Program to Support Digital Inclusion in Communities - Telecentros.BR (Decree No. 6,991 / 2009)
	Creation of the Digital Inclusion Program Steering Committee - CGPID (Decree No. 6,948 / 2009)
2010	National Broadband Program - PNBL (Decree n° 7.175 / 2010)
2011	Creation of the Digital Inclusion Secretariat (Decree n° 7,462 / 2011)
	Digital Cities Program (Ordinance n° 376/2011, from the Ministry of Communications)
	Popular Broadband Program, under the PNBL (from Decree no. 7,512 / 2011)
2013	Special Taxation Regime of the National Band Program Larga - REPNBL (Decree n° 7,921 / 2013 and Law n° 12,715 / 2012)
2014	Marco Civil da Internet (Law n° 12.965 / 2014), establishes in its Art. 7 that the Internet is “essential to the exercise of citizenship”
2015	Connected Amazon Program (Interministerial Ordinance No. 586/2015)

2016	Intelligent Brazil Program (Decree nº 8.776 / 2016)
2017	Internet for All program, within the scope of GESAC
	Launch of the Geostationary Defense and Communications Satellite (SGDC), operated by Telebrás and the Brazilian Army (regulated by Decree nº 7.769 / 2012)
2018	Decree nº 9.612 / 2018, which replaces Decree nº 4.733 / 2003 and extinguishes the National Broadband Program and the Brasil Inteligente Program. Establishes “digital inclusion” as an objective of public telecommunications policies
	Launch of the publication “Brazilian Strategy for Digital Transformation”
2019	“Lei das Teles” - Law nº 13,879 / 2019, which modifies the General Telecommunications Law to remove obligations regarding the universalization of services.

Source: Silva (2020).

As seen in the Introduction, the recovery of this trajectory and the normative concern with digital inclusion is also verifiable not only in demands about Internet access, but also in public policies already established. In reality, there is a solid case in the country of a policy projected for expanding and improving network access, the Plano Nacional de Banda Larga<sup>4</sup> (PNBL), a 2010-2014 project that sought to massify broadband in the country, involving committees such as the Digital Inclusion Management Committee (CGID), later rearranged as the Digital Inclusion Programs Management Committee (CGPID)<sup>5</sup>. However, despite being present in the justification and basic text of the Program, in the statements of Marco Civil or in the principles adopted in the main official Internet governance body in the country, the specific use of this normative orientation was not constituted in a perennial or concrete way. Both the PNBL and its remodeled version in 2018, the “Banda Larga para Todos<sup>6</sup>” or “Internet para todos<sup>7</sup>”, as well as the aforementioned committees, lack simultaneously effective continuity, results, data and monitoring about actions effectively developed (LEMOS, MARQUES, 2012; KNIGHT, FEFERMAN, FODITSCH, 2016; IRIS, 2019; SILVA, 2020).

This lack of enough results is shown in recent data on connectivity in the country, as presented in the next topic.

<sup>4</sup> National Broadband Plan.

<sup>5</sup> CGPID was instituted by Decree No. 6,948, of August 25, 2009, revoked and reformulated by two decrees until it reached No. 9,612, of December 17, 2018, in which digital inclusion is an objective of public communication policies, without appointing a replacement in terms of the committee.

<sup>6</sup> Broadband for all.

<sup>7</sup> Internet for all.

**Comentado [LP1]:** Pegar o quadro do Guilherme, falar do Programa Brasil Inteligente

Ao contrário do PNBL, que contou com um documento-base em que eram detalhadas as ações e objetivos do programa, no caso do Brasil Inteligente e do Internet para Todos há poucos dados disponíveis no site do Ministério da Ciência, Tecnologia, Inovações e Comunicações (MCTIC), inclusive 66 a respeito das iniciativas realizadas e os resultados alcançados. O Programa Brasil Inteligente foi, inclusive, revogado pelo Decreto nº 9.612/2018 (BRASIL, 2018c), que também extinguiu oficialmente o próprio PNB

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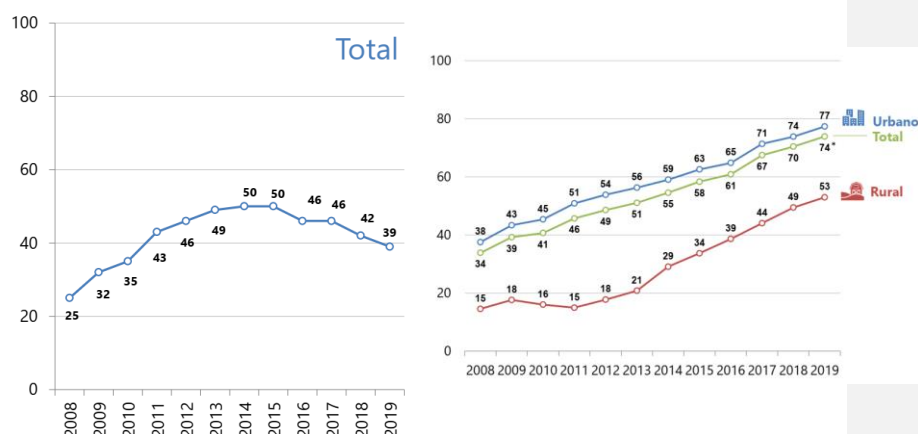
Não uso por questões particulares

## A country in real terms: connectivity and Covid-19

### i) Recent landscape: access, digital skills and Internet presence

Data from ICT Households show that the reach of connectivity and the possibility that citizens have to be in Internet has been in continuous growth since 2008, the first year of this survey. The trajectory reveals a scenario in which, in principle, there was a huge gap in terms of widespread access at the national level, something that is now close to or above 70% in terms of both households and users.

Graphics 1 and 2: Domicílios e usuários em comparação com o total nacional



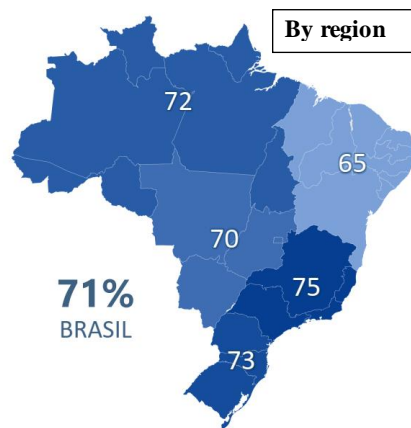
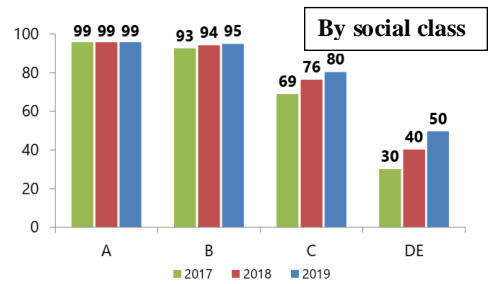
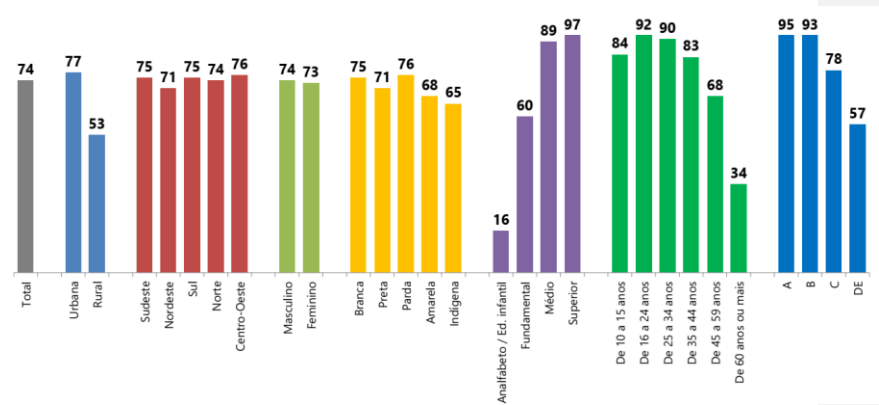
Fonte: Cetic/CGI.Br (2020)

However, the difficulties and limitations of this process also tend to have a strong relation with factors as: a) region; b) race; c) location; d) education level; e) family income and f) social class. These inequalities are manifested not only if it is possible or impossible to just access some kind of Web connection, but in the way it could be done or in the characteristics of online behavior.

Regarding the first problem, the possibilities of access, the most vulnerable groups within these categories listed also correspond to the largest portion of non-users (those who have not accessed the Internet in the last three months, according to the methodological definitions of the survey) or those who live in households with less access structure, as can be seen, in a synthetic way, in the graphs below. It is also worth noticing that a considerable portion of the population (36,514,325 people, equivalent to 20%), also

with the same demographic characteristics, declares that they have never accessed the Internet.

Graphic 3, 4 and 5 – Internet users in terms of total population



Source: Cetic/CGI.Br (2020)



It is important to emphasize that the non-use identified by the research is not automatically equivalent to the absence of the possibility of connection, a reference that is not quantitatively directly measured. Regarding non-users and non-uses, Silva (2020) highlights that it is necessary to contextualize and detail these indicators within the technological and scientific scenario of Latin America and the Brazilian reality, as the explanations cover not only the connectivity deficiencies themselves or the economic cost of hiring the service from operators, pre plans and the purchase of devices, but also phenomena such as resistance to ICTs and previous consumption and communication habits. In this sense, it is worth mentioning that the reasons stated for non-use dialogue with voluntary, involuntary and indeterminate reasons, according to the author's classification in association with the proposals of Satchell and Dourish (2009) and Wyatt, Thomas and Terranova (2002). The results below qualify, albeit in a very limited way, the self-reported characteristics of this non-use and indicate, at least, that the Internet is a product culturally known to the population, even those who do not make use of it:

Board 2: Non-use ICTs Household 2010

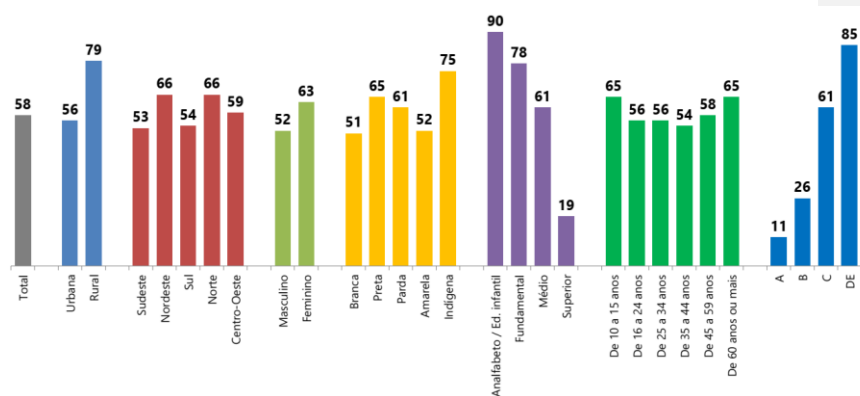
<b>Motivo (apenas um)</b>	<b>Respondentes</b>	<b>Proporção</b>
For lack of need	19.500.869	53%
For lack of interest	24.335.772	67%
For lack of computer skills	26.286.608	72%
Because I have nowhere to use	13.419.541	37%
Because it is very expensive	16.421.798	45%
For security or privacy concerns	16.795.864	46%
To avoid contact with dangerous content	16.670.099	46%
For another reason	493.847	1%

Source: Cetic/Cgi.Br (2020).

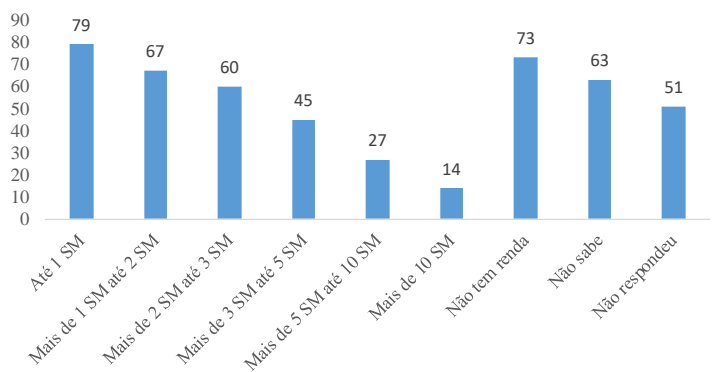
In terms of the quality of this access and possibilities of using Internet, which demarcate the limits of the inclusion process experienced in Brazil, the groups listed are also the most restricted in terms of devices utilized, for example. Exclusive mobile access is practiced by 58% of the total users (77,525,493), contingent occupied by a) 66% (7,348,690) of all the users in the North and Northeast (22,690,570) regions; b) 75% (1,224,476) of indigenous people and 65% (11,046,813) of black people; c) 79% (10,722,072 people) of user who live in rural areas d) 90% (1,426,758) of illiterate users and 78% (37,350,903) of those who only have elementary education level; e) 79%

(20,876,651) of those receiving up to one minimum wage, 67% (21,620,652) of those receiving between one and two minimum wages and 73% (966,306) of those who declared to have no income; f) 85% (28,804,373) of classes D / E and 61% (40,287,429) of class C. These data can be seen in graphs 6 and 7:

Graphics 6 and 7: Exclusive mobile access



By family income



Source: Cetic/CGI.br

Concerning these markers and the use of the Internet among already users, interpersonal communication activities, such as sending instant messages, voice or video calls and using social networks, as well as gaming activities, appear in a widespread way, even between these groups. However, other activities, such as sending and receiving e-mails, searching for information about services and products, health, travel and accommodation, and conducting consultations in virtual libraries or financial

transactions, are also behaviors characterized by the pattern above illustrated: with restricted reach for these types of users. In terms of cultural habits, for example, listening to podcasts, accessing websites of museums, exhibitions and newspapers are activities that are rarer for them than compared to the others, while resources such as the consumption of videos, music and series are a little more widespread. . In particular, within the indicators of education and work and online behavior, selecting those of greatest interest for this research, we highlight:

- Of the 10 to 15 year old users, 72% used the Internet to do research and 53% studied on their own.
- Among class D / E users, 23,776,244 (70%) did not carry out these surveys and 24,739,998 (73%) did not study on their own. The indexes are, respectively, 1,709,687 (50%) and 1,345,531 (40%) in class A.
- 105,658,159 (79%) of users stated that they did not download programs or applications. The index exceeds 90% negative in illiterate groups, people with elementary education, people aged 60 or over, without income and from the D/E classes.
- For financial transactions, 89,687,140 (67%) did not make them, an index equal to or greater than 90% in the groups mentioned in the previous point, with the exception of people aged 60 or over (78%) and an increase in the group of people who receive up to a minimum wage (90%).

It is from this background that the Brazilian population is, in 2020, depending on the Internet for performing various activities. Fundamentally, with the need to interrupt face-to-face classes in basic schools, so that a) children and adolescents can continue their studies and, on the other hand, b) so that the citizens benefited by the income distribution policy in the context of the paralysis also of work activities.

Due to the expressive nature of these events, amid the conjuncture of the coronavirus and the Brazilian scenario of Internet access, the documentary analysis of the official acts that instituted the authorization and recommendation of remote education and the income distribution program, the Aid Emergency, as well as an exploratory analysis of the Ministry of Education's propaganda and the press conference to launch the Aid. These materials were selected because they offer, on the one hand, the justification and normative structure that marked these acts from the point of view of the Brazilian government and, on the other hand, the narratives that permeated the implementation. Finally, a survey of news and events related to access difficulties or non-access to the Internet in the country was conducted, based on the search for the keywords "Internet"

and “coronavirus” in the online base of the newspaper Folha de São Paulo, selecting those pertinent to the two events considered in this paper.

*Covid-19: Remote learning and Emergency Aid*

a) *Remote learning in Brazil*

In early March 2020, the then Minister of Education, Abraham Weintraub, released a video on his personal Twitter account, in which he recommended that educational institutions develop remote education programs in Brazil: “(...) a city or region that needs to pay more special attention so that we have ready remote lesson plans, you send classes to students, provide email, Youtube, Skype, internet, to avoid agglomeration, avoid transmission more acute coronavirus”, he said in the video.

Using the keyword “coronavirus” applied to official acts published in the Official Gazette (DOU) between 03/01/2020 and 06/01/2020, the following documents were read, downloaded by Htrack and indexed by Copernick Desktop Search.

Official act	“Coronavírus”	Internet
Contact	24	14
Resolution	4	2
Normative act	3	-
Minutes	1	-
Act	1	-
Joint Ordinance	-	1

In the 24 Ordinances of the Ministry of Education, located from the search for “coronavirus”, it is possible to highlight the authorization to adopt remote education, described in more detail below. Apart from this act and an amendment that includes the authorization of remote work, also without dedicating itself to the topic of digital requirements for this activity, the other documents were changes to dates and procedures.

The Ordinance dated from March 17, which effectively “Provides for the substitution of face-to-face classes with classes in digital means while the New

Coronavirus - COVID-19 pandemic situation lasts”. Throughout the document, the substitution of face-to-face meetings with “classes using information and communication facilities and technologies” is authorized. It maintains the mandatory replacement and compliance with the mandatory workload and provides that the institutions must be responsible for the “provision of tools to students that allow the monitoring of the contents offered”, this being the only opening for the consideration of what requirements would be necessary for monitoring these classes. This ordinance has been renewed several times (Ordinance 395 and 473, for example), and is currently in force until the end of 2020.

Based on the documents above, it is observed that the normative discourse regarding the interface between education and the interruption of face-to-face activities, therefore, was not supported by the consideration of what would be the prerequisites or conditions for offering and monitoring remote education, limiting themselves to authorizing this modality and assigning responsibility to the institutions.

Regarding the narrative that permeated the implementation of remote education by the Brazilian federal government, the advertising campaign of the Ministry of Education was selected regarding the National High School Examination (Enem), through two widely publicized commercials. ENEM is a nationally applied test that determines the possibilities for admission into the largest portion of public higher education institutions in the country. Of annual application, part of the discussion about the interruption of face-to-face activities involved the debate about the application or not of the Exam.

In this sense, the official stance of the Ministry was to try to maintain the original date of application while opponents of this idea claimed that there it would affect negatively more vulnerable groups who, deprived of the school structure and with families impacted by the pandemic, would not compete in equal opportunities to compete with other students in better circumstances or with those who have already finished high school, since activities were interrupted at the beginning of March.

There are two pieces, one published on April 14, with the title "Enem 2020 is maintained" and another dated on May 4, 2020, with the title "Applications". In the first, the main theme is the disclosure of the approach of the deadline for

requests for exemption from the application fee, which could be done on its website, with the words “Life cannot stop, nor your dream of entering the University education. After all, Brazil needs you (...) So this year Enem is going to happen”. The second commercial, in turn, brings young people who speak directly to the camera, as if recording messages with electronic devices, composing the following speech:



*Youth 1:* What if a generation of new professionals was lost? Doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers? Would it be the best for our country? Life can not stop. We must fight, reinvent ourselves and overcome. Better days will come.



*Youth 2:* And that's why I want to take Enem this year. To enter a university. Study. From anywhere, in different ways, through books, the internet, with the remote help of teachers.



*Youth 3:* Register now at ENEM from 11 to 22 May, through the site [enem.inep.gov.br](http://enem.inep.gov.br). In addition to the paper test, this year will also have the digital Enem done by computer in places indicated by MEC.

*Youth 4:* The tests will be at the end of the year. Until then, study. Your future is already there. Ministry of Education.

*Federal government. Beloved country Brazil.*

Also in this case, it is observed that the official and normative posture of the Brazilian government was to consider that the information and communication technologies enabled the students to continue preparing, without linking this possibility to the direct proposal of measures that could mitigate the existing situation: where many (not all) actually have access to the Internet, but groups marked by the attributes already listed do so, when possible, exclusively by cell phones, with limited data connections and without the possession of certain digital skills, this so as not to enter into a theme that seems to me even more primordial and underlying this reality in the Brazilian case: the absence of living and housing conditions, and therefore of study and access Internet, in the private sphere.

In this case, attention is drawn to a narrative based on overcoming difficulties and personal effort, with the maintenance of the date and form of registration, associated with the presence of various technological devices in a reality that does not match the one present in the data of ICT Households or in the collected news. The minister's initial statement, along with the promotional material and the absence of further details or proposals in the official norms of remote education, show that there is a choice for the modality as the only possible way in the face of the pandemic, but without considering the Brazilian government as responsible for conduct some proposal to mitigate the currently existing inequalities in terms of digital inclusion.

Enem's theme is significant because, when observing the arguments mobilized for the postponement of the Examination, introduced in this paper through the ordinary session of the Brazilian Senate for consideration of Bill 1277/2020<sup>8</sup>, the issue of digital inclusion and the lack of connectivity for part of the population appears as one of the most mentioned reasons, but unaccompanied, again, by more direct mentions to actions, policies or measures for reaching universal access in the country. From an analysis of the frequency of terms in the shorthand notes in the section, it is possible to evaluate the recurrence and use of terms related to digital divide, verifying that the concern was present and was associated with the use of more general terms, such as inequality and injustice. :

Expression	Repetitions	Examples (in the order of the session)
Internet access "acesso à Internet"	10	<p>Ex. 1: "Distance learning does not include all students. About 46 million Brazilians do not have <i>access to the internet</i>. "</p> <p>Ex. 2: "Now, in this pandemic moment when many Brazilians do not have <i>access to the internet</i> and sometimes do not even have the opportunity to have a phone, how to apply Enem in this moment? So, we even stand for the postponement for next year. "</p> <p>Ex. 3: "Effectively 40% of young people in this country do not have <i>access to the internet</i>. In the state of Amazonas, this is very serious, in the interior of the state, because practically 80% of our young people in the rural area do not have access to the internet "</p> <p>Ex. 4: "She knows very well, because she lives the social difficulties of the economically vulnerable students, she</p>

<sup>8</sup> Which proposed postponing entrance exams to higher education in a national situation of public calamity or interruption of the functioning of the country's educational institutions.

		<p>feels in her country and northeastern soul the pains and difficulties of people who are not able to <i>access the internet</i> today,” (...)</p> <p>Ex. 5: “(...) it is a clear demonstration that we are going to guarantee equality for the Brazilian population. Public school students who have <i>access to the internet</i> and those who do not have access to the internet will be able to compete in the same way because this period of the pandemic will pass, and they will study and, God willing, will enter university. ”</p>
Internet	13 (10 delas são as da linha anterior, como ‘acesso à internet’)	<p>“Young people, especially those in North, especially those in our Northeast - without loss to other regions as well, but, especially and notably, the Northeast and the North Region suffer. Let us commiserate in the face of this suffering, because it is young people who do not have their minimum tools, materially speaking, do not have their <i>internet</i>, do not even have a microcomputer to monitor program content so that they can discuss and dispute a of vacancies to universities.”</p>
Tecnologia	3	Science and Technology Commission
Tecnológico	1	<p>We are doing justice to our students, especially those in need, who do not have technological resources, who are standing still and really need equal opportunities.</p>

Source: Author (TV SENADO, 2020)

The only speech that makes concrete reference to the performance of public authorities in the midst of this scenario comes from the author of the proposed bill, in her initial speech:

We know - I am President of the Science and Technology Commission, our colleague Senator Vanderlan was President of the Science and Technology Commission, as well as Senator Izalci himself, to whom I congratulate and thank the rapporteur - that 40% of Brazilians do not have *access the Internet*. They don't have it. We all voted PL 79 together. And one of the issues we dealt with was access to places that do not have broadband, where it doesn't reach, there is no way to have communication, mobile telephony, internet. So, all of this was discussed; were the biggest discussions of 79, which today is being worked on, and we have not even reached this moment - whoever is following this knows – the moment when the internet is a reality deep down this country, of places where there is no access: 40% of that amount, 30 % in the rural area, 81% of public school students taking ENEM. This means saying (...) that these students are notably affected (RIBEIRO, 2020, translated – TV SENADO, 2020)

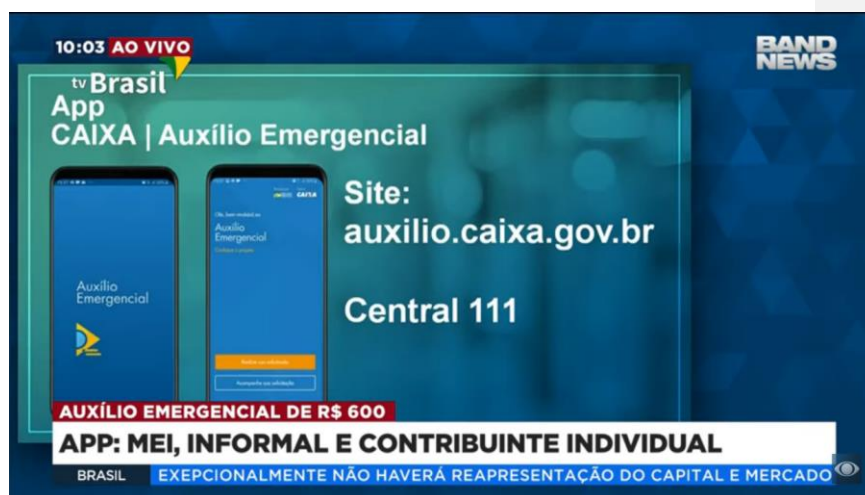
*Use of apps to withdraw and transfer Emergency Aid*



The other area considered in this work is of an economic nature. Starting from Law No. 13.982, of April 2, 2020, which institutes the emergency aid, and Ordinance No. 351, of April 7, 2020, the payment of a financial benefit for families that fit certain conditions was established in the country. Evidently, within the pandemic scenario, the operationalization of this distribution took place with the main form of applications and websites to request the Aid or its withdrawing and transferring it to a bank account.

While criteria for receipt are the main elements of the aforementioned regulations, the operationalization, point of our interest, can be apprehended through the investigation of the first press conference on the topic with the functioning of the website and applications, held on April 7. Over two hours, the authorities explain the necessary procedures and what was done by the federal government and Caixa Econômica, with the free creation of digital accounts and the availability of two apps and a website that should be used in the application process (App Caixa - Emergency Aid and website [caixa.gov.br](http://caixa.gov.br)) to receive the amounts (App Caixa Tem). The telephone, Central 111, worked only to doubts.

Picture 1: App and website



Source: Youtube (2020).

The exclusive use of an app with required Internet access was subject of questioning by a journalist. In the response, the authorities claim to consider that

only a minority of people will be harmed by the way the Aid should be requested, but there is an expectation of working together with the Brazilian telecommunications regulatory agency, Anatel, to release access through the application, even without credits or franchise contracts, and the possibility of using the site is also emphasized, with computers of friends, stores or acquaintances, for example. To work with an website and applications, to create digital accounts and to make a staggered payment were actions aimed to reduce the number of people present at the bank agencies.

*Journalist:* “(...) I would like to know if these informal workers who do not have access to a smartphone, because there will be people who do not have a cell phone and it is not everyone also who, having the phone, has access to the internet, how would it be made for these invisibles? There would be the participation of local city halls there so that people have access to this aid?

*Pedro Guimarães:* Great question. First, that's why we created the site. There is the issue of the cell phone. There is prepaid. So the conversation via Anatel so that anyone ... as far as I know a prepaid chip is 10 reais, I don't know, but even if I don't have credit, for this app she can access it. So there is a very important point ... You can have your friend's cell phone for example and do it (...) But, in the last case, you couldn't get it under any circumstances, we have 26,000 points of sale (...) if it works everything goes wrong at a Caixa agency or at the lottery. Our expectation is that this will happen in less than 0.1% of cases because we have, as we just saw, an answer ... It has already reached 9 million hits (...) When in doubt, go to Caixa. Now what I want to ask for is that, especially with coronavirus times, etc., only with the exception of the exception. *Because it's working really well. Anyone who has a prepaid cell phone without credit for this operation can order even without credit and we still have the website. You can get the friend's website, the website of any store. That's why we also ask for the website.*

*Onix Lorenzoni:* And it is important to make it clear that, first, of the Latin American countries, Brazil is the country that has the highest number of cellular equipment per inhabitant. And the other important issue is the Brazilian financial system is the most automated in the world, so we have a combination of two very important factors that will allow, as President Pedro correctly said, the total expectation, if we add all the publics, all groups, we will reach 70, 80, 85 million people. Which country in the world manages to put together a program of this magnitude and execute it in 45 days as is what we are saying here? (YOUTUBE, 2020).

In fact, since April 8, the application can be accessed without discount in the mobile data franchise, as a result of a partnership between the telecommunications union, the National Union of Telephony and Cellular and Personal Mobile Service Companies (SindiTeleBrasil), and the Caixa Econômica.

In this context, other government measures can be highlighted and need to be included to provide a more complete picture. Sponsored use (no franchise discount for partnership or state payment) has also been released for remote education applications in the states, for example. Other measures taken and belonging to the period of analysis were, on the part of entities associated with the federal government: the possibility of requesting the CPF by e-mail; the definition of telecommunication services as essential services and the flexibility of the activity of telecommunication companies in Brazilian cities; the prohibition on interrupting the service after reaching the franchise limit; the prohibition on interrupting the provision of services due to lack of payment. On the part of schools and states, the use of open television channels or radio stations to transmit classes on the network; the distribution of printed tasks and textbooks.

### **An invisible country in real terms: the materialization of statistics**

In another dimension, the collection made on the Folha de São Paulo website led to the filtering and analysis of 24 news and reports that highlight the limitations and difficulties of citizens in using the network of networks in reference to remote learning in elementary education and Emergency Aid. The purpose of the collection and analysis is to bring the presence of the theme and the characteristics of the aspects raised there from a small sample of the Brazilian universe. From the “internet” search “coronavirus” for news between March 1st and June 1st:

Board 3: Reports filtered within Folha de São Paulo website

<b>Total results</b>	<b>Selected reports on education</b>	<b>Selected reports on Emergency Aid</b>
1117	12	12

Source: Folha de São Paulo

The news shows that individuals of the groups highlighted in the previous topics have in fact experienced a series of difficulties and limitations in the usufruct and Internet access. Absence of signal, of sufficient devices for the whole family, of digital or broadband skills, on the one hand, and low speed, lack of fiber optic coverage and exclusive access by cell phone, on the other hand, are reasons listed by the presented statements in the collected material. Associated with these factors, there are also reasons of an indirect nature that are, however, related to the Internet, such as the structural conditions of the houses, lacking adequate spaces for study, the struggle for parents or family members to help their children, the need to reconcile domestic tasks and homework in the case of mothers and girls, mainly, and deep social problems, such as



	<p>have a computer for both, so we take turns with the cell phone ” (FOLHA, 2020b).</p> <p>Ex. 5) “I studied at the kitchen table, but when everyone woke up or went to lunch, it was difficult to concentrate” (FOLHA, 2020b).</p>
Emergency Aid	<p>Ex. 1) “I haven’t been working for 40 days. They gave me this paper and told me to join this application. I will ask the person who is helping me” (FOLHA, 2020c).</p> <p>Ex. 2) “The employee made changes in my phone, the settings, but I still can't access Caixa Tem. When I signed up, I only managed to access it at dawn, throughout the day it's impossible to access” (FOLHA, 2020c).</p> <p>Ex. 3) “I was approved to receive emergency assistance, but I can't access Caixa Tem” (FOLHA, 2020d)</p> <p>Ex. 4) “It does not allow you to make a transfer on the weekends [when there are fewer users] so that it can take effect on the next business day, which further contributes to congestion” (FOLHA, 2020e)</p> <p>Ex. 5) “To access Caixa Tem, it is a great suffering. I spent more than 15 days trying, I was already giving up. I had to keep the screen always on, only here I need to be like a bee buzzing to get a signal” (FOLHA, 2020f).</p>

Source: Author. Based on statements from Folha reports.

### Final considerations

With the research, it was expected to confirm or reject the hypothesis initially assumed, in addition to discussing the extent to which the two dimensions addressed are related or not in the empirical scenario of the pandemic in Brazil, using two situations in which the Internet became a requirement almost exclusive to access education and income. It was also expected to be able to verify the consequences of a mismatch between the attempt to assert a right normatively and the absence of its recognition, practice and use for the elaboration of public policies, a process that was potentially accelerated and inflected because of a dynamic that imposes social isolation and, therefore, requires connectivity and digital education that have not come to life.

The results showed that, although the country has seen an increasing improvement in terms of access and digital inclusion, which appears not only in the data considered in this paper, but also in broader research and based on other indicators (NISHIJIMAA; IVANAUSKASB, SARTI, 2017; UNESCO, 2020) is that the problems and limitations that still exist in terms of effectively breaking digital divide find direct correspondence with the problems identified at the moment when the demands of COVID-19 insert the need for qualified and universal use of the network and where the diagnosed deficiencies

are added or occur in direct combination with previous factors, such as social markers of region, race, class and educational level.

The Brazilian case, at least within the limits of the factors and examples considered in this paper, also indicates the insufficiency of analyzing Internet access, in an unqualified way, as a synonym to digital inclusion. As seen by the data from ICT Households and in the balance made from the reports and materials collected, the exclusive access through mobile strongly restricts all the possibilities and uses that were necessary, since they would be possible only through more complete devices, such as computers, and in a more proportional distribution the number of individuals per household. In addition, the need to implement immediate solutions, such as the distribution of chips and the installation of new antennas are also extremely problematic in a scenario of crisis and urgency.

The insufficiency of restricting the discussion on digital inclusion, in the most common terminology in the Brazilian scenario, or the digital divide, to what corresponds, in reality, only to the first level – the one of strict access (VAN DEURSEN; VAN DIJK, 2019;) – it is already a common point in the specialized literature. Today, there are several factors considered in this assessment, such as connection quality, usage, user skills (second-level digital divides). However, although these elements are of academic knowledge or already guide the establishment of some normative principles, even in the Brazilian case, the lack of concrete diffusion or effective implementation of these principles in the development of public policies generates a scenario in which the universality of access is not a reality and there is no evidence of the necessary cultural and instructional capacities in an equal (or at least more equal) distribution to allow citizens to carry out educational activities, access to information or perform services such as installing applications, registering and carrying out financial transactions.

Without a history of at least partial mastery of these possibilities, the imposition of an exclusive and unrelated dependence on more substantial attempts to alleviate the situation with palliative measures, an expressive portion of the Brazilian population, characteristically demarcated by the aforementioned attributes, was irreparably damaged. The legislation and official acts included, as well as the declarations of the authorities and some of the measurements taken by Brazilian government, show that, even in a moment of inflection and indisputable dependence on the network, there is still no evident link between this demand and the direct and urgent action of the State, with or without the

partnership or dialogue with telecommunication companies, the private sector or civil society.

Through the case, an inflection nuance for the debate is evidenced, proving the hypothesis mentioned within the parameters and limits of this work. Even though the Internet was already asserting itself as the main instrument in the midst of the hybrid media system (CHADWICK, 2017), its recognition as an essential right did not take effect in time.

Aside from legitimate expressions of resistance to the use of the Internet, which are unlikely not combined with the restrictions imposed by a dynamic of the digital divide, and without linking this perspective to a compulsive incorporation of individuals to the online sphere, the lack of concrete possibility of a inclusion that is already well established and qualified implies, in the midst of the Coronavirus and for the next generations, significant short, medium and long term consequences.

The stronger recognition of the Internet as an essential right with universal reach would not necessarily guarantee the lack of these shortcomings, but would have created a different scenario for its operationalization at this time, in terms both of justification and urgency, as well as the level of problems already present.

Furthermore, the Brazilian case is expressive because it does not represent a context of complete, or statistically serious, absence of access in terms of infrastructure or of those who are or are not on the internet, but because it brings the solid and urgent weight of the existence of very demarcated groups by characteristic social attributes, effectively excluded.

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