

Editorial

Brasília, September 1st

Dear Reader,

The team of Revista do Serviço Público (RSP) hopes you are well and healthy. These are not easy times. As always, mankind has a new problem and must fight against it. This is no “new normal” situation. This is exactly what we human beings have been doing since the beginning of our existence on Earth. It is the old and good “ordinary normal” and we have all the skills needed to win this war.

Of course, one of these skills is the ability to perform research and RSP has long been a journal open to high quality research. It is not different now. However, this special edition on *Governments and Covid-19* intends to be a hallmark in the long history of this journal. How? First this special edition is an initial step to a more dynamic RSP, as we saw with the *online first* submission system. Second, submissions to this edition were only in English and Spanish. We believe Brazilian research must reach a broader audience.

We received many high-quality submissions and it was not easy to choose among them. We finished with eleven articles.

To begin with, we all know that the pandemic is a complex phenomenon with many dimensions. For example, how do the health and the economic dimensions relate to each other? Our first article, from Ornelas, offers a simple theoretical benchmark to address this. The main message is that the optimal level of lockdown depends on economic costs and health benefits. His model allows us to avoid pitfalls during discussions regarding the optimal level of lockdown.

Economic costs are the main subject of the second article, from Oliveira. Using a Kalman Filter, this article found that, for the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS), the accumulated costs of the state’s lockdown policy, in 27 days, would be around BRL 43 billions, a conservative estimate, considering that this would be a measure of tax collection foregone because the article only examined the formal sector of RS economy.

Another way to examine the economic dimension is to study a specific sector of the economy. The third article, from Castro and coauthors, highlights the problems that the pandemic brought to municipalities that are economically dependent on mining. They analyzed municipalities in Pará and Minas Gerais and found that there is a greater proportion of Covid-19 cases in mining municipalities and also stability in the supply of jobs in the mining sector.

Some would argue that the decision regarding the optimal answer from policymakers should be made under a more authoritarian background, with a (supposedly) small sacrifice of democratic aspects of the decision-making process. Lins and coauthors, using survival analysis, found that autocratic and democratic regimes did not differ in their reaction to the pandemic.

The *institutional* aspect of the governmental reaction to pandemics is yet another dimension that deserves more discussion. In a more speculative article, Del Ponte and coauthors focus on the limits and possibilities of public-private partnerships (PPP) as a tool to fight the pandemic. In a context of difficult fiscal imbalances, PPP could be useful in building hospitals, health centers or even in the development of vaccines.

Rodrigues and coauthors study another important institutional aspect in the role of Brazilian municipal governments: *transparency*. Using a sample of municipalities, they highlight variance of the quality of information provided on local governments' websites but also offer evidence for the importance of using social networks in disseminating data.

By the way, the importance of open public data in the context of the pandemic is not new. Researchers have been discussing ways to improve the forecast of Covid-19 infections and deaths. Duan and coauthors use a *Continuous Intelligent Pandemic Monitoring* in order to improve the forecast in the Brazilian state of Santa Catarina (SC) using governmental open data. The importance of this type of open data requires the attention of the policymakers¹.

Health problems demand public initiatives, and these must be carefully thought in terms of their regulatory aspects. Mota and coauthors use the pandemic to show how *problem analysis and definition*, an important phase in Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA), could be useful to the regulatory agencies. The worsening of mental health and low population adherence were two problems identified as integral to an optimal design of regulation by the Brazilian Health Regulatory Agency (ANVISA).

Brazilian government response to the pandemic is not a *free lunch*. Figueiredo and coauthors investigate so-called *judicialization* using a sample of actions. She found that about one third of the cases are related to restrictive economic measures adopted by governments (suspension of commerce and services' activities).

Technological shocks are one important ingredient in mankind's response to situations like this devastating pandemic. Our tenth article, from Mendonça & Dantas, presents an ongoing project relating big data analysis, specifically collecting human vital signals for public health monitoring to minimize the numbers of COVID-19 tests required.

Finally, Vidal offers his thoughts regarding the role of the state in this war against the new virus based on his analysis of the initial response of three European governments: Spain, Germany and Sweden, and speculates about potential reconfigurations in the relationship between State and society in a post-pandemic world.

We hope our readers will find inspiration in one or more of these articles and, of course, we are hopeful that the war against this pandemic will be won soon.

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¹ Recently, during ongoing research, a coauthor of one of the adjunct editor found *negative* numbers recorded as cases of Covid-19 in another Brazilian state which is an anecdotal confirmation of the need to review open public records in empirical work.