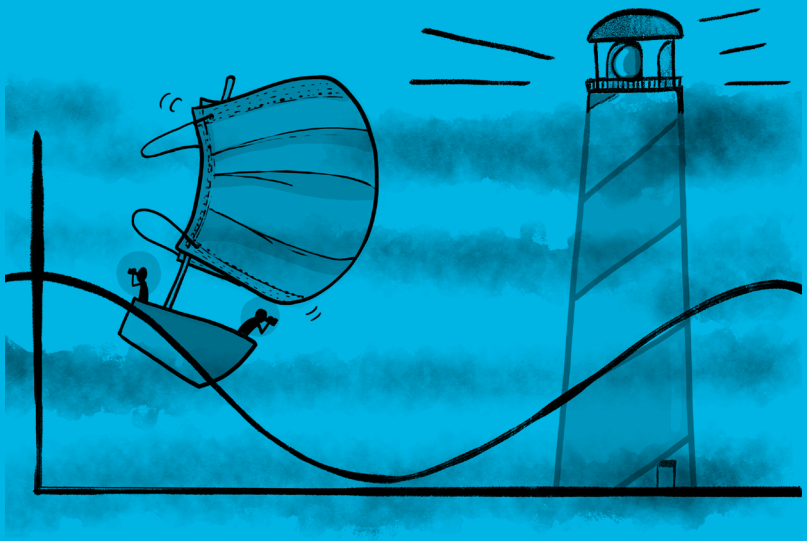
booklets

THE PANDEMIC SHOCK



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Printed by: Ediciones Rondas S.L.
Legal deposit: B 5428-2021
ISBN: 978-84-9730-480-1
ISSN (virtual edition): 2014-6574

Editor: Santi Torres i Rocaginé
Translated by David Brooks
Cover drawing: Roger Torres
Layout: Pilar Rubio Tugas
March 2021

THE PANDEMIC SHOCK
SUBSTRATUM, LESSONS AND FUTURE PROJECTIONS OF A GLOBAL CRISIS

Oscar Mateos

Dedicated

To Abril, Biel and Laia, for sharing this intense time of pandemic and for each day of our lives;

To all of the health care workers who have literally left their lives behind during the pandemic.

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1. INTRODUCTION[1]

"We have gone on undisturbed,
intending to maintain ourselves always
healthy in an unhealthy world."

Pope Francis[2]

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated a global social, political and economic shock, with consequences that are not yet foreseeable. The pictures taken in the middle of March, 2020, in numerous cities throughout the world of lines of people in supermarkets, of shelves empty of the most basic products and of the faces filled with confusion and panic did not belong to some zombie saga or to a chapter of *Black Mirror* or the phenomenal *Years and Years*. The dystopian imagery of the cinematic world was incarnated, in a crude, sudden and unexpected way, in the daily lives of a good part of the planet.

The crisis thus portrayed a global event which synchronized disparate and distant realities, from different latitudes and places. As pointed out by the Bulgarian political commentator Ivan Krastev, evoking *The Plague* by Albert Camus, it raised like never before "the consciousness of one's own vulnerability and one's impotence to plan for the future."[3]

Be that as it may, this synchronicity has nothing to do with the differing impact that the pandemic has generated. As the philosopher Daniel Innerarity has written, there exists the paradox that a risk that confronts all of us equally at the same time brings to the fore all of our inequalities, causes new ones to appear and puts our political and economic system to the test.[4] The fact is that the impact of this crisis has not been the same for everyone. The mortality rate has been enormously higher in the most impoverished neighborhoods of New York, Dakar, Lima or Barcelona, where the aspirations for life were already lower, than in the richer neighborhoods. The social im-

pact has not been the same in countries such as Peru, South Africa, India or Brazil, where the health infrastructures were already weak and where universal health coverage is practically nonexistent. As suggested by the United Nations, the effects of the crisis will serve to widen the gap between the sexes and will push another 47 million women and girls into extreme poverty in 2021.[5]

In spite of the gravity of the situation and the hundreds of thousands of deaths that the crisis has caused in only a few months, and of the enormous dose of uncertainty that has become added to a hypercomplex world, it should be remembered, nevertheless, that the pre-COVID world was already one which was tremendously hard and challenging for millions of people on a daily basis. It was a world in which malaria and AIDS, to name only two of the current principal diseases, annually left almost two million victims dead. This proves what the anthropologist Yayo Herrera says when she reminds us that "only when crises get into the heart of privilege are they called emergencies, given names and made publicly visible."[6] And it happens that in a few months the world, especially the richest countries, has begun the search for a necessary vaccine. Meanwhile, a disease like HIV/AIDS, which has left more than 35 million victims dead in the last three decades (a large part of whom was on the African continent), would have been grateful also for a similar reaction. So therefore, the pandemic has corroborated again the idea of Judith Butler that "we only recognize certain lives as human and real"[7] in a world that continues to be tremendously racist, classist and ethnocentric.

1.1. Facing a Double Difficulty

Nevertheless, the COVID-19 crisis should not be understood as an inflection point, but rather as a certainly extraordinary phenomenon that deepens and accelerates some dynamics and transformations. These had been developing since the 1980's when globalization in its neo-liberal form took off. From the time of the financial crisis of 2008, they had been appearing with greater virulence.

The pandemic brings out a double difficulty which we had been experiencing already: the difficulty of interpreting the present and the difficulty of imagining a hopeful future. On the one hand, what for many people today can be understood as a black swan (something impossible to predict) is inserted into the context of a "paradigmatic transition". This is an allusion to the idea of Boaventura de Sousa Santos in which a multitude of factors already signaled the passing of a world waiting for the enlightenment of another. During that transition, a phrase of Mario Benedetti acquired significance: "When we believed that we had all the answers, suddenly all of the questions changed." Surely the problem in that pre-COVID world was in the fact that the majority of the political and economic leadership continued insisting on offering hoary and useless answers, incapable of seeing or recognizing that many of the questions had changed.

In effect, the questions pointed to a world of enormous wealth and techno-scientific development, but at the same time obscenely unequal, precarious and uncertain for millions of people. It was a world shaken by a

growing and shared global unrest, with democracies incapable of offering real change. Above all, they pointed to the existence of an inexorable ecological crisis, with a time clock that was warning about the necessity of adopting courageous and ambitious policies before the effects of climate change were completely irreversible. It was a broken world of winners and losers, enormously convulsed by the rapidity and simultaneity of multiple global transformations.

So, many of the phenomena that occurred in the last few years (the arrival of Trump or Bolsonaro in Brazil, Brexit, the impact of protests in Chile, Mexico, Spain and the United States, etc.) were often perceived with a certain amount of stupefaction and perplexity but not with the necessary lucidity to formulate a new framework of understanding and response. Innerarity insists, "We human beings are less disposed to modify our behavior the further away seem the consequences of not doing it."[8] Stuck in the habit of only considering the short term, political leadership has led us to attend to what is urgent at the expense of the responses that many situations required. Victims of blindness, we continued to use tools, categories and strategies for a world that had come to an end.

But running parallel to this difficulty of understanding and attending to the present and this sense of social and political confusion, there also has emerged a wave of social nihilism and of pessimism that is inclined to foretell the worst of the possible fates for our planet and for future generations. To the incapacity for interpreting the present there has been added thus the incapacity to make out, to imagine and to build a future together. From mere resignation, like the orchestra on the Titanic, almost any other dystopian resolution has been embraced, installing us in what Marina Garces has called the "posthumous condition."[9] It is a society which aspires only to survival and to ask ourselves how long we will last, in a sort of "Game Over". It makes good that which was said by the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Zizek, that our time is characterized by a humanity capable of imagining how to reach other planets and at the same time incapable of imagining and constructing models and forms of life that overcome this savage capitalism.

1.2. The "Moment of Clarity"

Faced with this double difficulty, this Notebook attempts to put in order some debates that are trying to shed light on this moment of global darkness. The image of our being in a large cave, with little light and stepping on slippery and dangerous rocks, forces us to take on that double objective: that of formulating questions and analytical elements that allow us to discern in depth the causes, but also that of elaborating – continuing with the metaphor of the cave – a sort of "speleology of hope", capable of shining light into the nooks and crannies that allow us to move on toward possible exits.

The Notebook advocates one idea, perhaps ingenuous, which has been suggested by other voices, like that of Yayo Herrera, who propose to understand the pandemic as a phenomenon that offers us a moment of clarity. "At

least for a moment, let society distinguish the civilizing trap."[10] Or, said another way, the possibility that this event, both simultaneous and global, which we are living might take us to a better social and political conscientization, that there is no future possible without overcoming our current model. The incompatibility of capital and life, and the necessity of overcoming what Jason Moore has called the *capitalocene* (an era characterized by the capacity of capitalist accumulation to generate dynamic economies based on production that change the ecosystems) are placed in this way at the center of any type of reflection.[11] This difficult coexistence of capital-life runs parallel to an old debate that also places in counterpoint the existence of a savage capitalism and the subsistence of any democratic proposal, establishing a triad of capital-life-democracy that these pages hope to include.

The pandemic has forced us to focus on all of these contradictions and the moment of clarity allows us to understand that this constant flight onward makes no sense. "To stare directly at the crisis of civilization requires us to touch on its causes and to be conscious of the relationships and ties of eco-dependence and interdependence which are a *sine qua non* for sustaining life with dignity," explains Yayo Herrero.[12] "The health crises of the 21st century are not only crises of health," warn Javier Padilla and Pedro Gullon in their marvelous essay *Epidemiocracia* concerning the impact of the pandemic. We can conceive of these crises as "matrioska crises", such that, as both authors hold, "the health crisis is covered up by another crisis which is economic and both of them are nested in a much larger crisis which is the ecological one.[13]

Besides this, the situation puts a question of time on the table. The time of which we dispose to deal with the subject in depth is not unlimited. From the available scientific evidence there is an insistence on seeing the next ten years as a crucial period to reverse and stop some of the effects on climate which today we have begun to feel. The alternative to a necessary change of direction is to continue on this global road to nowhere.

1.3. The Structure of the Notebook

The present Notebook is structured in three parts. The first one considers that in spite of enormous wealth, above all financial wealth, which neoliberal globalization has provided for us in the last three decades, and the process of global wealth redistribution which that has created (generating a new planetary reality with the ascent of the middle classes of Asia, and, above all, of China), the reality which the pandemic has collided with is that of a world which is already broken and in convulsions. It is one in which the incompatibility among the triad of capital-life-democracy is irrefutable and in which the magnitude of speed and simultaneity with which changes are produced make even more complex the development of all the circumstances. Therefore, the pandemic sits upon a "substratum" and is incorporated into a predetermined scenario, making sharper the problems of an unequal world that is plutocratic,

politically polarized, socially atomized and environmentally unviable.

The second part of the Notebook takes a deeper dive into that "moment of clarity" that the pandemic can be offering us. In the words of Boaventura de Sousa Santos, in taking into consideration the "pedagogical potential" that the crisis is providing, "Are we capable of understanding what the pandemic is explaining to us?" the Portuguese sociologist asks himself.[14] In this section I will analyze what according to my way of thinking can be the principal lessons to bear in mind in any discussion: (a) work for the common good and caregiving is what sustains life; (b) vulnerability, empathy and the perception of limits emerge forcefully as elements to put up against the current culture of excess; (c) seeking security and militarization are innocuous strategies that are self-interested and counterproductive; (d) there is no global effort without cooperation or international solidarity; and, finally, (e) the desire to protect global public goods and global common goods ought to be the principal frame of reference.

The third and last section analyzes the different post-pandemic scenarios without determining which of them is the most plausible: that of withdrawal and democratic regression; that of an esthetic, "lampedusian" change, but altogether insufficient to deal with the challenges of the present and the future; or a third, that of a movement toward alternative new forms of being on the planet that harmonize the economy, life and democracy. Precisely, in the process of the construction of alternatives, I analyze the role of the principal global actors (United Nations, G-20, the Davos Economic Forum and movements for an alternative world) in order to emphasize that they all have detected the same problems, but nevertheless offer different diagnoses and clearly different strategies for dealing with them. The Notebook ends going more deeply into something that many others have underscored in this context, that is, the idea of a global "new social contract", examining the potential of some proposals like that of the "New Green Deal" (NGD) or that of the 17 Objectives of Sustainable Development (ODS) of the United Nations. Above all we outline the inescapable conditions which that contract needs for the next generations and the essential role which civil society and social movements ought to have in their articulation.

2. THE SUBSTRATUM OF THE PANDEMIC

The financial crisis of Lehman Brothers in September, 2008, began an extraordinarily convulsive period which has come down to our day. The shock meant much more than just the crash of one of the most important global companies of financial services. It demonstrated in real life a globalization with clay feet that had generated the most ominous jump in wealth in the history of the human race, and, at the same time, erected a world that was enormously unequal, precarious and plutocratic.

The global convulsion that has followed this event (political protests over the whole planet, histrionic hyper-leaders who have come to power, etc.) has produced a social and political climate of stupefaction and perplexity, faced with the sensation that there is a world that is collapsing before our eyes with reminiscences of the traumatic "decade of the thirties". Precisely in the last few years, an endless number of voices has proliferated, each one trying to understand what "substratum" (following the idea of *Epidemiocracy*) characterized this disruptive reality that had found its way to the fore.

2.1. Understanding the Substratum of the Pandemic

Daniel Innerarity points out that the pandemic causes us to face a problem that is not as much "epidemiological" as it is "epistemological".[15] The global reality prior to the crisis of COVID-19 did not suffer from a lack of analysis. The essays, studies and informational writings of the principal reference sources, think tanks and even intelligence sources assumed the magnitude, complexity and simultaneity of the transformations that were being produced. The warnings of all kinds (ecological, epidemiological, social,

political, etc.) were out on the table for all to see. Nevertheless, looking for short-term solutions, the inertia of the principal political and economic actors dragged everyone into a spiral of repetition and forgetfulness, of having to be kicked to move forward. Building a vision of the future that would be good for generations had been converted into a chimera for those who exercised power. What were the elements, then, that defined this whole global reality? In what way did the COVID-19 crisis accelerate, modify or sharpen the underlying dynamics? There are at least six elements that need to be analyzed if we want to understand the substratum of this transition among the paradigms in which we find ourselves. All of them are the consequences of processes of greater or lesser length, but nevertheless are closely interconnected.

Transnationality, complexity, interdependence and acceleration

Humankind has been globalizing as such for centuries. Nevertheless, the growing interconnection and interdependence of a world that has been changed into a small "global village" (to use the famous expression of the sociologist McLuhan), has experienced a frightful phase of acceleration since the fall of the Berlin Wall and as a result of the advances on the technoscientific plane. Life in this small great village has been changed from that time into an experience increasingly impregnated with the digital, affecting not only the area of economics, but also the social, cultural and personal spheres.

It is commonplace to affirm that the problems of today do not know anything about passports, paraphrasing the late ex-Secretary General of the UN, Koffi Annan. The old world of nation-states has been completely overwhelmed by a cross-border dynamic where questions that are theoretically distant have an immediate impact on our lives. That makes us enormously interdependent and porous, citizens of the same global reality for as much as we continue to put up resistance. The Ebola crisis of 2014 brought it to the forefront as few experiences before it had done. It was an epidemiological problem that was taking place in a forgotten corner of Africa and to which, despite thousands of deaths, the wealthy world had hardly paid attention. It turned into a global health emergency in the moment when the virus and the panic traveled to our countries. The crisis of COVID-19 should be understood as the most intense experience of transnationality and interdependence that we have lived through until now. The Spanish flu of 1918, which has been so often evoked during this time, took two years to become "global", while the current pandemic has accomplished that in a few weeks in a world where mobility has become a part of life.

Geopolitical transition; new global actors

The global village was experiencing a second important mutation. The unipolar and international world that resulted from the end of the Cold War, in which the United States emerged as the principal hegemonic actor, was

giving way to a different reality. On the one hand, paradoxically, globalization had been the impulse for the economic growth of a group of countries which was gaining geoeconomic and geopolitical influence in the world of today. Among all of them, China emerged as the country called to be the protagonist of the 21st century. Little by little it configured a world that was essentially bipolar (multi-polarity still seems like a long way off) in which Washington and Beijing rivaled each other in exhibiting a hegemony that was less and less Western (and above all less European). The pandemic has been the scenario in which that rivalry, among mutual accusations, has been able to accelerate the decline of the United States and has raised up the growing dominance of Asia.

On the other hand, the pre-pandemic period already did not belong exclusively to the States. The role of non-state actors (investment funds, rating agencies, technology companies, think tanks, philanthropic organizations like the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, private security companies, NGOs, social movements, etc.) were already sketching out a post-state reality, very asymmetrical, in which the States competed with all these actors in the process of configuring norms and making international decisions. The erratic Paris Agreement of 2015 on climate change, to give only one example, cannot be understood without the involvement of many of these actors in multiple discussions over many years. The pandemic has demonstrated the significant role of some of them, like the pharmaceutical industry, even though it also seems to have given back to the State the role of being a (perhaps ephemeral) protagonist in working out the social and human effects of the crisis in a context of apparent "de-globalization" and of "return to the State".

Distribution of power, fragmentation of government

The two conditions mentioned above influenced directly one of the key elements of international relations. "Who has power today?" has been a question asked by numerous authors in the last few years. The thing is that, in an increasingly post-Western and post-statist world, power was also changing in form, becoming more and more porous, decentralized and distributed. It was, nevertheless, an asymmetrical reality, where some States, some enterprises, some transnational elites exercised a substantial part of the capacity to influence and make decisions on a global level, creating a reality that was worrisomely plutocratic because of the preeminence of some actors.

That preeminence has led some figures like Zygmunt Bauman to posit the possibility that globalization also has produced a *de facto* divorce between power and politics.[16] The image chosen by the well-known and now deceased sociologist sheds an enormous light because it allows us to see the different strata that both areas have come to occupy. Power no longer resides in its direct form in the area of political representation, but rather has migrated to a sphere which is non-democratic and opaque and which ends up influencing decisions that affect people.

The consequences of this dynamic are ill-fated. The sketch artist El Roto has taken it to the humorous: "If it is the markets that govern, let's save the money we spend on governments," he proclaimed in one of his vignettes. The lack of counterbalances to the power of finance has thus emerged as one of the principal contemporary challenges.

The emergence of new actors on the global scene and the growing transnationality and interdependence of our problems have not been accompanied by the articulation of global instruments that are efficient and uniting. In what the sociologist Ulrick Beck has called "organized irresponsibility", we can count on scientific knowledge to inform us about risk and uncertainty, but there is no attempt or collective insurance policy to deal with those risks with the necessary political and institutional resources.[17]

What we encounter today is, in the words of the deceased internationalist David Held, "fragmented governance".[18] Each problem unleashes a global conversation, sometimes sterile, among the actors who are implicated (in the case of COVID-19, among WHO, the States, the pharmaceutical industry, etc.). This leads to partial and non-binding solutions and compromises, whose implementation remains at the mercy of the good will of the parties involved. The pandemic has made clear as never before the misalignment between a challenging and overwhelming reality and the lack of any efficient and operative instruments of global governance. Or, said another way, it has demonstrated the hyper-globalization of multiple sectors (financial, commercial, social, cultural, etc.) confronted with the sub-globalization of the political.

Social uncertainty, political disaffection

A fourth aspect of the global substratum to change is found in the sociopolitical realm. Globalization has facilitated the economic growth of economies which had been known until now as "underdeveloped". As a consequence of the processes of industrial relocation, all of the Asian countries (and above them all, China) have become the subject of extraordinary economic growth. The new Asian middle classes are the expression of a world in which the gap between countries of the North and South is not as clear. There exists an "equalization at the bottom" in which societies with *rising expectations* (for better salaries or rights for workers) are counterpoised to a world of what are called the "wealthy countries", with societies with *declining expectations*, where impoverished middle class people have slowly experienced the loss of their status as a fruit of the process of globalization.[19] This downgrading process is treated in a brilliant way by the French geographer Christophe Guilluy in his essay *No Society.* For Guilluy, globalization has implied not only a social regression, but also a cultural one of the traditional Western middle class. The idea of the "no society" speaks about a broken society whose social and cultural structure has become polarized, making any form of social contract unviable.[20]

It is worth noting, nevertheless, that this contraposition (rising-declining) should not hide a sharing of the same

experience by both groups: that of the precarious employment conditions and uncertainty of life. For Guy Standing, a professor at the University of London (SOAS), "global precariousness" is that heterogenous new subject (including immigrants, "mono-parental" families, underqualified and overqualified workers), without any class consciousness, "but at war with itself", as it is usually put forward, branded by vulnerability, storms in the labor market and a lack of community support in times of need. Far from being the inevitable result of globalization, Standing insists on understanding it as the political victory of a neoliberal project and which has been politically and culturally deconstructing the pillars of the old Keynesian world.[21]

The pandemic has given us evidence of this social fracture, as I have pointed out above. The crisis has impacted societies that have become precarious in which the structures of the public sector and the community fabric found themselves terribly cut back by years of neoliberalism. The philosopher and intellectual feminist Nancy Fraser also invites us to think about this reality from the point of view of the existence of an underlying "crisis of care." "Financed capitalism has reduced salaries in real terms, thus increasing the number of hours of paid work that each home needs to maintain the family and provoking a desperate struggle to transfer the work of caregiving to others." Thus, there is a spiral of transfer of caregiving and making life more precarious.[22]

Political disaffection has emerged as a consequence of this panorama, and not the reverse. Such disaffection is not only nourished by the social perception that the democratic systems are today incapable of bettering the lives of persons (divorce between power and politics), but also the perception that life has been changed, also in Western societies, into an experience impregnated with uncertainty and unease. In the context of the pandemic there has been produced a debate about the future of democracies. Apparently, the best argument that has been made by some authoritarian regimes, just as it has been suggested in some debates, can lead some persons to question if democracy is necessary given the circumstances of today.

Crisis of climate, crisis of civilization

The time of confinement has opened for us a surprising debate. What if the planet and the rest of living beings lived and breathed better without us? What if the human species is, in fact, the principal virus? Beyond the images of clearer skies and animals recovering spaces they had lost because of human action, entering into this debate does not get us anywhere. Elinor Ostrom, the Nobel Prize Laureate in economics, demonstrated with her work about the administration of communal goods how the history of humankind offers many examples of measures dealing with natural resources that are sustainable, horizontal and democratic. The climate crisis has nothing to do with the human species nor with a sort of genetic fatalism, but rather with a model of consumption and production that is not universalizable. "It's the model, stupid!", it would be worth recalling,

paraphrasing James Carville the former assistant to Bill Clinton.

Two large problems can be observed about the attempt to overcome this "perverse" system, as it was described by Pope Francis in his famous encyclical *Laudato si'*. The first problem is political: we need to have in record time political decisions and changes that achieve a functioning economy that is respectful of the limits of the planet. In a reality that is characterized by short-term solutions, it ends up being difficult to find audacious leadership that dares to channel this urgent transformation. A second problem is cultural: the global minority, the 15% of the planet who exhibit a model of consumption which produces the 90% of ecological impact, should deconstruct with urgency a culture of excess and consumerism, something which the system itself needs to do in order to feed itself.

The French philosopher Bruno Latour has warned, in an essay that has achieved notoriety, that the pandemic is nothing more than the "general rehearsal" for what is to come, the first consequence of an ecological crisis which has only just begun.[23] If as humankind we are not politically, socially, culturally and economically capable of overcoming this model in the next few years, the medium range reality will be that of a world which should accustom itself to manage the uncertain effects of a crisis on civilization.

Social atomization, crisis of values

The last of the six analyzed elements which have been incubating in the last few decades is precisely the one that has the most cultural character. Again, Bauman synthesizes in an excellent way the mutation that has been produced when he considers that in the globalization of today, we have gone from being citizens to being consumers. This passage is of an enormous transcendence. Citizenship depends on person's and communities' being politically involved in public affairs and searching for the common good. Consumerism depoliticizes and immobilizes. It changes us into individuals without a consciousness of community nor of a collective goal. Into that context there has been inserted in an accelerated way a "digital hedonism" which reinforces that superficial, vacuous and atomized dimension of our society.

Laudato si' sketches out a set of "countervalues" proposed in this context of an unrestrained capitalism in which "the obsession with unlimited growth, consumerism, technocracy, the absolute domination of finance and the divinization of the markets" are the central elements.[24] The fact is that, for Nancy Fraser, "there is something rotten not only in the current financialized form of capitalism, but also in capitalist society *per se*."[25] For that reason, Pope Francis is advocating for an "ecological culture", "a different way of looking, a thought, a policy, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality which come together to form a resistance to the advance of the current reality."[26]

The first months of the COVID-19 crisis witnessed an effervescent communitarian solidarity - sometimes as a catharsis – in facing a problem that affected the entire planet even though in some places in an unequal way. On

the level of the state, much as had happened after the mobilizations of 15-M in 2011, there were initiatives to provide mutual support in neighborhoods and towns. This brought into focus that there are sectors of society that for some time have been resisting and organizing against a culture of consumerism and egotism.

2.2. A Crossroads of Multiple Crises

What instruments do we need in order to take on, control and transform problems of a complex nature which are transnational and interdependent? How do we lower the dominance of financial power over democratic political power? What is necessary to offer stable and worthy prospects for life? How do we make a model of production and consumption compatible with the life of the planet? How do we counteract the dominance of an individualistic cultural model and build a project in common?

The questions that resulted from that pre-COVID scenario already were of such a transcendence and magnitude that they made up a "critical juncture".[27] Other periods of history have been long periods of giving birth, of a transition between epochs, but there have been none like this one that has brought together so many variables in a simultaneous way, of such relevant magnitude and complexity, and with such a significant capacity for acceleration. As we indicated, the effects of this global cataclysm many times manifested themselves in the form of perplexity or stupefaction. At other times they were seen by the articulation of decisions of changes which were inadequate or insufficient for the size of the problems. The crisis of COVID-19 is the synthesis of that situation of change and confusion which brings us back to the beginning of reality in a way that is brusque and, for many of those who suffer in an indirect way the consequences of these global problems, unexpected.

In the last few years, especially since what was called the "Arab Spring" which began in December of 2010, we have witnessed a wave of "global unrest" which has few precedents and which has erupted since then (Spain, Brazil, United States, Sudan, Senegal, Chile, Ecuador, Hong Kong, etc.). Although apparently brought about for localized reasons (police repression, rise in prices for staple goods, etc.) all of the mass protests converged in two main aspects: the incapacity of their institutions and systems to provide democratic responses to their political, social and life-affecting demands, and the protest against a social reality increasingly more unequal and unjust. In part, these protests were the reaction to the "global precariousness" of the people without being for a political cause that was easily recognizable. It showed their deep-seated anger with the direction and the future of their respective countries. With an emancipating or transformative discourse, or, on the contrary, with a xenophobic, nationalistic and isolationist narrative, the wave of protests, on the left and the right, were the symptom of a world which was coming apart at the seams.

Within that context of multiple crises (of responses, of ethics, of institu-

tions, of feelings, etc.), there underlie three great crises:

- One democratic. This is evidenced by the divorce between power and politics, but also by the populist retrogression with so many xenophobic and extreme right-wing movements that have come to power or which influence it directly, and which has caused the most important democratic regression in the last three decades.[28]
- One social. We find ourselves in the time of the greatest inequality in history, of the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few (Oxfam assures us that 26 people have as much wealth as half of the world's population) and in the growing precariousness of the social and labor situation.[29]
- And one ecological. This is the fruit of a model of consumption and production that is not viable nor sustainable, and is bringing the planet to the collapse of its ecosystems.

There is a model which highlights the incompatibility between this "capitalism of disaster", in the words of the political theorist Naomi Klein, and democracy and life. On the one hand, the production of enormous inequalities and the precariousness of life of a social majority puts on to the ropes the model of representative democracy and is evidence of the extant incompatibility between a way of understanding economic development and democracy in itself. On the other hand, it reveals that the development which is flaunted by a minority part of the planet (many times at the cost of the majority) runs counter to human subsistence itself with the consolidation of a way to consume and produce that is not viable. Any social contract for the future should make possible the coexistence of the economy (from the Greek *oikos* "administration of the home"), democracy and a dignified life, done with the sense of elements of a triad that should be indissoluble but which in fact has been converted into incompatibility.

This diagnosis was already the basis for the discussion of the "alter-globalisation" movement from the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium. The "Another world is possible" called for understanding the current modus operandi as a model which is socially and ecologically not viable. It articulated proposals that aspired to think about alternatives in a context in which capitalism does not have an alternative in itself. The World Social Forum, the place in which this alter-globalism was articulated, has gradually disappeared, as a consequence of internal divisions and a loss of relevance. However it may have happened, the articulation of a civil movement with a global character that might take up the banner of the different struggles for equality, calling attention to those in need of care or social rights and those of the planet is more urgent today than ever.

3. LESSONS FROM A GLOBAL CRISIS

Understanding the elements that underlie this complex and winding global scenario which we have just presented becomes, as we have indicated, the primary objective. On the other hand, the pandemic, as an extraordinary event, presupposes an intense experience that calls out to us for explanation and invites us to become conscious and to think about that which is essential and fundamental at this juncture, the "moment of clarity" that is pointed out by Yayo Herrero, and the "pedagogic potential" of the crisis that Boaventura de Sousa Santos talks about.

3.1. A Global Conversation

Krastev points out a relevant fact with relation to the pandemic and to the time of confinement: "We, the people of the whole world, have had the same conversation and shared the same fears. We have experienced what it really means to live in the same world."[30] And so, there have appeared reflections that have called us to interpret the depth of the crisis. If Latour called us to understand the pandemic as the "general rehearsal" or the "prologue" of the ecological crisis, Inger Andersen, the director general of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), interpreted it as "a message from nature".[31] Meanwhile, the ex-president of Uruguay, Pepe Mujica, did the same thing asserting that it was "a warning to the sapiens".[32] For his part, Pope Francis, in one of his homilies for that Holy Week of 2020, considered it to be "a call to conversion", both personal and collective.

The reflections during this time have been ones of great depth, shaping in an indirect way, and sometimes directly, a global conversation about the current state of our world, about the direction it is taking and about the future. What does the pandemic say to us about ourselves, about our way of being on the planet, about our way of organizing ourselves politically and

economically? What does this crisis highlight? What does this crisis expose?How does it dialogue with preexisting fundamental problems and what does it answer the questions that are asked? These can be some of the questions that underlie many of the contributions to the said conversation.

In this understanding of the pandemic as a call for help before which we have to stop and think, the idea of Daniel Innerarity stands out. He says that "crises only teach the one who is disposed to learn."[33]

3.2. Five Possible Pessons

Javier Padilla and Pedro Gullon, in a very clear way, plant the idea in their essay about the pandemic that "epidemics have accompanied and perform our social and political reality for centuries, creating a privileged position from which to analyze the intersection of medicine, politics and the economy."[34] The peculiarity of the moment through which the world is passing (acceleration, simultaneity of crises, etc.), emphasizes more the interaction that both of the authors suggest.

The COVID-19 crisis gives us at least five aspects about which we have to pay special attention. They are elements that shed light on where we are going, what to do and how to do it.

The work for the common good and caring for others sustains life

A first aspect that the pandemic has brought into the spotlight from the first moment is that the role played by the public sector and by jobs related to caregiving (health personnel, workers in the service sector, domestic workers, etc.) is fundamental in order to sustain the most important pillars of our life. Caregiving, which includes as much affective as material work, and which often is done without remuneration or is underpaid, is indispensable for society, as Nancy Fraser reminds us. The applause which came at the end of the work day in the middle of the quarantine recognized it as such.

This which can seem to be something almost completely obvious has been enormously questioned in the case of workers in the public sector like sanitation workers or those in education, or in the case of those made invisible like care-givers. The merchandising and privatizing inertia of the neoliberal ideal has achieved, in the case of welfare societies, cutting the resources destined for certain public sectors, the fundamental pillars of social cohesion, and for any other project that has as its goal a certain equality. The badly-named "austerity policies" have directly eroded areas that affect the life and dignity of persons. In the case of Latin American or African countries the situation is much worse. The Washington Consensus, pushed by the international financial institutions since the end of the 80s and based on privatization and deregulation, had already conditioned the future of some countries which were emptied of all possibility of building a robust public sector and which had often depended on private action or on international cooperation. The reconstruction of any kind of social contract therefore must include fortifying and placing value on these areas.

For Henry Giroux, a pioneer of critical education, the conclusion is evident: "The first lesson of the pandemic is that a political and social system built on greed, self-benefit, merchandising and privatization of everything cannot deal with a crisis of this magnitude."[35] To the American professor it is important to understand that we are not only struggling against a health crisis, but also against a political and ideological crisis, just as we have pointed to previously.

In this respect, our attention is called to a reflection made by the French president, Emmanuel Macron: "What this pandemic has already revealed to us is that universal health care, which is independent of all income, ancestors or profession and our state of well-being, does not involve a cost or burden, but rather precious goods, active and indispensable. … There are goods and services that ought to be placed outside of the laws of the market. To delegate to others our food production, our protection, our ability to care for our condition of life is, at its roots, madness. We should take back control."[36] Moving away from the mercantile model, promoting and protecting the areas which are essential for life with dignity and equality, therefore, becomes an essential lesson that we ought not forget.

Vulnerability, empathy and perception of limits

There exists a second lesson or affirmation that in a very basic way calls to account the societies of the global North. When from our communications media or academic reflections we hear that the pandemic has been an experience of "shared vulnerability", we forget that millions of people are systematically exposed to living out in the open and to a situation of fragility and vulnerability. They are, moreover, persons and societies who develop strategies for confronting and cultivating resistance as a daily practice.

This point of view that places our own experience in the center is the result of an ethnocentric and racist culture that lacks historical and global perspective. Our model of life, which is the fruit of struggles and social victories on the part of many groups (workers' movements, feminism, pacifism, etc.) with regard to civil and human rights, demonstrates also a level of life that would not be possible without the subordinate role that other territories of the global South has played in the "economic development" of the global North. The force behind the Industrial Revolution and the European bourgeoisie during the 19th century cannot be explained without the whole dynamic of exploitation of many countries and people. When we look with condescension at certain realities of poverty and misery, we should be also conscious of what has been and is our role and responsibility in that kind of situation.

The culture of excess and unrestrained consumerism has turned into a global culture, but there continue to be very few places that exhibit it in its complete and unchecked form. The "ecological footprint"[37] of Africa, for example, continues to be ten times less than that of the United States, or six times less than that of all of Europe taken together. In order to establish an equitable measurement, we need to

remember that our life has been filled with privileges and created necessities that have an extraordinary ecological and human price. For Marina Garces, more than just demonstrating the fragility of the system, the pandemic has revealed the social inequality and violence on which rests our "normality".[38]

Nevertheless, the crisis offers us a triple opportunity. First, the possibility of developing a greater empathy for the instances where there has been systematical punishment by injustice and poverty within a global system that continues dispossessing many people so that a few can live an ostentatious lifestyle. But also for those instances which occur within our own contexts where there is ever more punishment by uncertainty of work and living and by a precariousness that impregnates everything. Second, we should deconstruct and confront this culture of excess that takes us to a dead-end street. The "civilization of poverty" of which Ignacio Ellacuria spoke invites us to give a new meaning to the idea of "shared sobriety" in a world that needs precisely for us to rethink our habits of consumption and for us to place limits on our desire to accumulate.

Finally, and as a fruit of that "crisis of attention" which the digital age has brought to us and about which the essayist Yoval Noah Harari has spoken, the pandemic also offers us the possibility of reconnecting with ourselves.[39] "Intimate resistance", alluding to the masterful work of the Catalan philosopher Josep Maria Esquirol, is a resistance that wants to give greater value to the small, the slow and the unappreciated when faced with a dynamic of acceleration and confusing hurry.[40] In the words of Judith Butler, "The pandemic gives us the opportunity to understand ourselves as being more connected. We can breathe with each other, we walk on surfaces that have been walked on by other people, we brush against strangers. We sing together, we speak to others with this same voice. As incarnate beings, humans depend on one another, their bodies are porous and they share a common world of air, water and land."[41]

"Securitization" as part of the problem

"Epidemics infect society with fear," we are reminded by Ivan Krastev.[42] Nevertheless, global discussions have been fed by fear and insecurity in the last few years, especially since September 11, 2001. The response to the "security threats" increasingly have been strategies for securitization[43] and militarization. Instead of understanding and dealing with the elements that are at the roots of international terrorism (poverty, inequalities, etc.) or of phenomena like migration, the reaction in many countries has been an increase in the budget for armaments or the construction of military bases or of walls and the placement of razor wire.

More than any other, the Western world has bet on containing its threats instead of transforming the root causes, thinking that that could be a possible solution when in reality it has helped to increase the problem. The idea of Giorgio Agamben, popularized during the pandemic, that the "state of emergency" could be converted from now on into the normal paradigm for government (by the norms adopted during

the time of the pandemic), is nothing new if you take into account the rollback of civil rights that many countries have suffered in the last few years under the guise of obtaining greater security in the face of the emergence of new fears and insecurities.[44]

Paradoxically, in a world which is globalized and hyperconnected, and at the same time in a complete rollback of rights and as a nation, borders have also been converted today into trenches of war. That shameless border", to use the expression of the analyst Blanca Garces[45], has led the Western governments, and actors like the EU, to sacrifice openly the right to life and the most fundamental rights of the migrant population and refugees in the last few years. At the end of July, 2020, a new scandal was finding its way into some of the communications media. Dozens of refugees were abandoned by the Greek government in floating tents while waiting for the Turkish Coast Guard to take them back to Turkey, in the umpteenth example of a Europe that has lost its direction.

The pandemic has reinforced this collective fear, many times in the hands of irresponsible leaders who have fanned the flames in order to keep themselves in power, turning uncertainty into a powerful tool for control and domination. Reality, nevertheless, imposes itself. From the point of view of common sense as well as that of scientific evidence, it is important to underscore that the security that we need is not a "military security", but rather a "human security" based on equality, dignity and respect for the limits of the planet. As we noted above, life and democracy will not be possible without a form of social, political and economic organization that takes these elements into account.

Cooperation, solidarity and diversity for a new global plan

Voices like that of the well-known political scientist Francis Fukuyama or that of Oxford professor Will Hutton agree in pointing out that the great lesson of the pandemic is affirming the necessity of cooperation in a world that is profoundly interdependent. The great problems that affect humanity have an indisputable transnational character for which the States or other actors with a base in one country do not dispose of resources or an adequate capacity to assume.

Notwithstanding that, the pandemic has arrived precisely in the middle of a crisis of multilateralism that is without precedent in the last eighty years. There was a sense of euphoria that arose in December, 2015, when the United States and China, the two principal contaminators, approved an agreement that consolidated a series of compromises with respect to the climate crisis that were fairly ambitious. From that point we have passed to one of questioning the cooperation between States and actors that is the fruit of the moment of political rollback that we are living in. We arrived at the point that in the first phases of the pandemic Trump decided to withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO), accusing it of favoring the interests of China.

However it might be, the international liberal order had already been questioned by that geopolitical mutation that we have analyzed. The in-

ternational organizations, heirs of a certain historical epoch (2nd half of the 20th century), are still the reflection of the hegemony of the Western countries, when the current context is characterized precisely by the emergence of some countries from the South and by their desire to participate more actively in global decision-making.

In this process of readjustment, nevertheless, any multilateral system should also expect to have a different look. It ought to be one that places value on the knowledge and strategies that have usually been made invisible or silenced, like the social movements, the indigenous communities or any actor that usually remains on the margins of a system that only accepts what powerful voices bring to the table. The "epistemologies of the South", as Boaventura de Sousa Santos points out, are an unavoidable source that the new multilateralism should listen to, incorporate and integrate into their form of building and articulating international solutions and instruments.

Protecting public goods and global common spaces

Inge Kaul and Elinor Ostrom have been two of the authors who have made more popular two concepts that have emerged as central since the advent of the crisis. Kaul has been behind the idea of *global public goods* which refers, more or less, to those goods which can be considered as achievements or benefits which humanity has obtained, like education or the eradication of a disease. For her part, Ostrom has been essential to the discussion about the so-called *global common goods*, referring to those finite resources or natural spaces which do not belong to any State or concrete actor, and which ought to be enjoyed by all of humankind together and by the coming generations, such as fishing banks, the oceans or simply the air that we breathe.

The history of the last decades sets in opposition the attempt to prop up the defense of all of these goods and a system that aspires precisely to market them and privatize many of them. The pandemic brings to the forefront the importance of making the goods visible and of converting them into the keystone of any social contract of the future. Their protection and their universalization would help to shed light on an ideal in which life, care-giving, interdependence and the idea of the common good will be placed in the center.

4. TOWARDS A NEW "SOCIAL CONTRACT"

When this pandemic is over, the temptation already seems to be clear: return to doing what we were doing as if nothing had happened. It is true that then we will not be the same and that it will be hard to calculate not only the socio-economic and political impact of this crisis, but also the psychological and sociological. But the temptation to do what we were doing is enormous, in spite of the many scientific warnings and in spite of this first-person experience in the global North of what it has meant to live during the storm. The emeritus professor of the Institute of Political Science in Paris, Bertrand Badie, stated this: "We will restore the old order because we have no other solutions at hand."[46]

This kind of tragic fatalism is also reflected by Slavoj Zizek in his essay entitled *Pandemic,* when he suggests that this crossroads only leaves us with one exit: an internationalist communism adapted to the 21st century or barbarism. For the Slovenian philosopher, the most probable result, nevertheless, will be that a new savage capitalism will end up being imposed. "… Many weak and elderly people will be sacrificed and will be left to die; the digital control of our lives will now be something permanent; class distinctions will be increasingly a matter of life or death."[47] Nothing of what Zizek says seems preposterous because the pandemic itself has brought out these same dynamics. But what does strike us is the seriousness and fatalism with which numerous voices invite us to think about the future from the point of view of the crudest representation of our dystopias.

To think today in the key of hope has been converted into an ingenuous attitude, including for those who live life from a profoundly religious perspective. The "speleology for hope" to which we alluded at the beginning suggests exactly the will to think and build alternatives going counter to the current, in the middle of a wave of nihilism that denies any human capacity to confront the difficulties of the moment.

4.1. Post-pandemic Scenarios

The literature that has arisen in the midst of the pandemic has coincided on the establishment of three possible scenarios for the post-COVID-19 world. The first is that of the revanche and democratic retrocession to which Zizek refers. It is a scenario in which the different consequences (growing inequality, authoritarianism, effects of the climate crisis, etc.) would become more pronounced until we reach the extreme of drawing up a truly terrible scenario. We can already intuit this scene in the world of today when we begin to observe its first symptoms. The majority of the political establishments are aware that the continuation of these consequences will reinforce the "securitarian strategy" as the way to contain its effects and it would generate a scenario of enormous instability and tension throughout the world. Today we have the evidence and the social experience in order to avoid that this road should be taken even if we are lacking in the political commitment to stop being sunk into the very dangerous dynamic in which we find ourselves.

The second scenario is something that we could call "lampedusian", alluding to the famous sentence in the novel *Il Gattopardo* by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa which says, "Change everything so that nothing changes." In this scenario (which in my way of thinking is the most probable of the three, above all in Europe), the political authorities suggest a strategy of profound changes, at different levels, in order to confront the different challenges that we have ahead. In this option, pointed out the philosopher Amador Fernandez Savater when he did this same prospective exercise, social rights and health measures are combined within a framework that is not touched, an absolute limit. In itself, this is a contradiction, because in order to produce substantial changes that framework needs to be rethought.[48] This second scenario suggests measures based on an inexorable dynamism, that of climate change or that of the current digital revolution in terms of labor, but it avoids a truly transformative debate.

The third scenario is that of a response that is freeing and one of building alternatives that directly confront the magnitude of the challenges that we have ahead of us. It is a quasi-revolutionary scenario, not only with regard to politics, but also with regard to social and cultural matters. It suggests what is necessary to undertake over various generations, a true process of transformation of our economic organization from a perspective that takes profoundly into account the condition of eco-dependence. It is the post-capitalist scenario of an economy that respects limits and places lives and care-giving at its center.

During this interlude in which we find ourselves, when we are enormously affected by the experiences of the pandemic, two elements arise as especially relevant in moving toward the third scenario which is the most difficult of all of them. In the first place, getting behind the idea of *social contract*, as far as we are able to visualize the breakdown of a previous contract (that of social cohesion), at least in Europe, and in so far as we possess a framework to think and reflect about the conditions that any plan for living together should

have in the next decades. Secondly, to visualize the fundamental role that the alter-globalisation movement, as a social movement with a global character, has had, has and can have in the configuration of this contract.

4.2. Conditions for a New Social Contract

The idea of shining light on a "new social contract" is being spoken of by everyone. From the current Secretary-General of the United Nations (Antonio Guterres) to the flamboyant president of the European Commission (Ursula von der Leyen), passing through various academic critics, all have called out the need to rethink the political coordinates, both economic and social, that we as societies of the 21st century ought to give to ourselves, thus recognizing at least in the Western world the extinguishing of a model which right now is going up in flames.

As of now, the proposals for giving new meaning and content to that idea of contract are still vague. It is assumed that it should be multilevel (local, regional, global) and that in its configuration and unfolding there should be roles played by many different actors. Surely, the two frameworks that approximate most closely the idea of a global "social contract" dealing with nature are, first, the so-called New Green Deal (NGD) which has appeared above all in the United States where it has been given a political voice of consequence such as that of the young Democratic congresswoman Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, and which in other places has had other meanings (and also substantial differences in its content) as in the "ecological transition" in the case of Spain. A second framework is that of the Agenda 2030 which was approved by the United Nations in September, 2015 and which several months later (January, 2016) was launched with a total of seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which try to cover the principal problems of the world. Although with differences, both are established today as ongoing conversations with respect to what to do and how to do it.

The NGD is today open ground for a dispute between two versions of that ongoing necessary productive and ecological transition, one that is softer and another that is more ambitious and alternative. In the hands of reputable authors like the political advisor and essayist Jeremy Rifkin, the NGD is a proposal based on what he calls "distributive and social capitalism". This tries to encourage green infrastructures in which property is substituted by access to and the transaction of goods, by a constant flow of services. All of this would have a marginal cost that comes close to zero. In a similar vein we find the so-called *Green Pact* of the European Commission, that establishes a plan of action to encourage the efficient use of resources through passage to a clean economy and restoring biodiversity and reducing contamination.

The most ambitious proposal that comes from the hands of social movements and the more alternative left suggests an urgent economic transformation based around a series of strategic sectors. For example, these would be the transition of sources of energy and the decarbonization of the econo-

my, the rebuilding of food distribution systems inspired by agro-ecological principles, the reordering of transit and transportation systems, a process of returning to nature and rewilding, caregiving and social reproduction, along with the reorganization of the educational and fiscal systems.[49]

If the NGD has based its suggestions on the necessity for a transition of the systems of production and the economy, the Agenda 2030 and its seventeen SDG are the substitute for the Agenda for the Millennium (MDG) which was in force between 2000 and 2015 with an important difference. While the MDG was a proposal almost by the North for the South, fundamentally based on the eradication of poverty and with little participation of social and political actors from the global South, the SDG now recognizes a series of transnational problems that affect any latitude, and in whose elaboration, there were voices taken much more into account from the countries, NGOs, enterprises or social movements from different places around the globe. The SDG contemplates the use of hundreds of measures and indicators in order to evaluate progress in the different sectors and touch on the majority of the suggested global problems. Their unfolding and systemization since the time that they were initiated has been notable, even if they are enormously dependent on the available resources and the will and commitment of the principal state and non-state actors, in a context – we should not forget – of ecological backward steps.

At root, these two frameworks mean that the dead-end street is not really that and that there are proposals that are open or already in progress, which are more or less ambitious and are more or less capable of changing things in the medium or long term. Be that as it may, in the configuration of that social contract we ought not forget that the three problems that confront us globally have to do with those three crises to which we had made reference: the social, the political and the ecological. Thus, inequality, erosion of democracy and ecocide are the pillars of that problematic transnational reality which it is necessary to transform. This leads, therefore, to three conditions that every social contract ought to include: the distribution of wealth and caregiving, the democratic and political control of the financial sectors, and the determination of some parameters that establish a new relationship with the planet. Both the most ambitious version of the NGD and the SDG offer us relevant ideas to continue thinking about from local, regional and global points of view. They are the articulation of that political, social and economic future toward which we should be heading.

4.3. Reconnecting with the Alter-globalism

The principal global actors, from the G20, to the United Nations, passing through the World Economic Forum that meets annually in the city of Davos, Switzerland, are fully aware of the problems that we have analyzed. They are aware because their own informational releases suggest the same uneasiness and uncertainties, even though they offer substantially different responses due to their own vision and

interest. The United Nations appeals to a greater multilateralism and international cooperation (today it is worryingly more sterile given the scope of the problems) and the G20 insists on economic growth as the basis for all social and economic recovery. Davos maintains a mercantilist strategy that places people and common goods at the service of the market, in a sort of sensitized neoliberalism (for what it means for the actors of that global mercantilism) with its problems and, above all, with the repercussions from those problems (protests, political instability, populism, etc.) but it is incapable of perceiving its *modus operandi* as an essential part of the problem.

In that conversation among global actors, social movements are fundamental, as they have been in any process of change and social transformation throughout history. In this sense, the end of the decade of the 90s saw come to light a social movement of a global character that fought directly the effects of neoliberal globalization and embraced the idea that, faced with the mantra of "There is no alternative", it was up to them to insist on the necessity that "Another world is possible". The alter-globalization articulated afterward in the World Social Forum was a fundamental actor in its first phases when it was counterpoised to the neoliberal "common sense". With the passing of the years, the internal divisions based on differing visions. In the midst of a boundless and convulsive context, the alter-globalization movement has gradually lost the strength and capacity to be seen as that political ideology capable of being a true counterweight to the current hegemonic system.

Nevertheless, the alter-globalizationsocial movements have helped to awaken a much more critical social consciousness which has been germinating in small (and not so small) social initiatives in one or another part of the world. There exists today a soil, smeared with social unrest and precariousness, that allows one to think that the alter-globalization continues to be a potentially significant actor in the articulation of proposals. At the same time, a new wave of protests, sponsored by feminist, antiracist and ecological movements brings into focus the existence of a very young generation that experiences precariousness, exclusion and uncertainty in their own lives and who are becoming political and organizing around the current conjunction of multiple crises. The classical tension between institutions and social movements is more important today than ever. To shed light on a new way to organize ourselves politically and socially needs an alter-globalism that reconnects its various participants and protests, and which pushes toward a version of ambitious and truly transformative change. It would thus prove valid what was said by the French activist and politician Daniel Cohn Bendit, "In order to have successful reformers it is necessary to have frustrated revolutionaries." The fact is that social movements are not only fundamental to the articulation of a determined agenda and in their ability to pressure the political world to take audacious decisions. Their activity, both historically and today, can be crucial in the configuration of a culture of sobriety and caregiving that puts at the center the idea of the communal.

5. CONCLUSIONS

"We don't want to return to normality because normality is the problem", screamed out a wall in one of the principal cities of Spain. Or, said another way, how much inequality, precariousness and lack of life planning for the future does our democracy support? How much hyper-consumerism does our planet tolerate? What political, social and economic cost is there for not doing anything? What cost is there to getting to work?

The principal challenge that we have in front of us is that of pushing bold political decisions which unfortunately tend toward being short term as a way of life, as well as that of converting fear and unrest into a transforming and dream-filled collective project. The pandemic has produced an enormous shock at various levels but it has left an important value added which we should not renounce: resiliency, the capacity to adapt ourselves to the unexpected starting with some determined previous conditions. The crisis also opens the window to that "moment of clarity" when we take on social and political consciousness in order to undertake all of the changes that we need, changes that also depend on an urgent transition from the "I" to the "us", in a world, as we have insisted, that is profoundly interdependent and eco-dependent.

The pandemic shock brings to the fore what the Senegalese philosopher Felwine Sarr said in an interview during the pandemic: "I am among those who think that things have to change. If things continue as they are, I don't know. But I can say what I desire and for what I will work. I will put my little bit of energy into my spaces in order for the world to change. The people who want the world to change should not stop only with wanting to want it. They should reflect on what actions should be taken for it to succeed. We have all of the elements to take an action, and the great lesson to extract is that this is a great moment to act so that the world changes.[50]

NOTES

1. This notebook was conceived out of an invitation to participate in two virtual sessions which were organized in the midst of the confinement by the pastoral section of the Fundacio Blanquema (May, 2020) and by the Passatge Centre of the Institucion Teresiana in Barcelona (June, 2020) in order to analyze the impact, the challenges and the elements at the root of the pandemic. Both fora were of immense usefulness in order to organize ideas, share areas of discomfort and to shed light on some hopes as a group.
2. "El Papa Francisco imparte una bendición 'Urbi et Orbi' extraordinaria en una plaza de San Pedro vacía. 'Estamos todos en la misma barca.' [Pope Francis imparts an extraordinary blessing 'Urbi et Orbi' in an empty St. Peter's Square". "We are all in the same boat,]" *El Mundo*, March 27, 2020.
3. Krastev, Ivan, "¿Ya es mañana? Como la pandemia cambiará el mundo. [Is it already tomorrow? How the pandemic will change the world.]" Debate (Barcelona, 2020) p. 10.
4. Innerarity, Daniel, *Pandemocracia. Una filosofía de la crisis del coronavirus*. [*Pandemocracy: A Philosophy of the Coronavirus crisis*.] Galaxia Gutenberg (Barcelona, 2020), p. 25.
5. "The pandemic increases the gap between the sexes and will push 47 million more women into extreme poverty in 2021, according to the UN." Eldiario.es, September 2, 2020.
6. See the "Prologue" by Yayo Herrera in Padilla, Javier and Gullón, Pedro, *Epidemiocracia. Nadie está a salvo si no estamos todos a salvo.* [*Epidemocracy: No one is rescued if we are not all rescued*.] Capitan Swing (Madrid, 2020), p. 10.
7. Interview with Judith Butler. "Sólo reconocemos ciertas vidas como humanas y reales. [We only recognize certain lives as human and real.]" *El Mundo*, June 6, 2020.
8. Innerarity, Daniel, *op. cit.,* p. 118.
9. Garcés, Marina, *Nueva ilustración radical*. [*New Radical Enlightenment*.] Cuadernos Anagrama (Barcelona, 2017).
10. "Prologue" of Yayo Herrero, in Padilla, Javier and Gullón, Pedro, *op. cit*., p. 11.
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12. "Prologue" of Yayo Herrero, in Padilla, Javier and Gullón, Pedro, *op. cit*., p. 8.
13. Padilla, Javier and Gullón, Pedro, *Epidemiocracia. Nadie está a salvo si no estamos todos a salvo*. [*Epidemocracy: No one is rescued if we are not all rescued*.] Capitan Swing (Madrid, 2020), p. 81.
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15. Innerarity, Daniel, *op. cit.,* p. 42.
16. "Estamos en un estado de divorcio entre el poder y la política. [We are in a state of divorce between power and politics.]" *ElDiario.es*, February 14, 2014.
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19. Sanahuja, Jose Antonio, "Posglobalización y ascenso de la extrema derecha: crisis de hegemonía y riesgos sistémicos. [Post-globalization and the rise of the extreme right: crisis of hegemony and systemic risks]" in Mesa, Manuela (ed.), *Seguridad internacional y democracia: guerras, militarización y fronteras*. CEIPAZ/Fundacion Cultura de Paz (Madrid, 2017), *Anuario* 2016-2017, pp. 41-78,
20. Guilluy, Christophe*, No Society. El fin de la clase media occidental. [No Society: The End*

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21. Standing, Guy, *El precariado. Una nueva clase social*. [*The Precarious. A New Social Class*.] Pasado y Presente (Madrid, 2013).
22. Fraser, Nancy, "Las contradicciones del capital y de los cuidados. [The Contradiction of Capital and Caregivers.]" Contexto y accion (2020).
23. Latour, Bruno, "¿Estamos en un ensayo general? [Are we at a general rehearsal?]", Climaterra.org (2020).
24. "Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis on the care of our common home." #194
25. Fraser, Nancy, *op. cit*.
26. Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, #111
27. The concept of crossroads or critical juncture refers to situations of uncertainty in which the decisions of important actors are causally decisive in choosing a path toward institutional development over other possible paths.
28. This is shown by the principal indicators as described in the communications media and in centers of investigation such as *The Economist* or Freedom House.
29. "Las 26 personas más ricas del mundo tienen la misma riqueza que los 3.800 millones de personas más pobres. [The 26 richest people in the world have the same amount of wealth as the 3.8 billion poorest people.]" *ABC*, January 21, 2019.
30. Krastev, Ivan, *op. cit*., p. 87.
31. "Coronavirus, 'Nature is sending us a message', says UN environment chief", *The Guardian*, March 27, 2020.
32. Mujica, Pepe, "Una advertencia a los sapiens. [A word to the sapiens]", *El Pais*, May, 2020.
33. Innerarity, Daniel, *op. cit.,* p. 35.
34. Padilla, Javier and Gullón, Pedro, *op. cit.,* p. 33.
35. Interview with Henry Giroux, "El virus pone de manifiesto la quiebra del proyecto ideológico del neoliberalismo. [The virus brings to the forefront the breakdown of the ideological ideal of neoliberalism]". *La Marea*, May 20, 2020.
36. "Macron ordena el cierre de guarderías, colegios y universidades 'hasta nueva orden'. [Macron orders the closing of childhood education facilities, high schools and universities 'until further order']", *El Pais*, March 13, 2020.
37. The "ecological footprint" measures the land mass necessary (calculated in hectares) in order to produce the resources consumed by one inhabitant, one activity, country, city or region, etc., as well as that necessary to absorb the waste which is generated, independently of where these areas are located.
38. Interview with Marina Garces, "El control social será uno de los grandes ganadores de la pandemia. [Social control will be one of the great winners of the pandemic.]" *La Marea*, April 3, 2020.
39. Harari, Yuval Noah, Homo Deus. Breve historia del mañana. [*God-Man: A Brief History of Tomorrow*.] Debate (Madrid, 2016).
40. Esquirol, Josep Maria*, La resistencia íntima. Ensayo de una filosofía de la proximidad. [Intimate Resistance: An Essay on the Philosophy of Proximity].* El Acantillado (Madrid, 2015).
41. Interview with Judith Butler, "Ninguno de nosotros reparará el mundo solo. [None of us will repair the world by ourselves]". *Diari Ara*, June 8, 2020.
42. Krastev, Ivan*, op. cit.,* p. 55.
43. In general terms, in international relations the idea of "securitization" makes reference to how a social or political phenomenon (migration, etc.) ends up by being construed in discourse as a "threat". This discursive construction, apart from the language, legitimizes and unlooses the beginning of strategies and "exceptional" methods which respond to this "threat" with military force or traditional methods of security.
44. Agamben, Giorgio, "La invención de una pandemia. [The invention of an epidemic]". *Quodlibet* (2020).
45. Garcés, Blanca, "La frontera descarada. [The uncontrolled border]", *Diari Ara*, August 21, 2020.
46. Bassets, Marc, "Un virus sin fronteras que reactiva el poder del Estado. [A virus without borders that reactivates the power of the State]", *El Pais*, March, 22, 2020.
47. Žižek, Slavoj, *Pandemia. La COVID-19 estremece al mundo*. [*Pandemic. COVID-19 shakes the world*.] Nuevos Cuadernos de Anagrama (Barcelona, 2020), p. 135.

48. Colloquium with Amador Fernández-Savater, philosopher and writer, “Habitar y gobernar la incertidumbre. Reflexionar en común en tiempos confusos. [To inhabit and govern uncertainty. Communal reflection in confused times.]” Espacio La Atenea, Madrid, July 15, 2020.
49. See “New Green Deal: solucionar problemas y problematizar soluciones [solving problems and making problems of solutions.]” ElDiario.es, July 15, 2019.
50. Interview with Felwine Sarr, “A qui encara no havia apres a estar amb si mateix, aquesta crisi l’hi ha obligat”, Vilaweb.cat, May 5, 2020.

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N. 179
March 2021

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