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Covid-19: changes in living and socioeconomic shifts in the spotlight

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Dupuy [1] noted "*what is terrible about the disaster is that not only was it believed that it couldn't happen, even though there was every reason to know that it would, but once it had occurred it appeared to belong to the normal order of things* […] *We have acquired the means to destroy the planet and ourselves, but we haven't changed the way we think"* [1].

During the first half of 2020, the world was more or less at a standstill since every sector of activity vital for the planet had been paralyzed within a couple of days. To check the propagation of the SRAS-CoV-2 virus and protect the health of their populations, many countries took drastic measures to slow down the rate of infection and reduce the death rate. The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis is obvious even for the most well-heeled families, but more so for the most vulnerable populations of different countries.

SRAS-CoV-2, a revelator of weaknesses and disparities between countries

The pandemic has bared the weaknesses and disparities that characterize national health systems and those of the global economy [2]. Social practices and lifestyles have already undergone profound changes that will undoubtedly remain. Lazzarini and Musacchio [3] stated that through its social and economic repercussions, the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, "*has triggered a new debate on the merits of markets in comparison to governments to face acute societal crises. Whereas some assert that market forces are imperative to stimulate the increased supply of essential products and services, others esteem that the combat against the pandemic requires speedy adjustments to supply that can be limited by a multitude of factors*" [3].

SRAS-CoV-2, a source of socioeconomic changes?

Several thinkers, researchers and politicians are questioning the socioeconomic changes brought about by the Covid-19 crisis. At the social level, lifestyles and interpersonal relations have been considerably shaken and everything points to a long period of time before the situation is corrected and becomes normal. Generally, fear and suspicion regarding the other are wearing away at the social fabric. The pandemic has merely aggravated the social atomization of individuals that was already in progress, especially in western societies [4]. If the notion of physical distancing has been popularized due to the

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pandemic, it has also highlighted the extent to which social distancing and disparities constitute the very rationale of the wealthiest societies.

At the economic level, the imbalance has increased by the same measure. Companies, services, education, and consumption have had to adapt to a new reality. Cuisinier [5] observed that "*companies have been particularly shaken by this singular and unprecedented health crisis due to factors exogenous to the economy and their traditional inductors. The result of social distancing measures affecting half of the world, the deliberate interruption of part of the productive machine has unbalanced every dimension of the economic fabric, irrespective of borders and for a long time to come*" [5].

On the perpetuation of economic changes and social upheavals

One of the fundamental questions consists in asking whether Covid-19 will end by causing a deep change in social and economic structures and in turn permit acting on the inequalities linked to them. The data and information now available permit responding in the negative to this question. The necessity for physical distance due to the pandemic has resulted in sending each individual back to their basic social structure. In other words, the COVID-19 pandemic has made meeting and social mixing an illusion and cannot be used as an illustration of equality in the face of disease. On the contrary, it reveals the absurdity of government logic in different countries including Haiti which, year after year, have refused to grant a decent budget to the health sector, and allowed large private corporations, such as those in the pharmaceutical industry, to take almost absolute control of most of the health systems of developed countries. Put differently, according to whether one finds oneself in a poor or rich country, the health system is largely controlled either by NGOs or by private consortiums. In both cases, the poorer classes have little chance of gaining access to quality health care.

Pansot and Rocca [6] underlined that at the moment when major crises break, it is natural to question the efficiency of economic thinking: the economist is called to prove the utility of their knowledge for the functioning of society [6]. On the economic level, although sectors such as tourism, catering, civil aviation and team sports have borne the brunt of the pandemic, there is nothing to indicate that the deep structure of the global economy will undergo profound changes. The dominant economic systems, in particular capitalism, will become neither more egalitarian, nor more humane. Regarding this, the changes brought about by Covid-19 lead to thinking that they will be nothing more than conjunctural and that they will continue to be integrated in profit accumulation strategies. The vulnerable sectors of the population affected in swathes by unemployment will be added without cease to "the mass of disposable individuals" since, due to the changes integrated in production strategies, the capitalist system will not know what to do with them.

Can SRAS-CoV-2 be a source of opportunities?

From another angle, some authors speak of opportunities. Using the principles of Thomas Kuhn's theories of change [7] as their starting point, these thinkers approach this crisis on the basis of analyzing opportunities. Buheji and Ahmed [8] have established a prospective of the opportunities provided by the coronavirus (COVID-19) to improve the situation at the global level. They foresee opportunities that could be gleaned from the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis and possible positive impacts in an era of the permanent crisis. They have reviewed the different repercussions for the different communities of the world due to the increasing frequency of diseases and crises. Their paper highlights that history has

given lessons to humanity on the advantages of epidemics. Lastly, in their review, they illustrate the relationship between the crisis and the extreme capitalism of global enterprises [8].

Although it is true that all crises represent opportunities, it is nonetheless necessary to determine who will be the real beneficiaries. On the scientific level, the pandemic could certainly favor the development of new approaches, especially in medicine. Moreover, the decisive role played by technology today in myriad social interactions without doubt count among the opportunities to be exploited. However, it should be underlined that regarding this, it is necessary to implement the resources required to reduce the digital divide. As the philosopher Alain Badiou [9] rightly emphasized, it is quite possible that Covid-19 reveals absolutely "nothing new under the contemporary sky" [9].

By looking back on history, one may share the opinion of Tomas Kuhn [7] according to whom "The great paradigms are always born during major societal crises". The need for a new social model compatible with new approaches to production is the new paradigm. In addition, among the new problems raised by the Covid-19 crisis, it is important to ask whether we will, for example, move towards more robotization in society to avoid the economic deficits observed during periods of confinement. In other words, a change of paradigm in no way signals a change in the status quo. Whatever the case, whether this crisis brings about fundamental or superficial changes, we go along with Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, that is human beings will have the intrinsic capacity to adapt to the changes the current crisis imposes on it. This adaptation should always be thought of in terms of improving humanity.

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