

# THE RESILIENCE OF ASSOCIATIONS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

Science is undergoing a profound crisis. Its institutional framework and its capacity to influence social transformation are caught in persistent tensions: an overproduction of documents with no real impact on productive and social systems; an ethical bankruptcy derived from an incentive model based on the quantity of publications, “editorials” that prioritize revenue over quality; a loss of credibility and public legitimacy; increasing precarization of scientific work; budget cuts and censorship driven by political ideologies. This crisis is not only administrative and related to governance, but also structural, threatening institutional framework of science as a public good.

The institutional defense of science is neither recent nor improvised. The first scientific associations, such as the Swiss Society of 1762 and the Society of German Natural Scientists and Physicians (GDNÄ), founded in 1822 in Leipzig, followed by the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BSA) in 1831 and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in 1848, sought to protect science and consolidate themselves as a social and political force, coordinating efforts to advocate for resources and recognition that legitimize science as a vital activity of society.

In Latin America, this impulse developed its own trajectory. The Argentine Association for the Advancement of Science, founded in 1934 and chaired by Nobel laureate Bernardo Houssay, was a pioneer in the region. Its aim was to support the advancement of science, defend the freedom of research and the disinterested pursuit of knowledge—without disregarding its applications—and to bring together the country’s scientific societies. After World War II—a turning point for global science—similar associations emerged in other countries: in 1948, the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science (SBPC) and the Uruguayan Association for the Advancement of Science; in 1950, the Venezuelan Association for the Advancement of Science (AsoVAC); and in 1970, the Colombian Association for the Advancement of Science (AvanCiencia). This process of institutionalization made it possible, in 1974, to establish in Recife the Interciencia Association, conceived as a continental space to integrate national associations across the Americas and strengthen regional cooperation.

Historically, these associations have acted as bridging institutions: between science and the State, academia and society, knowledge and democracy. They supported the creation of national science and technology councils, regulatory frameworks, public research funds, and doctoral training systems. They also played a critical role in engaging governments to sustain budgets, infrastructure, and international cooperation. Furthermore, between the 1970s and 1990s, they promoted science as a central pillar of democratic and development projects. This trajectory was not without disruption. Economic crises, dictatorships, political persecution, forced exiles, and budget cuts dismantled emerging scientific communities and weakened key institutions. Nevertheless, these associations endured. Through conferences, journals, and cooperation networks, they kept science alive as a collective project for development.

Today, we once again face a critical scenario marked by political polarization, attacks on scientific autonomy, and the stagnation of major research programs that do not align with governmental ideologies or with the pleonexia of large corporations. In a hostile environment of budget cuts, extreme commodification of knowledge, disinformation, and, in some cases—such as Colombia—government harassment and persecution based on ideological prejudice and personal retaliation, we must turn to unity and collective strength to defend the autonomy of scientific advancement.

Associations for the advancement of science cannot falter in their social role of promoting science as a public good. We bear the responsibility of maintaining the resilience of our mission: to protect, strengthen, and place science at the service of society. Our role is vital at the interface between science, the State, and society, fostering education and the creation of scientific culture, and representing the scientific community of organized civil society within industrial dynamics and public policy processes. Above all, we must defend the institutional foundations of science that sustain a model of development based on knowledge, innovation, freedom, and the dignity of our peoples.

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