

A microscopic image showing numerous coronavirus particles. The particles are spherical with a distinct outer layer and a core, and are covered in characteristic spike-like projections. The background is a dark, reddish-brown color, and the particles are illuminated from the side, creating a 3D effect.

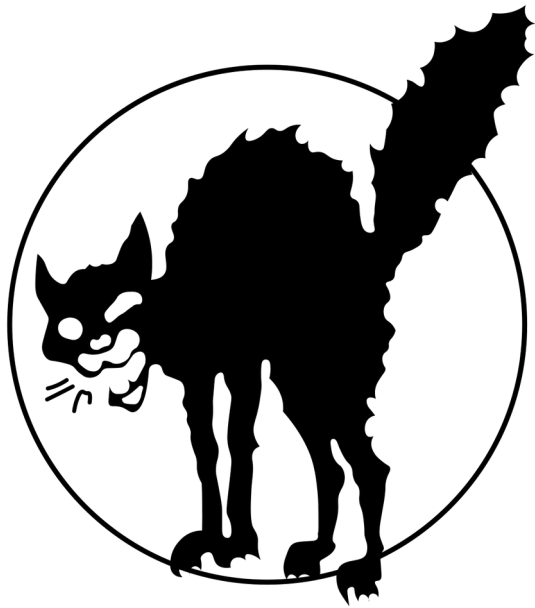
Coronavirus & Anarchism pandemic's anthology

Gathered, edited and printed by
AGA - Anarchistische Groep Amsterdam
ACAA - Anti-Capitalist Action Amsterdam

Contents

Foreword by AGA	3
Coronavirus and confinement in other latitudes by Todo Por Hacer	4
Reactions on the coronavirus and the community response in neighborhoods by Emma	6
Chronically ill and mental health patients, the forgotten risk groups in the covid crisis by Ana Castro	8
What does Covid have to do with Biodiversity? by Todo Por Hacer	13
CoronaVirus and riots in The Netherlands by Peter Gelderloos	16
Reactions on Covid -19: it's not the virus that is killing us, it's capitalism by GAF	17
Against the Coronavirus and the Opportunism of the State	21
An Anarchist Response to Ebola : Visions and Questions Part Two: Envisioning an Anarchist Alternative by Carwil Bjork-James with Chuck Munson	28
Clarifications by Giorgio Agamben	33
Caring geographies : The COVID -19 interregnum and a return to mutual aid by Simon Springer	37
COVID-19: Between society and state by Maria Rachmaninova	40
Debunking the arguments for vaccine apartheid by Cory Doctorow	45
Corona van onderop samen te lijf by Peter Storm	48
After the Pandemic, We Can't Go Back to Sleep by David Graeber	53

Foreword by AGA



definition of what should BE normal needs to be thought through thoroughly and radically. With so many lives jeopardized by the current state of the world, the most important, overarching message in these texts, is to maintain solidarity. So as these eclectic texts join together in a unified voice to renounce Capitalism and State Control we too should read and share, spread the word and seek out our own forms of solidarity! We hope you enjoy these texts, it may often make you feel sick to your stomach but within these texts and your own critical mind lies the remedy, so please come join us in creating the cure!

The following collection attempts to gather as many pieces regarding Anarchist takes on Corona as possible. It is a collaboration that was not intended as such. Each piece presented was independently published and only now are they meant to be read as a whole. For this reason there will be many, many topics and opinions presented throughout and it is important that you keep an open and critical mind. Within you will find testimonies of people suffering and actively working to support others during Covid, a plethora of criticism against Capitalism, geopolitical overviews of a multitude of continents and countries both in how they are impacted as well as how they failed to prepare themselves against a worldwide pandemic.

An emphasis in some texts will be on the need to prevent future pandemics as well as the lack of preparation to the one we are all living through, or on how our rights are being reserved as future privileges that many had never had access to in the first place, or how even when this is 'over' we should still ask the question 'are we going back to normal?' to which our

Coronavirus and confinement in other latitudes by Todo Por Hacer



A look at the peripheries of capitalism, May 2020

This international pandemic that we are suffering in the year 2020 seems to accelerate the end of neoliberal globalization according to some thinkers, but, at least in the so-called first world, this future scenario seems quite improbable. Precarious health systems or the absence of social shock plans augur a minimal questioning of the capitalist system, but it does not collapse easily when it has made crises its strong point. The times of shock came early, we should have done our homework better before reaching this scenario, with robust social and political organizations to face neoconservative and nationalist sectors.

These turbulent times of change of leadership among the masters of the world are a dangerous glimpse of authoritarianism. International social movements must combat these tendencies if we do not want to be dragged into a pit of vulnerability and even more extreme poverty. Transformative social action requires a strong social agenda, integrating debates that concern ordinary people, and represented themselves, fostering collective autonomy and self-organization. While Francis Fukuyama published in 1989 an essay on the end of

history, among others of the era of class struggles and revolutions, history should be rescued and the engine that neoliberalism wants to turn off should be reactivated.

In other latitudes of this capitalism that we suffer, the social consequences and in the basic economy of the communities is being devastating. The labor experience in some geographies has been the same for decades, neoliberal extractivism has left the social body of many rural and urban families completely naked. Those who sustain life are evidently the workers, those who sow the land, those who guarantee basic care, health care and food. The social system can function perfectly well without intermediaries, speculators, or financiers; without those rulers who give moralistic speeches, when in some regions the recommended social distance in the current emergency is a privilege.

Latin America resists and insists

In Latin America, with a strong presence of social movements, these are acting in the first line of containment of the pandemic, in the face of the disaster of informal jobs due to social isolation measures. Community movements are providing minimum levels of food, identifying people who are sick or in need of care, and protecting vulnerable sectors of the population. These networks are sustaining solidarity ties and pointing the finger at the States as responsible for abandoning the needs of the popular classes. For example, in the Zapatista territories they called not to lose human contact, but to temporarily change the ways of knowing each other as brothers and sisters.

While in the U.S. they have the armed extreme right generating fear in the midst of a health emergency, in other American countries they have the narco, which fulfills the same social function. The wave of popular revolts in which Latin America has been immersed since last year will surely continue after overcoming the current health emergency, since the social and political reasons for these mobilizations have

been better legitimized and exposed as an unpostponable necessity. In Brazil, social fragmentation is absolute, with the presidential figure of Bolsonaro de facto displaced by military commanders who are making political decisions in quarantine. In addition, there have been recent confirmed cases of the coronavirus reaching Amazonian indigenous communities, previously plagued by poverty and social exclusion. This is caused not by biological factors in these social groups, but by the conditions of inequality to which they are forced in many respects by aggressive state policies in their territories.

Africa and Asia, the experience of living together in a continuous pandemic in the face of inequality

In Africa, the pandemic is spreading timidly for many reasons also of unequal social explanation. First of all, the health systems for the detection of diseases are limited and inefficient, despite being the continent that constantly experiences more epidemics due to the extractivism of the first world. This says a lot about how narratives are written from the center and not the peripheries, since this pandemic is being picked up as an international event that will remain in the official history of the world because it affects the exemplary citizens of the northern hemisphere. The African countries with the highest number of cases are those that bathe the Mediterranean coasts, which are the tourist and financial center of neo-colonialist Europe. At the other end of the scale, South Africa, also the apex of first world business, is the country with the highest number of contagions on the continent, and has already experienced episodes of forced eviction of markets by the police to disinfect, shortages and revolts by social groups that have appropriated food to feed themselves.

Asia carries the worldwide stigma of having been singled out as the origin and spread of the virus, although it is true that the first xenophobic outbursts of this pandemic have been overcome by other discourse trends. It is

no less relevant that, as in other world latitudes, social communities in Asia suffer a great risk of vulnerability. The Middle East is plagued by refugee camps, displaced populations and criminally blockaded territories such as Palestine, where hygienic conditions are deplorable due to the premeditated actions of authoritarian governments in the region. India points to a worrying expansion of the epidemic also in the midst of deep processes of social mobilization; an immense and overpopulated country where the existence of millions of people with enormously precarious livelihoods and a huge loss of daily jobs can kill more than the coronavirus itself.

A future of international mobilizations and widening the gap in the Wall

This international emergency is defining more clearly the contours of the social and economic debacle of capitalism; the class gap is widening in the retaining wall that are the various political regimes in each world geography. The improvised methods of the system to save the financial economy together with the strategy that the workers are the ones who accept to pay again this crisis, opens transforming possibilities that overcome the authoritarian tendency. These changes will develop differently in those regions where the social struggle and the protagonism of the peoples can be linked to emancipation projects. New situations open in the gap in the wall, which deserve alternative social entities, strengthened municipal economy and an organization of our lives with a communitarian perspective.

Coronavirus and confinement in other latitudes was originally published on <https://www.todoporhacer.org/coronavirus-otras-latitudes/> by Todo Por Hacer

Reflections on the coronavirus and the community response in neighborhoods by Emma



In many cities and urban centers mutual support groups and proximity networks have arisen (semi)spontaneously to help each other, originally so that when neighbors at risk infected need an errand, those of us who live around can help them, although in certain neighborhoods this first intention has been overwhelmed by hundreds of desperate requests for food and basic products from families without resources.

Many of these networks have been born from the initiative of educators and social activists working in these neighborhoods, and quickly the fuse has caught fire and hundreds of people have joined together to lend a hand when needed. The fact that the mutual support networks are born out of professionals in the social sector is not a cause for concern. The root problem is that community networks have been institutionalized for many years.

Solidarity is a natural reaction to living in community, but it must be nurtured, cared for and pampered. It is nourished by ties, pre-existing networks, neighborhood collectives, and by doing politics in the neighborhood and living in the neighborhood. It has existed in many neighborhoods for decades and has been absorbed by the welfare state. They have put it in our heads that problems have to be individual and that if you are precarious it is because you

are not doing enough. Capitalism has reinforced this discourse which has generated shame, guilt and a certain suspicion in the person next door. The State has deactivated us and has made us believe that our problems have to remain individual, that the more indoors the better. Capitalism tells us that we have to be self-sufficient, and that if you are not, your neighbor should not find out. That the answer is in a window that will assess what we deserve and what we do not. It is obvious that we expect an answer from the welfare state, but why do we give it the organization of our lives, leaving the neighborhood as mere recipients of welfare? It can be seen in the way people ask for help in the support groups that have sprung up around confinement, with desperate messages and listing why they deserve to be helped even more than the other.

The social professionals whose agendas include "making community" are being the driving force behind platforms that were having trouble getting started. They have tools, predisposition, desire and initiative, and part of their job is to know the neighborhood to the millimeter.

All this time we have been nourished by welfare and not by emancipation and the fundamental rights of people. I do not doubt the importance of the work of the dynamizers and educators, much less doubt their good intentions, we have very valid tools and initiatives, we organize ourselves efficiently and even perform tasks that many people would not want to assume for free, but I also know firsthand how difficult it is to let go of the tool to hand it over to the community, because they will no longer need us. That may be a pending task for those of us who accompany in the social area because being there for many people is important, but without annulling. Only if we leave space can people access the roles that society has denied them.

It is dangerous to professionalize mutual support. And it is harmful when it comes to building networks that can last, since hierarchy is the main enemy of mutual support and we

also depend on subsidies and we are often produces real change." But such change need ephemeral. Why not give things a chance to not necessarily be for the better. The great last? Wouldn't it be nice if these professions reactionary movements also feed on the fear of were to fade away? We have to manage to self- manage the networks, if not now, then when all this is over. The 15M taught us that it is possible, that we know and can create horizontal ways of doing things, outside the institutions, and that it is essential to do so if we want to build a new world.

It is necessary that the voice in the neighborhood belongs to its neighbors. No one should feel judged for asking for help or receiving it. We have hardly any non-assistance alternatives to the aid provided by Caritas, the Red Cross, Social Services or the food bank. We need a solidarity pantry in each neighborhood, as they have been doing for years in Tetuán and Vallecas. And sometimes one is not enough, and even less in crisis situations like the current one where, for example in Entrevías, thousands of people have lost their precarious jobs in homes or hospitality or subsist on B economies and can not go out to the street to look for a living, and they barely survive with the benefits and resources of Social Services overflowing, which refer their cases to small neighborhood networks to do their job.

But, if we anarchists have not been creating networks in our neighborhoods, have we been too focused on other projects? Is it that we are so few that we have not been able or known how to create bonds of proximity? I don't have the answer, I wish I did. As Naomi Klein said a few days ago, we are in a better position in this crisis than in 2008. We have the remnants of past networking experiences, and we know how organizing with neighbors with different ideas works. We already know how to work collectively and from below, without leaders of any stripe. In 2011, we weren't able to bring our radical alternatives to how this system works to the table. Will we know how to do it now?

Quoting another U.S. politician, Klein commented that "only a crisis, current or past,

such events. Knowing how to organize ourselves and make propaganda by the fact of organizing ourselves outside of officialdom is a weapon against oppression.

And this urgent need to organize has caught us unawares. What were we waiting for? Now more than ever we have to offer a real alternative to this capitalist system, where the economic interests of big business are more important than the welfare of the workers. Where money is more powerful than the health of children and the elderly.

We have to make our cry loud and reactivate our struggles against prisons, CIEs, discrimination against different groups, the precariousness at the service of a few, etc.. Our voice and actions can create links that allow us to deconstruct in order to build other ways of seeing and doing, integrating the differences.

We do not need, nor do we want, corporations to tell us how to create ties and how to organize ourselves. We want and need horizontal and secure networks. But in a context of crisis like the current one, making decisions and creating collective proposals becomes complicated. We must arm ourselves with courage, patience, perseverance and empathy. Now more than ever, the neighborhood is ours.

Reflections on the coronavirus and the community response in neighborhoods by Emma.

Chronically ill and mental health patients, the forgotten risk groups in the covid19 crisis by Ana Castro



All their appointments and treatments have been cancelled in the public health system and mental health care has been minimized exclusively to very seriously ill patients.

They are there, locked up in their homes, because they are a risk group for covid19 infection and nobody sees them. They do not go out to do the shopping out of fear or only in case of urgent need. Where they do go as parishioners is to the pharmacies, which provide them with the medicines that their bodies and minds need to live. No one has provided them with means such as masks, like most of the population. In fact, nobody saw them before this whole alarming situation (in all senses). And they are part of the groups at risk, with multiple previous pathologies and vulnerable to the situation of uncertainty in which we find ourselves.

One might think that the chronically ill or mentally ill who, because of their illness, spend a lot of time at home could be used to and have an advantage when facing this home confinement dictated by royal decree, which is

becoming more and more restrictive to mobility, according to the latest appearances of Pedro Sanchez, President of the Government, in recent days. But no. It has only brought them the cancellation of all their medical appointments and treatments in an indeterminate manner, a worsening of their condition, both physical on some occasions, and psychological in all of them, in the case of the eight patients with chronic pain and mental health interviewed during the making of this report. In fact, this is also attested to by the three healthcare professionals specializing in this area who were contacted.

And patients with chronic pain and mental health are not few in Spain precisely, as can be verified by reviewing the latest National Health Survey of 2017 -published in June 2018-, prepared by the Ministry of Health and also available to the citizen on the website of the National Statistics Institute (INE), or as shown by the Study the Pain Observatory, which determines that 17% of the Spanish population suffers chronic pain, with special incidence in women. As regards mental health, one out of every ten people over 15 years of age suffers from some problem of this type and, once again, women report it more frequently than men (14.1% compared to 7.2%).

Among all the prevalent disorders in adults that affect these groups are, among others, chronic back pain (lumbar and cervical), migraines, depression, chronic anxiety, asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. To these we must often add the rare diseases to which FEDER aims to give voice, such as endometriosis, which affects one in ten women, and fibromyalgia, a chronic condition still unknown and suffered mainly by women.

Although most of the patients with chronic pathologies have been contacted by telephone to inform them of the cancellation of their appointments and treatments, as in the case of a 40-year-old patient with a central nervous system pathology, treated at the Hospital de La

Paz (Madrid), no written communication of any kind has been sent by the hospital, except to one of the eight patients interviewed. Only in the case of a patient with chronic pelvic pain and urinary and digestive disorders, depression, chronic anxiety and a conversion syndrome, in addition to receiving the news by telephone, did she receive the following communication from the Fundación Jiménez Díaz on March 18 by email: "Given the exceptional measures due to the current health alert, and following instructions from the Ministry of Health, all non-urgent scheduled activity of outpatient consultations, diagnostic tests, day hospitalization, scheduled admissions and non-preferential surgical interventions is suspended. If your consultation, at the physician's discretion, can be made through the Patient Portal, the hospital will contact you / Best regards. / Remember that through the patient portal (on your website or the App on your mobile) you can consult test results, reports and much more."

A. C. V. is confined to her home except for the obligatory visits to the pharmacy, as she is even more exposed to infections because she needs daily self-catheterization.

This casuistry is confirmed by Jara García, children's operating room nurse at the Doce de Octubre University Hospital, who indicates that "this, like the other hospitals in the public network of Madrid's region, has taken special measures, such as suspending consultations and non-urgent surgical interventions and restructuring staff to other services to meet current needs and avoid contagion". He comments that the guidelines, transmitted from the hospital management, have been changing and will continue to do so, and insists: "Chronic patients can rest assured that their needs will not be neglected. Only non-urgent appointments have been cancelled and the medications prescribed in the health card have been renewed automatically as a preventive measure, but pathology will never be neglected in preference to any other". He wants to leave this group with

a message of peace of mind, despite the fact that other services have had to be prioritized according to the emergency situation and for the protection and benefit of the patients themselves to reduce the chances of contagion.

Despite this, this more vulnerable group of patients has seen its anxiety skyrocket. The first of the aforementioned patients states that, although his pathology is stable at the moment and he can lead a semi-normal life, "anxiety is eating me up", and he sees that "this is going to be a roller coaster" and does not count on the possibility of going to a psychologist. His wife, also belonging to a risk group due to her respiratory conditions, "was fired from her job as soon as the quarantine was announced, and she is suffering constant anxiety". The second of the patients mentioned, A. C. V., from the Fundación Jiménez Díaz, can barely find the words. She is confined to her home except for the obligatory visits to the pharmacy, since she is even more exposed to infections because she needs daily self-catheterization. She has already been experiencing a worsening of her chronic pain, which continues in this line during this crisis, and she suffers an aggravation of her depressive and anxiolytic symptoms. She states that "most days I don't want to live... I just want tomorrow to come soon". I just want tomorrow to come soon. She also feels a lot of anger at being "trapped" in her "body, mind and, moreover, by royal decree" and finds it very difficult to eat, "to feed a body she does not recognize as her own".

L. R. S., a patient with an anxiety and panic disorder, has not even been contacted and already considers her appointment with the Social Security psychiatrist as lost. The exceptional circumstances we are living through have led to a worsening of her condition: "I have had several anxiety crises and, in general, my state of nervousness and anxiety has shot up. At my own risk I have decided to increase the adose of lorazepam because the symptoms have become very present and obvious". Fortunately, she attends a private consultation with a

psychologist who will attend her via Skype for the duration of her confinement - she specifies: "A service that is not available in the public health system" - and who can even call her on the phone if she feels unwell at any time. She adds: "I feel a lack of clarity. I don't quite understand the real danger of the virus. I feel a lot of confusion from the media and even more from politicians. It is as if we were in a movie. I feel overwhelmed between housework, family, care and work obligations, I feel that I don't get to everything and I miss my friends very much". She goes out as little as possible and without a mask, because she doesn't have one.

I fully understand the seriousness of the issue, but people with mental disorders and chronic illnesses are being completely neglected," says Gudrun.

J. S. V. has been living for five years with chronic pain caused by various foot and knee pathologies, which led to an adaptive depressive disorder and an anxiety disorder with episodes of hypochondria and agoraphobia. A resident of a rural area of Lugo, she has appointments scheduled in several units and they have been canceled for the time being. "My physical symptoms have not worsened and, with regard to the psychological ones, a few days ago I was reading a girl who said that her life did not change much with the quarantine, since due to her mental illness she was used to not leaving the house or socializing. She was surprised how what for her was her day to day life could affect others so much. It's a little bit the same for me (...). Many times I stopped going out with my friends because of the pain, and these days they are bringing concerts and all kinds of cultural events closer to those of us who stay at home. For many, the disease and pain is a constant quarantine". He counts on the possibility of attending private psychological consultations via Skype.

Gudrun Palomino Tirado, 21 years old and a resident of Cadiz, has been suffering from a mixed anxiety-depressive disorder for two

years. In her case, they had been delaying appointments with Mental Health for some time and have phoned her to do so once again. Again, she appeals, like other patients, to a worsening: "I have had several panic attacks, insomnia, my legs feel numb and I feel quite tired. I feel quite overwhelmed and tired". She does not have the possibility of seeing a psychiatrist or a psychologist because "the psychological staff who are providing their work online for free are overwhelmed, I cannot afford an appointment privately and the hospital does not attend me". She adds: "I completely understand the seriousness of the issue, but people with mental disorders and chronic illnesses are being completely left out. My mother has a rare disease and is practically in the same situation as me. The organization in mental health centers is being dire and we are being denied the psychiatric care we need. If it was already deficient before, now even more so."

Alicia Gómez Benito, who already in herself helps raise awareness about the importance of mental health from her project "Cuidando en Femenino" on Instagram, has depression and anxiety. "When I have anxiety crises, they include dizziness, vomiting and general body pain. During my forties I have had crying at some angry/sad moment, but I have not had a crisis as such," she comments and assures that her "head works better in moments of crisis than in normal life." As a social educator, she says she is "trained" to help in times of crisis, to which she adds her years of personal work in therapy. She insists on the need not only to denounce situations such as that of these groups, but also calls for the dissemination of more positive news "to help us gain peace of mind in these moments of panic".

There are certain types of pathologies (severe phobic anxieties, OCD, psychotic disorders, severe depressions, etc.) with which we are and will be especially attentive because it can affect them a lot and lead to a significant worsening.

I. D., a woman who suffers from various

pathologies, both physical and mental, the drastic reduction of services at the Mental Health Center, with the exception of emergencies and very acute severe cases, he comments that she has not yet received the summons notices and that no one has contacted her. She feels "stuck on an even longer waiting list". She, who had already seen her physical health deteriorate before her quarantine, confesses that she also has agoraphobia and "waiting rooms are one of the places where I have the worst time. Now I don't dare go to the health center and I keep my fingers crossed that my symptoms don't get worse. Although she can afford to attend private consultations with a psychologist via Skype and continues to count on this resource despite the state of alarm, her mental health has also worsened: "I have had to increase the dose of daily psychiatric medication, after spending several months reducing it, and, in that sense, I am very afraid. I am very scared. My anxiety levels, depression and my obsessive behaviors have skyrocketed over the last few days. I feel like all the work I've been doing over the past few months has been for nothing, that I've regressed to a point I didn't even know. I am very afraid of my body, of the saturation of the system, of something happening to me and not being able to take care of me. My life hasn't changed too much, because I was already isolated at home before. But not being able to see my partner, who was my fundamental support, and the situation of added risk and uncertainty generate a lot of discomfort. Having new symptoms and not knowing why, not being able to do anything, terrifies me".

Also a public health worker, Marina Carretero Gómez, a physician specializing in Clinical Psychology, reflects: "Attention in mental health services has been changing in recent weeks as the general health situation in relation to covid19 has been changing. Currently, the general indication is to attend and supervise the condition of patients by telephone, maintaining face-to-face activity only for emergencies. All mental health patients will be affected in their follow-up not only during this period of health crisis, but presumably afterwards. Given the foreseeable increase in demand for mental health care, it will be necessary to rethink the situation: if waiting lists and follow-ups are already worryingly long, the delay will be even more accentuated if the teams, especially clinical psychologists, are not reinforced. For many people, the current situation will be a traumatic experience in the face of which they will develop symptoms; a significant percentage will require specialized help. It is also possible that a percentage of people with mental disorders will have worsening symptoms and that many of the colleagues who are currently in the front line of intervention will need psychological assistance. This is another health problem that needs to be solved".

With regard to the medical group that these patients are questioning, a psychiatrist from the Hospital Clínico San Carlos (Madrid) interviewed, who prefers not to reveal his name, states that they work under daily guidelines and that they are giving appointments from May onwards, although "half of the colleagues are on leave due to positive or suspicion and there are fewer of us. It even costs to be focused and active, sleep and rest well." In fact, he has been informed that this week he is assigned as general practitioner to a covid19 patient ward. When asked about the impact on his patients of

For his part, Jesús Muñoz de Ana, an expert

psychologist in psychological care for people with chronic illnesses with a private in-person and online practice, continues to attend his patients "by videoconference, telephone and email, as closely as possible". "I notified each person I attended in consultation and gave them the option of continuing the accompaniment online or by telephone," she says, and draws attention to the vulnerability of this group: "The needs of people with chronic pain involve support network, both health and social (family, etc.), which can be affected by the current situation. It is possible that certain types of consultations may be delayed, which are currently difficult to carry out due to the risk of contagion. Staying at home so as not to spread the virus or in situations of isolation, it is more difficult to have family support, also not being able to attend support groups...". Muñoz de Ana, on a personal level, concludes that for him "it is also an encounter with my limits, my resources and my perspective on things. I feel committed to accompany them as best I can within the limits of what technology allows us".

Deprived of care and support unless they turn to private healthcare, all that is left for this type of patient is to try to get information from pharmacists. "There has been increased traffic from the public, people asking mostly for masks, gels, disinfectants, alcohols and gloves. At the beginning of this situation they did ask more about it. Right now the media has more power over opinion than the health workers. We health professionals simply limit ourselves to working," says Javier Viloría, a pharmacy graduate and practicing pharmacist, who has also seen his activity affected and has had to implement the greatest possible protective measures. This group operates under the guidelines of the Official College of Pharmacists of Madrid. Viloría says: "Of course I don't see patients normally, and chronic pain patients are a particularly vulnerable group because they are less treated. In addition, it seems that the coronavirus affects more people with previous pathologies, and chronic pain is a symptom that accompanies many of them. It is

an exceptional situation, pharmacies must reinvent themselves and pharmacists must make life easier for those infected who are at home with medication and for others to give them the best professional advice."

Chronically ill and mental health patients, the forgotten risk groups in the covid19 crisis was originally published on <https://www.elsaltodiario.com/coronavirus/enfermos-chronicos-pacientes-salud-mental-olvidados-tesis-covid-19> by Ana Castro

What does Covid have to do with Biodiversity? by Todo Por Hacer



Today the whole world is looking forward to the appearance of a vaccine for the Coronavirus and all hopes are pinned on a technical solution that will solve not only the problem of the disease, but all those associated with it. Billions have been invested in big pharma, vaccines that do not yet exist have been pre-purchased and no drastic containment measures are taken in the hope that the vaccine will arrive as soon as

possible. All so that the old normality returns, the economy recovers and we pretend that nothing has happened here.

This way of thinking and doing is very much of our times, derived from the paradigm of Modernity, where the sum of science and technology, techno-science, generates a horizon of hope in the face of any disaster, whatever its nature. It does not matter if there is an increase in extreme climatic phenomena, if inequality increases or if totalitarian forms of government gain weight. Science and technology will provide a solution sooner or later, we are told. In reality it is not a problem intrinsic to science or technology, the problem is the mantra of economic growth, the environmental and social destruction it causes and the pretension that all problems can be solved with new technologies. This idea the only thing that solves is the maintenance of the profit rates of the companies that today dominate the market, the big technology companies simplified under the acronym GAFAM (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft).

To prevent is to cure

Perhaps the popular wisdoms have a greater vision of the future and humanity than GAFAM. Or have we never heard the expression "prevention is better than cure"? A popular saying so simple but which carries intrinsic a paradigm completely alien to that of turbo-capitalism. Vaccines are a necessary and indispensable cure, but what if we were able to prevent situations like the current one? Is it really possible to prevent events of such magnitude? Of course it is, although with the inertia of the system we suffer from it becomes tremendously difficult.

In order to prevent, it is necessary to know and analyze the origin. Few times you will have read that the coronavirus is a disease of zoonotic origin, this means that it is of animal origin with the capacity to infect humans. Seventy percent of the newly discovered diseases are zoonotic

and 100% of those decreed as priority diseases by the WHO are zoonotic. This gives us a first indicator: the relationship between humans and non-human animals can lead to new and harmful diseases. How does this happen? Has it always happened?

Zoonotic diseases: the diseases that are already here

Zoonotic diseases are nothing new. Ebola, Zika or the Nile Virus are unfortunately well-known examples of their impact on human health. The origin of this type of diseases is in the contact between humans and non-humans, from a tick that was first in one and then in another being, to more direct contacts derived from the ingestion of wild animals. This reading brings us directly to the question of biodiversity and the advance of humans over non-urbanized territories. Biodiversity functions as a natural balance which, when disturbed, can have tragic consequences. Zoonotic diseases work as follows: there is a pathogen within a host species and there are reservoir species. Reservoir species are species that are host to the pathogen but without the pathogen posing a threat to their health. When contagion occurs to such a species, the chances of spreading the pathogen are reduced. This indicates that areas of higher diversity function as a natural barrier to protect against pathogens. The natural balance makes it difficult for these diseases to reach humans.

We break biodiversity

At the moment in which the human being advances in his process of deforestation and urbanization by wild lands, we are destroying that balance that is the biodiversity and increasing the probabilities that an unknown disease jumps to us. There are many basic examples that serve to exemplify this.

In the Gulf of Guinea, intensive fishing by large multinationals caused half of the fish biomass to disappear. Traditional fishermen lost their livelihoods and, with it, the community that lived and fed on them, as fish prices rose

drastically. In search of livelihoods, logging companies came in, deforestation began, and interaction with wild animals also began in the food supply. This is how HIV jumped to human beings.

Industrial monocultures, the destruction of traditional agro-livestock farming practices, forced migrations and, in short, environmental destruction by the hand of big capital have made possible the appearance of a multitude of hitherto unknown diseases with terrible consequences for human beings.

In addition, climate change accelerates this whole maelstrom of biodiversity loss and pathogen transmission. Stagnant waters increase the existence of certain mosquitoes in semi-urban areas that greatly facilitate the transmission of diseases and the breakage of these eco-systemic balances facilitates another great vector of infection, such as ticks. Faced with this, we find ourselves in the absurdity of blaming these bugs, when, as we have seen, the blame goes beyond this and is the result of human activity that destroys natural balances. The technocrats' solution would be to kill all ticks. This is how absurd this way of thinking is.

A system as vigorous as it is fragile.

While capitalism sells itself as "the best of all possible systems" it accelerates the destruction of the only habitable planet available to us. The Covid crisis has revealed what environmentalists have been warning for decades: that any excessively complex system carries a multitude of vulnerabilities that, in situations of severe stress, can lead to its collapse. And with it, we go with it. The international trade and business circuit allows problems to spread at a speed never seen before. International value chains generate a total loss of economic and political autonomy of the territories. We are seeing yet another example of how the existing and potential vulnerabilities of this way of life are greater and more dangerous than the benefits they offer us.

Today the vaccine is no more than a necessary stopgap to tackle this global pandemic. But the goal should be to prevent other pandemics from occurring. This requires a paradigm shift that is strictly incompatible with the paradigm that offers us technology as a solution to all our problems, without showing us the perverse side of it all.

In the Community of Madrid we have a very clear example of this clash of paradigms. While the health world was claiming to reinforce preventive measures by investing in primary care and trackers, the necro-neoliberal government of Isabel Diaz Ayuso has been dedicated to build a new pandemic hospital, while there are plants in public hospitals closed or has not taken control of private resources to make them available to the public.

A new paradigm

The timing of this crisis is no coincidence. We have been laying the groundwork for events like this to occur for decades. Under-investment in healthcare systems, dependence on foreign trade, increased tourism pressure and environmental destruction are not isolated and compartmentalized events. They are part of a global whole as we have seen. Health is not just a matter of nurses, doctors and scientists. At the beginning of the 20th century, one of the facts that drastically reduced diseases and infant mortality were the campaigns for personal hygiene, something as simple as hand washing. This holistic way of thinking is what is needed today more than ever. A new way of thinking that allows us to generate a paradigm that shows us a future that is not apocalyptic or a crappy version of Blade Runner. Recovering biodiversity, slowing down the pace of life, taking power away from the corporate world and investing in things that are not governed by commercial criteria and profit are some of the steps we must take so that, in the event of a new pandemic, we will be prepared.

What does Covid have to do with Biodiversity? was originally published on <https://www.todoporhacer.org/covid-biodiversidad/>

CoronaVirus and riots in The Netherlands by Peter Gelderloos



On the riots in the Netherlands, anarchist positions towards corona-riots, and giving ownership of social conflict to the far Right. Several days ago, far Right groups in the NL organized anti-lockdown protests, as has happened in other countries. Some of these led to clashes and property destruction. As conflicts increased in subsequent days, racialized and migrant youth rioted and looted in several major cities. When I wrote a message of support for the latter, a number of people responded in protest, evidently seeing migrant youth as either pawns of a xenophobic party or simply an irrelevant factor within a definitively right-wing phenomenon.

What is rarely mentioned is that racialized people in the NL, as elsewhere, have agency and have plenty of reasons to riot and loot. Left-wing accounts, though, tend to portray them as pawns and scapegoats. Link: <https://socialisme.nu/fascisten-organiseren->

[rellen-geven-migrantenjongeren-de-schuld](#) I haven't seen them mention, for example, the recent benefits scandal (toeslagenaffaire) in which the Dutch government and social services had been harassing and penalizing thousands of largely migrant or dual nationality families claiming benefits, certainly a major part of the racist context.

There is a historic problem with white radicals being fixated with countering the far Right rather than concerned with fighting alongside racialized people. In the former case, we get to be the heroes, in the latter we have to leave our comfort zones.

There is a serious problem with a politics that translates to "stay home", that erases multiracial riots because earlier protests were called by the far Right, that doesn't take to the streets as far Right politicians call for the army to be sent in against migrant rioters.

Our history shows us it is never a good idea to let the Right monopolize social conflict. Have we already forgotten Ukraine? That brings us to the issue of corona riots.

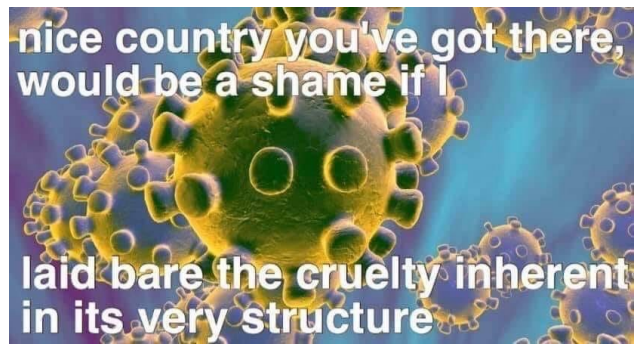
It is a serious problem if the Right is the only force mobilizing against the government handling of the pandemic. They will do so on the basis of harmful conspiracy theories. We must do so on the basis of mutual aid and a critique of the necropolitics of austerity, visibilizing that while the pandemic rages, people are still getting evicted, forced to work precarious and unsafe jobs, or simply left unemployed. If the Right starts mobilizing against lockdowns, we CANNOT surrender the field to them. We need to kick them off the streets and stand side by side with those who are fighting against precarity and racism, spreading our own critiques of how capitalism is leaving us to die or crafting lockdowns that are most onerous to poor and undocumented people.

Not long ago there was looting in Barcelona and other places that most anarchists did not support

because earlier protests had been called by the far Right. We gained nothing by staying away. We don't respond to the Right by ignoring them, but by deplatforming them & not allowing them to define the fault lines of social conflict. Certainly not by leaving the most precarious alone to face repression.

CoronaVirus and riots in The Netherlands
was originally published on <https://threadreaderapp.com/thread/1354544710732427266.html> by Peter Gelderloos

Reflections on Covid-19: it's not the virus that is killing us, it's capitalism by GAF



Over recent weeks, the business as usual that activists have been fighting against for decades has been abruptly suspended in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Although many expected such a crisis could occur around this time, what could not have been predicted is the form and magnitude of the upheaval. Not just governments, businesses and health-services, but

also activists and grassroots organisations – we have all been caught with our proverbial trousers down. In this short period of time we have experienced significant changes to our lives and daily routines. Some have been able to adapt quickly, immediately getting involved with setting up mutual aid initiatives around the country. Others have needed time to recover, reflect, and regroup.

It cannot be disputed that Covid-19 is serious, and that regularly washing hands with soap, wearing a mask, and physical distancing are necessary to limit the spread as much as possible. However, the narrative that the current state of emergency, partial social collapse, and high number of casualties are caused by the virus exclusively is wrong – our society was sick long before the pandemic. Additionally, the measures being implemented by our governments at this time are unnecessary, as they are unhelpful for combating the virus and safeguarding the public.

One thing that we can all agree on is that this crisis has so overtly exposed the flaws, weaknesses and contradictions within our current system that it is no longer possible to feign ignorance.

Capitalism doesn't work: at least not for the 99%. Capitalism is unnatural, exploitative, and only exists by the authoritarian rule of the state. The system is dependant on everything going smoothly at all times, and is regularly prone to failure. Even one month of pause in production can cause businesses to close, workers to be made redundant, people to lose their homes and the stock market to crash. Workplaces are run as private tyrannies, where all aspects of production are controlled from above for the purpose of extracting profit. Bosses have the unjustified power to command workers to continue generating profit, which now accelerates the spread of the pandemic. Such a system is in no way inevitable, and now is the time to discuss and promote better alternatives.

Universal free public healthcare is non-negotiable: but for it to actually work it needs to be properly funded. Many countries still do not have universal coverage, a fact which is proving disastrous for limiting the spread of the pandemic. It is disturbing, but perhaps unsurprising, that so many governments are willing to maintain a bastardised model of healthcare which prioritises the extraction of profit over actually providing healthcare, or to cut public healthcare spending to the bone, allowing under-resourced and under-staffed hospitals and clinics to become the norm. It is safe to say that in many countries, the majority of Covid-19 deaths will turn out to be preventable deaths directly caused by the systematic dismantling and privatisation of national healthcare systems by governments. Now is the time to fight for healthcare as a universal human right, and to make it a properly funded public good.

Housing is a basic human right: not a privilege for the deserving, an investment for the rich, or a commodity for Airbnb to turn into ad-hoc hotels of questionable legality. It is a travesty that governments protect unused empty houses owned by the rich while many of the poor live in unfit accommodation, or have no home at all. The government having to enforce physical distancing policies shows it is possible to house rough sleepers. It was always possible. It raises the question, after this is over, if we allow previously homeless people to be kicked back out into the streets, what does it expose about the hypocrisy and ruthlessness of the authorities? Furthermore, this crisis has made it glaringly obvious the rental system does not work. Landlords do not provide a material service, they exploit those without the income for a more stable living arrangement, unscrupulously benefit from the distorted housing market, and many are willing to throw their tenants into the street at the first sign of inability to pay rent. Will we be seeing a wave of evictions at the end of the epidemic when the government prohibition has been lifted? Now is the time to work towards dismantling the state

of the current rental and housing markets.

This system creates second class citizens: and when has no compunction about disposing of them when it is expedient to do so. Our society already treats the disabled, neuro-atypical, and those struggling with mental health as burdens rather than equal and valuable members, and the few rights they currently have were fought for with long struggles. Yet all it takes is one pandemic for the UK government to pass a bill amending the Care Act and the Mental Health Act, putting the well-being and rights of sick, disabled, mentally unwell and elderly people, as well as their carers, in serious danger. This government wants us to accept and condone their ableist and social-Darwinist worldview, now is the time to stand up and demand no one gets left behind.

Borders and the exclusivity of citizenship cause misery and suffering: as people are penalised for seeking salvation from war, poverty and natural disasters. Capitalism and imperialism go hand in hand, and the result of imperialism has been the creation of the vast, super-exploited Global South. Western states have imposed dehumanising immigration rules allowing them to incarcerate refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants, many of which are trying to escape conditions of war or extreme oppression caused by those same Western states. Even before Covid-19, camps like those of Moria in Lesvos were essentially hell on earth. Now they are death camps in the making, yet still the EU refuses to offer any alternative, and seems perfectly willing to not accept the mass deaths that will result. Here in the UK, even those with shaky immigration status who are lucky enough to not be in detention centres still have to contend with inadequate aid or support to keep themselves safe from the pandemic. Now, more than ever, is the time to stand together as sisters and brothers to demand freedom from the false tyranny of citizenship.

Prisons are inhumane: and we should look to

phasing them out as much as possible. Much of the crime in our society is a consequence of capitalism, and the terrible conditions it creates – without financial want, what motive would there be for theft? A society gets the crime it deserves, and the relations of domination, social exclusion, and mental health crises resulting from the conditions of capitalism mean we see a lot of it. Now, Covid-19 poses a great risk to those incarcerated by the state, most of whom need rehabilitation, community and personal support rather than punishment. Many of these people are particularly vulnerable, and viruses can spread rapidly through the confined spaces. In response we have seen the release of “low-risk” prisoners proving the arbitrariness of prison sentences. Now is the time to step up the campaigning against our overtly carceral system, to expose its shameful secrets and push for more humane viable alternatives.

Not everyone’s home is a sanctuary: for too many it is a place of violence, abuse or neglect. The covering up and downplaying of the reality of domestic violence and rape, just like the way abortions and reproductive freedom have been turned from a right into a shameful, and often illegal, act shows the systematic sidelining of feminist issues. Capitalism is an inherently patriarchal system, where the “man of the house” is awarded the right to “command” – and if he wants abuse – his “household” exchange for his subjugation to the system, aided and abetted by “tradition” and all often religion. Domestic violence services, just like youth centres, were decimated during the years of austerity, highlighting the state’s utter disregard for the issue. Now everyone is being requested to stay home, as if home means the same thing for everyone, and little to no thought seems to have been given to issues of sexual health as the government bungled and u-turned several times over access to home abortions during this period. Now is the time to shout even louder about domestic violence, child abuse and reproductive freedom, and make our demands that everyone is afforded autonomy over their own bodies as well as a home that can

be a sanctuary even stronger .

There is real merit to the idea of universal basic income: now more than ever, and not just because it helps people cope during periods of financial insecurity. Non-essential workers would be able stay at home and protect themselves during this crisis, rather than be forced to put themselves in danger by continuing to work out of necessity. By taking unpaid leave, they could instead devote their time towards doing all the things that are sorely needed during a crisis, which in most cases are unpaid voluntary tasks. Now is a good time to refine the idea of UBI and put it seriously on the table.

The whole idea of wages is a sham: along with any notion of meritocracy. The fact that wages do not reflect the difficulty or importance of a job has been placed quite clearly in the spotlight at the moment, since all the jobs deemed high-priority are some of the most poorly paid, devalued and disrespected. Now is the time to revive the discussions about wage-slavery, and how economic inequality is a harmful and unjustified social construct.

The money exists: proven by the large sums that have suddenly appeared to bail out businesses and the economy. Since Thatcher, public services have eroded, while people have been forced to survive on stagnating wages and foodwindling benefits, all because the government supposedly didn’t have enough money to do otherwise. The lie has now been revealed – money was never the issue – and now is the time to have our say in what should be economically prioritised in society.

We can halt the environmental destruction: if capitalist over-production comes to a stop. Just a brief pause in flying and industrial production has been enough to substantially reduce global emissions. Now is the time to really push the point and make demands for the restriction of flight travel and unnecessary industrial production.

The slide into authoritarianism and nationalism is an easy one: and is happening before our eyes. Under the guise of beating the pandemic, governments have been able to pass frightening restrictions on our freedom of movement and privacy. In many countries, the police have been given extended powers, including the right to interrogate or detain people going outside. The power for the state to surveil us, as well the tools they are able to use, has grown substantially. Additionally, nationalist rhetoric and racism has shaped many government's responses, from the further strengthening of borders, to the scapegoating of Chinese people. We can't let the immediate emergency of the situation distract us from the possible long term implications of the measures being passed now. We're still waiting for the 'temporary' security measures after 9/11 to be repealed. Now is the time to make sure the red flags are raised and the measures do not go unchallenged.

What we are currently experiencing is not simply a health crisis, it is a crisis of capitalism and a crisis of governments. Capitalism has been under an extended period of decay, and hopefully this pandemic will give us the tools we need to nail its coffin shut. States have been dramatically exposed for their failings and inadequacies, as well as for where their true allegiances lie. We stand at a precipice, and how we act now will have vast ramifications for decades to come.

If we don't resist, then we run the very real danger of allowing:

- Wealth inequality to become even more extreme and institutionalised
- The disposability of the poor and vulnerable to be normalised and entrenched
- The welfare state to be completely dismantled and everything to be privatised and commodified

- Borders to become even stronger and better policed as we end up living in walled nations that happily let people outside die
- Authoritarianism and restrictive state surveillance to become a normal accepted part of our lives as we willingly hand over our privacy and freedom
- Measures to be taken to give capitalism one last lease of life that will put the fight for climate justice significant steps back, and ultimately spell
- The end of life on earth as we know it

On the other hand, this is one of those crucial moments in history where if we fight back we stand to make a lot of gains. Governments have been forced to reluctantly give a number of concessions: rent holidays, eviction freezes, the housing of the homeless, financial aid to people left with no income or sick pay, release of prisoners and many more. Lets make sure these concessions not only become the new norm, but become the stepping stones towards demanding the creation of a more egalitarian, humane and functional society.

Similarly the numerous mutual aid groups that have sprung up all over the globe, inspired and taught by the mutual aid initiatives in response to natural disasters of the last decade, have shown that people can and will self-organised to help each other. These groups have set about providing what the state, both national government and local councils, have been unwilling and unable to provide, proving quite conclusively the redundancy, and often obstructiveness, of the state apparatus. Lets harness the experiences and relationships that are being created, nurture the spirit of self-governance so that it lives well beyond this current emergency, growing into something richer, broader and more permanent, and reminding people that we can do things for ourselves.

One big question we have been asking ourselves is in this new strange status quo is how do we

continue to fight? We are used to taking the protest to the street and acting in the real physical domain. We are used to meeting, organising and building communities in the flesh. How can we continue on in this period of ‘social distancing’ where we are all essentially under a ‘light’ house arrest and group gatherings are prohibited? Thankfully we live in a digital age, where it is possible to communicate over the internet and replace many physical real world things with their virtual counterparts. Yet this is all still very new to a lot of us, and there is a lot of experimenting and exploring to be done as we investigate the questions of what effective digital activism looks like and how do we maintain effective connections while in isolation. It is essential we do the work to find answers to these questions, stay active, and prepare for the time when we can take to the streets once again. We hope that you will join us both now in the virtual world, and later on back in the physical world, because now is the time to step things up.

Reflections on Covid-19: it’s not the virus that is killing us, it’s capitalism was originally published on <https://greenanticapitalist.org/reflections-on-covid-19-its-not-the-virus-that-is-killing-us-its-capitalism> by GAF

Against the Coronavirus and the Opportunism of the State

Anarchists in Italy Report on the Spread of the Virus and the Quarantine



From one side, our lives are threatened by a new virus; from the other side, our freedom is menaced by nationalists and authoritarians intent on using this opportunity to set new precedents for state intervention and control. If we accept this dichotomy—between life and freedom—we will continue paying the price long after this particular pandemic has passed. In fact, each is bound up in the other, dependent upon the other. In the following report, our comrades in Italy describe the conditions prevailing there, the causes of the escalating crisis, and the ways that the Italian government has taken advantage of the situation to consolidate power in ways that will only exacerbate future crises.

At this point, the strategy of the authorities is not aimed at protecting people from the virus so much as controlling the pace at which it spreads so that it doesn’t overwhelm their infrastructure. As in so many other aspects of our lives, crisis management is the order of the day. Our rulers don’t intend to preserve the lives of everyone affected by the virus—they already wrote off concern for the destitute long before this crisis began. Rather, they are determined to preserve

the current structure of society and their perceived legitimacy within it.

In this context, we have to be able to distinguish between two different disasters: the disaster of the virus itself and the disaster wrought by the ways that the existing order responds—and does not respond—to the pandemic. It will be a grave mistake to throw ourselves at the mercy of the existing power structures, blindly trusting that they exist to save us. On the contrary, when our rulers say “health,” they mean the health of the economy much more so than the health of our bodies. Case in point: the Federal Reserve just allocated \$1.5 trillion to prop up the stock market—\$500 billion for the banks—but most US citizens still can’t get tested for coronavirus.

Let’s be clear: though Trump and other nationalists worldwide intend to use this opportunity to impose new controls on our movements, this pandemic is not a consequence of globalization. Pandemics have always been global. The bubonic plague spread worldwide several hundred years ago. In introducing a ban on travel from Europe while continuing to try to preserve the health of the United States economy—rather than directing resources towards preserving the health of human beings within the US—Trump is giving us an explicit lesson in the ways that capitalism is fundamentally hazardous to our health.

Viruses don’t respect the invented borders of the state. This one is already inside the US, where health care is much less widely and evenly distributed than it is in most of Europe. All this time, as the virus spread, service industry workers have been forced to continue putting themselves at risk in order to pay their bills. To eliminate the pressures that coerce people into such dangerous decisions, we would have to do away with the system that creates such drastic inequality in the first place. The poor, the homeless, and others who live in unsanitary conditions or without access to decent health care are always the worst hit by any crisis—and the impact on them puts everyone else at greater

risk, spreading the contagion further and faster. Not even the wealthiest of the wealthy can isolate themselves completely from a virus like this, as illustrated by the circulation of the virus in the upper echelons of the Republican Party. In short—the prevailing order is not in anyone’s best interest, not even those who benefit from it most.

This is the problem with what Michel Foucault called biopower, in which the same structures that sustain our lives also constrain them. When these systems cease to sustain us, we find ourselves trapped, dependent on the very thing that is endangering us. On a global scale, industrially produced climate change has already made this situation very familiar. Some have even hypothesized that, by reducing pollution and workplace accidents, the industrial slowdown that the virus has brought about in China is saving lives as well as taking them.

Liberals and leftists are responding by criticizing the failures of Trump’s government, effectively demanding more government intervention and centralized control—which Trump, or his successors, will surely wield for their own benefit, not only in response to pandemics, but also in response to everything else they perceive as a threat.

Fundamentally, the problem is that we lack a discourse about health that is not premised on centralized control. Across the political spectrum, every metaphor we have for safety and health is predicated on the exclusion of difference (for example, borders, segregation, isolation, protection) rather than the aim of developing a positive relationship with difference (for example, extending health-care resources to all, including those outside the borders of the US).

We need a way of conceiving of well-being that understands bodily health, social ties, human dignity, and freedom as all being interconnected. We need a way of responding to crisis based in mutual aid—that doesn’t grant

even more power and legitimacy to tyrants.

Rather than placing blind faith in the state, we must focus on what we can do with our own agency, looking back to previous precedents for guidance. Let no one charge that anarchistic organizing is not “disciplined” or “coordinated” enough to address an issue like this. We have seen over and over that capitalist and state structures are at their most “disciplined” and “coordinated” precisely in the ways that they impose unnecessary crises on us—poverty, climate change, the prison-industrial complex. Anarchism, as we see it, is not a hypothetical blueprint for an alternate world, but the immediate necessity of acting outside and against the dictates of profit and authority in order to counteract their consequences. While the current models of “addressing the pandemic” that states are carrying out are based on top-down control that nevertheless fail to protect the most vulnerable, an anarchist approach would focus chiefly on shifting resources such as medical care toward all who require them, while empowering individuals and communities to be able to limit the amount of risk they choose to expose themselves to without tremendous negative consequences.

There are precedents for this. We recall Malatesta returning to Naples in 1884, despite a three-year prison term over his head, to treat a cholera epidemic in his hometown. Surely our antecedents have theorized about this and taken actions that we could learn from today. Just a few years ago, some anarchists set themselves the challenge of analyzing how to respond to the ebola outbreak from an anarchist perspective. We entreat you to think and write and talk about how to generate a discourse about health that distinguishes it from state control—and what sort of actions we can take together to help each other survive this situation while preserving our autonomy.

In the meantime, we present the following report from our comrades in northern Italy who have been living through this crisis a few weeks

longer than we in the United States have.

Pandemic Diary, Milan: Love in the Time of Corona

1918-1920: Already shaken by the First World War, the world faced a more insidious foe: Spanish flu, a catastrophic pandemic that infected 500 million people, killing as many as 50 million or more—twice the number of casualties as in the War.

2020: COVID-19, a new pandemic infection, is spreading all over the world. As of this writing, according to the World Health Organization, over 125,000 cases have been confirmed, with over 4,600 deaths. In Italy, there are 12,000 infections, with at least 827 deaths.

Here, we’ll focus on Italy, asking a couple of questions about how to face COVID-19. The first step is to refuse to take the corporate media narrative for granted and—above all—not to give in to the prescriptions and impositions from above, all of which are getting more and more oppressive.

We begin from the most obvious facts. This outbreak highlights the need for international solidarity and cooperation so that people can join forces to cope with the difficulties and achieve common goals. But in the current system—in which every nation takes advantage of others’ tragedies and every “crisis” paves the way for profiteering—that’s not possible.

However we approach the question, we arrive at the same conclusion: capitalism and imperialism point out the need for a radical shift from the current state of things.

But let’s step back and concentrate on Lombardy, going back to the day that the Italian government signed the first Decree attempting to control the spread of the infection.

Lombardy, February 16

On this day, the Italian government signed the first decree attempting to control the spread of

the infection.

Milan, 7 pm: The worry that all schools and gathering places will be closed spreads quickly, along with a panic that takes hold among people, creating pseudo-apocalyptic moments. Supermarkets are stormed as if we were on the brink of war, people buy huge quantities of breathing masks and hand sanitizer (thin paper masks have become a totem representing safety), we hear screams, we see people weeping, we experience mass panic.

Following the rumors about restrictions, Milan, the great Milan, the city that never stops, was paralyzed with fear. But it only took a few hours to return to liveliness. In fact, the morning after the announcement, what was stirring all over the city wasn't fear of the virus but fear of not being able to live the "Milano da bere." Bars and pubs were closed from 6 pm to 6 am—clearly, the viruses clock in to work at night like proletarians on graveyard shift. Restaurants were not—apparently, you get ill if you drink, but if you eat, the virus, on the contrary, respects you. At the same time, we saw the closure of all schools, universities, and other gathering places.

Beppe Sala, Mayor of Milan, wearing a supportive shirt. Because Milan doesn't stop...

Late February

A week passes and Milan, this provincial wannabe New York, doesn't stop. Likewise, the virus advances, causing further panic. There are more infections, more deaths—even if, granted, the victims include many older people suffering from existing cardiovascular diseases. Once again, everything is locked down—schools, cinemas, theaters, kissing and hugging—but not bars, restaurants, malls, or public transit. Meanwhile, Beppe Sala, the city mayor, tries to give strength to the poor Milanese afflicted by this appalling virus that preys by night and only if you meet for drinks. Employing his beloved social networks, he posts a video with the hashtag #MilanoNonSiFerma (Milano Doesn't

Stop).

Technically, the video is flawless—bird's-eye shots with bright colors, catchy tunes—yet it's as phony as a three dollar bill. No doubt about it, it has been promoted by the Unione dei Brand della Ristorazione Italiana (Union of Italian Catering Brands). Milan doesn't stop. But in this video, we don't really see Milan, the real Milan—the Milan I love not because it is the center of movida but because it is traversed by revolutionary shivers, even though they tried to bring her down through fascism and xenophobia, even though it has fallen asleep politically over the last twenty years. The video presented by Sala seems to step out of the 1980s when the advertisement for a very popular liqueur was broadcast: Amaro Ramazzotti, the liqueur of the "Milano da bere."

The real Milan isn't depicted in those images. The real Milan is the one expressed crudely but sincerely by Collective Zam in a video parroting the one of a Mayor that—within days—backs out of the statement he has asserted, resorting to the false narrative on the media; a false narrative where xenophobic class rhetoric is constantly and continuously served up, making this city living off precarious workers and outsiders that every day has to struggle against racism, patriarchy, gentrification, neglected suburbs and capitalism.

The virus isn't the heart of the emergency. The real emergency, patient zero of this "cosmopolitan" city, is the economic precarity that inflicts despair upon the workers who are forced to fight against the rising cost of living and exploitation that, in the last weeks, has occurred in the new form of "smart working," never used before in Italy and that, surely, will become next year's trend to further enslave through subcontracts and outsourcing. Many employers in Northern Italy's red zones are forcing their employees to take sick or administrative leave without taking into account that this will further destabilize an already precarious state system and, above all, hit all

those precarious workers who have to fight every day to put food on the table, who keep their heads above water by taking low-paid jobs, who endure awful work schedules in worksites without any sort of security measures. Just to give you an idea, from January 1 to February 6 this year, there have been 46 workplace deaths.

If we study the two videos, we notice that, not by chance, the media keep focusing responsibility for everything that happens on the individual, from work to the displacement of people and the movement of goods.

In short, there have been three stages, which we can summarize as follows. The first stage, now impossible to maintain, is to conceal the problem. The second stage is the so-called “media terrorism” that is still in progress, wavering and oscillating between mass panic and illusory calm. In the third stage, the current one, dramatic changes are imposed in society under the cover of a combination of panic and social consensus. Meanwhile, decrees are introduced that will have a considerable impact upon our future, denying us the right to protest, to go on strike, to gather on our own terms.

What will happen now that the decree signed by Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte has appeared in the Official Journal? Additional restrictions and measures to contain the virus in Lombardy will be extended until April 3. We will need special permission to travel in and out of a region and also within it; people are urged to self-quarantine; all schools and universities are closed—we all know studying is not important, so why not seize the opportunity to drag parents and students, already exhausted from years and years of budgetary cuts, into the mess? Bars and restaurants can remain open from 6 am to 6 pm as long as customers can keep a distance of at least one meter between each other; theaters, gyms, ski resorts, and discotheques are shut down, but all major sporting events can take place behind closed doors (that’s Italy—you can’t live without football); all public gatherings are banned; no weddings and funerals; medium-

sized and large malls are shut down, but only during weekends and bank holidays.

In short, fear of contagion is sparking mass panic and, in the name of a supposed security, these new restrictions dangerously restrict freedom, justifying the state of emergency regardless of the impact it will have on small retailers and on family-run business. But the real danger, the one we should really be concerned by, isn’t so much about a contagion, but the one bound to the ignorance of a government that has leaked a draft decree that, as underlined by the virologist Roberto Burioni, “panics people.” Basically, these drastic measures ban people from working and impose “smart working” for a large proportion of workers, limit freedom of motion in some areas, pressure people to stay at home, and ban all public “gatherings” (inside or outside). Every right is more and more restricted or denied. All of this, amid the consequent mass panic and social isolation of millions of people.

And now, two of the biggest “social” issues appear on the horizon. The first, the sphere in which we Italians are undisputed sovereigns, is the “espertite” of many, resulting from information saturation, as a result of which everyone is “the greatest expert,” often ignoring issues such as how rapidly the virus spreads. This is clearly the result media and authority aims to achieve. The second issue is the consequence of the various specialists—doctors, virologists, biologists—raging on television, on the radio, in newspapers, and, especially, on the internet. These people are introduced, in bad or in good faith, as being able to provide some sort of resolution inasmuch as they are “neutral” experts—as if science were neutral and the experts analyzing it, doctors included, lack personal preconceptions. But that’s politics, anyway! If we don’t keep this aspect in mind, we will end up reaching erroneous conclusions even if we do our best.

What does the average Italian do to fight back against these controls and restrictions on his

freedom? He doesn't realize that he is already constrained by a wide range of restrictions imposed by control—via the media, surveillance cameras, and the like—and compelled to rush constantly to keep up with the wealthiest, even at the cost of taking out loans and starving just to buy an iPhone, paying loan shark rates for months just to be “worthy,” drooling after influencers who refuse to take a position when it's time to shelter “outcasts,” but always ready to post a selfie wearing the latest model shoes. He acts like Pulcinella, panicking because he can't get back to the South; rushes to board trains and buses; he couldn't care less if this behavior could spread the virus to Puglia, Calabria, Sicily—all of the regions that were still considered “safe” as late as March 8—along with the quarantine in effect in Northern Italy. Tonight [March 9], hundreds of people stormed train stations and bus stations trying to escape from the red zone, compelling the railway police (POLFER) to intervene to keep people calm. Unable to understand how it was possible, Conte says: “The publication of a rough draft has created uncertainty, insecurity, confusion, we can't accept it.”

So why not give police special powers, enable them to stop people and demand to hear where they are going, while bars and restaurants still remain open? A cause leads to an effect; in this case, it'll lead to the intensifying of pent-up anger and racism, obviously enough. And who knows—sooner or later, it wouldn't be surprising to read that someone began shooting Chinese, Moroccan, or Romanian people, or whomever else, on the pretense of seeking to avenge the death via COVID-19 of his cousin or neighbor or acquaintance. There have already been assaults on some Eastern Europeans living in Italy.

Hundreds of people storm the stations to escape Milan, at the risk of spreading the virus throughout Italy.

The Italo doesn't think about others; he just focuses on feeling good, because what really

counts is the pursuit of his own satisfaction. Who cares if the world around her falls apart? The apple doesn't fall far from the tree; an excellent example of why the average Italian couldn't give a damn is embodied by former Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvini, the right-wing populist and anti-immigrant politician leading the Lega party. It seems only yesterday, but almost a month has passed since he was snarling, as always, that the government wouldn't block boats loaded with migrants, wondering if the government had underestimated the coronavirus by “allowing the migrants to land.” Who cares that he wants to close Italian borders except to keep the borders open towards the United Kingdom. Just days before the decree was signed, he was able to go to London, challenging all common sense, spreading his nationalist and racist thoughts across Europe—the plague that precedes coronavirus.

Now we must ask ourselves some other questions that may be hard to answer. The first one is how we should react to what's happening, taking into account all the objective difficulties connected to the bans (for example, punishments for violators including up to three months in jail or fines of \$225), the continuous “media bombing,” the feeling of constant uncertainty.

On one hand, we see an over-emphasis on individual responsibility, especially for those suffering from the coronavirus, and on the other hand, the state using the excuse of an emergency to impose new rules. They don't talk about cuts to public hospitals (45,000 in the last ten years), about the situation of workers in the front line (especially, doctors, nurses, and the like), about the negative effects on the health sector—such as the interruption of regularly scheduled medical examinations including dialysis and the treatment of diabetics and others with serious medical conditions, who have seen their minimal rights denied by the diversion of economic efforts towards this “emergency” without ever taking them into

account. Hypocritically, Italian politicians—the same ones who attacked the public health sector and its workers—heap praise upon our public health system, never mentioning all the profit-driven privatization.

So what will happen now? What will be the historical consequences of these “emergencies?” In recent years, we can see clearly that a set of repressive rules has been created in Italy that didn’t disappear even when each “emergency” ended, whatever type of emergency it was.

In this country, the creation and exploitation of emergency has created serious problems for us. On the pretext of making war on the Mafia and so-called “terrorism,” the authorities passed “special laws” such as the one stipulating maximum sentence of 30 years (because, even in formal bourgeois hypocrisy, punishment should be “re-educational” and aimed at social reintegration); but in 1992, they introduced life without parole. This is perhaps the most obvious example of the more and more aggressive authoritarian tendencies of bourgeois democracy. To broaden our analysis, we should study how, over the past few decades, it has been possible to criminalize and repress the poor, and the struggling, and all who try to oppose the status quo in any way. This has led to hard punishment, with exceptions only when we are able to repel the attacks of the state.

For example, earthquakes have served as an opportunity to introduce anti-social regional laws on the pretext of opposing “looting.” The earthquake in L’Aquilas illustrates this—even if, in that case, they had to face a very combative grassroots response.

Likewise, the “anti-hooligan special laws” that, since 2006, started addressing the most “unpresentable” part of the movement (from the point of view of the police), the organization of youngsters from the poorest suburbs, often prone to fighting against the police and to breaking the rules they impose. Those laws were supposed to target “dangerous hooligans”

from organized football clubs, but in the years since they were passed, they have been used to repress strikes, mobilizations, and pickets as well. We can see the consequence in political struggles that are targeted with fines and the well-known “daspo,” an order banning access to sports events that has also been imposed in a “preventative” form against other targets without even going through courts, with the pure arbitrariness of the police. Many organized football clubs’ efforts could be summarized as a form of protest against modern soccer (that is, against the deprivation of sociality in order to maximize profit) and as an organized mobilization that recognizes the danger that the “anti-hooligan special laws” pose to all organized movements. The anti-repression slogan “special laws: today for hooligans, tomorrow for the whole city!” is relevant here, too. First, they’ll target us, but eventually they’ll extend control to everyone.

This brings us back to the decree that has been passed almost in silence, the above-mentioned “Conte Decree” that has hurriedly implemented a law reducing employees’ rights regarding “smart working” while increasing the bosses’ leverage. Even in ways that are not clearly connected to the coronavirus emergency, they are laying their hands on the rights of millions of people by means of such decrees.

But this kind of repression can also generate a revolt. In response to the government taking away a variety of prisoners’ rights (including visitation and recreation), prisoners rioted. As of March 9, more than 50 had escaped in the riots, though six more had been killed. Criminal trials were continuing even during the outbreak, though prisoners are prohibited from attending, supposedly out of fear they will contract the virus and spread it to those trapped in the prison system.

Despite all the threats and risks, on the first day of the national lockdown, a few dozen protesters converged on the empty streets of central Rome outside the Ministry of Justice to elevate the

demands of prisoners across the country in revolt.

March 11

New stricter measures have been imposed on those who falsify the self-certification to go out: you can be arrested in flagrante delicto and serve up to six years in jail. Furthermore, those who violate quarantine can be charged with “manslaughter against public health,” while those violating quarantine who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms such as fever and cough, causing the death of elderly people or subjects at risk, could be charged with “voluntary manslaughter” and jailed up to 21 years. The same applies to those having contacts with COVID-positive people and maintaining social relationships or working with them without taking the necessary precautions or inform the others.

March 12

Everything except malls, drugstores, and convenience stores are closed for two weeks. We are on lockdown and the quarantine isolates us from the world. Call me a catastrophist, but what comes to mind is the fate of Prince Prospero hiding in his fortified abbey:

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revelers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all. —The Masque of the Red Death, Edgar Allan Poe.)`

But we will survive, despite the quarantine imposed upon us.

March 13

The whole of Italy, brought to its knees, finally seems to be moved by a rebellious spirit. We are not talking about the singing flashmob scheduled for today at 6 pm—the call to go out on your balcony to sing and play music, to let

the world know that “we can do it” and that everything will be all right. This is something else. “Irresponsible strike,” say the masters. Safety measures are lacking in the workplaces, say the employees. “We are not expendable”—“We are not cannon fodder.” These are the chants coming from Italy’s factories. From north to south, unions and workers are making a show of force and stirring things up with spontaneous strikes calling for measures to safeguard health. That, at least, is something.

Against the Coronavirus and the Opportunism of the State was originally published on <https://nl.crimethinc.com/2020/03/12/against-the-coronavirus-and-the-opportunism-of-the-state-anarchists-in-italy-report-on-the-spread-of-the-virus-and-the-quarantine>

An Anarchist Response to Ebola: Visions and Questions | Part Two: Envisioning an Anarchist Alternative by Carwil Bjork-James with Chuck Munson



Anarchists are part of the global conversation on what's broken in the world, but when things really fall apart—like with the current Ebola outbreak—is the state the only answer? How might a stateless society respond to a challenge like this one?

Anarchists are part of the global conversation on what's broken in the world, but when things really fall apart—like with the current Ebola outbreak—is the state the only answer? How might a stateless society respond to a challenge like this one? This article provides an anarchist response to these questions, while highlighting issues that require those of us with anarchist politics to carefully think through our position.

This is part two of a two part series.

Key points:

- Just as with the AIDS epidemic, grassroots movements can and should pressure state and corporate institutions to save lives today, while staying critical and building independent alternatives.
- A future stateless society can and must maintain systems to support human health. These systems are generally more complex than other systems

anarchists have maintained during moments of revolt, but doing so is feasible.

- Too many anarchists offer critique and deconstruction under the banner of anarchism, but don't speak as anarchists when they put forward large-scale alternatives. This has contributed to the idea that anarchist solutions are only local, low-tech, and limited.
- On the other hand, health care systems, scientific research, and community systems of care reflect anarchist traditions of mutual aid, free association, and care for all people regardless of status or class.
- Global recognition that #BlackLivesMatter means fighting back not just when Black lives are senselessly taken, but when insufficient value and material care are put forward to sustain them.

Clearly the current epidemic is being made more severe by incompetent governments, agencies, public health organizations, international air travel, and people just reacting to it as frightened humans. As we have seen in other crises, the state has failed to adequately prepare for or serve the people most in need, a situation that is reminiscent of Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy in the United States. After these disasters, activists-turned-recovery-agents created decentralized, horizontally organized response efforts. These efforts, limited as they are, make it possible to ask a larger question: If we lived in an anarchist society where there was no state, would it be possible to deal with a public health crisis?

Vision Question 1: Even if global anarchist revolution happened tomorrow, there would still be many decades of rebuilding and redistributing to undo the concentration of wealth and the racialization and continental distribution of poverty. These are the consequences of their property becoming our theft. How do we propose to concretely reverse

imbalances like that in the number of trained medical professionals, which made this Ebola outbreak possible?

Vision Question 2: How do anarchists balance between celebrating the potential for volunteer, and horizontally organized responses to crises like the current Ebola outbreak and disruptively pressuring the state, capitalist, and vertical institutions that currently control much of the needed resources to do what they can? Or should anarchists maintain a partisan silence about the latter question?

What does confronting the Ebola outbreak mean?

The existing tools for dealing with Ebola, in the absence of a vaccine or more specialized treatment, are straightforward. Outside of careful protocols, Ebola is a particularly cruel disease, striking hardest at those who directly care for the sick, whether families, generous strangers, or dedicated health workers. With careful adherence to protective regimens, Ebola patients can often be sustained through the disease, with much less additional spreading of the disease. But these routines are built on the ready supply of “staff, stuff, space, and systems”—the material, human, and physical components of health care provision. Health workers need materials to protect themselves and their patients, clean and well-stocked facilities to work in, and adequate replacements when they need rest or treatment. Treating Ebola only makes sense within a public service that is an ongoing part of society.

Like HIV/AIDS during the initial years of the pandemic, Ebola is a disease which is striking first and hardest at the lives of people who have been devalued by the global power structure. Like HIV/AIDS, it threatens the future of whole communities, even countries, while posing a less direct threat to the global public at large.

Three dangerous responses that played out with HIV/AIDS are relevant for how we confront Ebola. (The difference is that the Ebola virus

disease can shift from a local to a global threat much faster.) First, that the disease has become an excuse for further stigmatizing members of large groups of people; we are already seeing disturbing overreactions associating Africans, West Africans, or Black people with Ebola. Second, the international community failed to prioritize responding to a disease until it affected high-status people. This response to an infectious disease leads to unnecessary deaths and greater ultimate costs. Third, new and existing solutions are only accessible at a high price, out of reach of much of the world. A vital struggle looms over who gets access to newly created treatments and prevention measures as these are rolled out for Ebola. Those with wealth and exaggerated fears must not be allowed to outbid those who are at greatest risk.

Fortunately, the response to the AIDS pandemic also taught some key lessons for today’s crisis. AIDS patient-activists fought to have a seat at the planning table alongside doctors and pharmacologists. They also built community-centered health clinics, disrupted political life to win funding for treatment, changed the process of rolling out drugs in favor of dying patients, defied global intellectual property law to make drugs available to the global south, and fought back against stigmatizing the disease and the people most vulnerable to it.

Vision Question 3: There have been many excellent grassroots public health efforts, from ACT UP to the Common Ground clinic after Hurricane Katrina, but they have suffered from limitations of infrastructure once they get beyond a certain scale. What organizing mechanisms can we put in place to make such efforts function at the scale of the problems they confront? What can we learn from non-horizontal institutions like Cuba’s health service or from the formalized funding that powers Doctors Without Borders? If the scale of liberatory institutions is limited, how do we instill a capacity to multiply such institutions rapidly in response to urgent needs? How might we fund science, including medical research,

and mass public services outside the current profit-driven system?

Public health and epidemiology: Public goods? State surveillance? Both?

We know about Ebola and how to treat it because of a chain of researchers and a larger framework of virology, medicine, and epidemiology that have traced the virus's incursions into human communities. Their work has taken us from nearly incomprehensible tragedy in 1976 to the ability to conceptualize and plan the urgent choices needed to bring to a halt a far larger epidemic today.

Such scientific systems are among the largest decentralized efforts humans have ever created. The scientific method operates through both collective memory and collective skepticism towards any permanently designated authority. At the same time, a permanently maintained collective memory of scientific facts is vital to the enterprise. So too is the continuous interchange of knowledge, training of researchers, health care workers, and public health specialists. Approaches to understanding disease, learning how microbes respond to possible treatments, and monitoring the spread and decline of waves of infection are all accomplished through these decentralized mechanisms. They also all rely on permanent public systems.

However, the anti-authoritarian story of science, while embraced by many scientists, leaves out the ways that many scientific ways of looking at the world are intertwined with those of the state. Indeed many branches of science emerge out of the modern state's urgent desire to monitor, enumerate, and plan the future of its subjects—hence the word statistics, from science of state. Epidemiology depends on counting disease among locatable, traceable, identifiable patients in a landscape where everyone is visible. If one thinks of modern governance as the hardware and operating system through which one is “watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled,

indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded ... noted, registered, counted, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, prevented, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished” (in the words of Russian anarchist Pyotr Kropotkin), then epidemiology is one of the “killer apps” that run on that operating system. Or rather, the opposite of killer. So, public health as a concept is inseparable from some of this apparatus of monitoring and responding.

Vision Question 4: Is anarchism about destroying not just the centralized state but the hardware and the operating system it has built to (over)see its citizens? About separating it from the control of any one entity? About fragmenting control into smaller pieces? About eliminating some but not all of these possible operations? About maintaining surveillance on microbes, for instance, while evading/anonymizing surveillance on individuals?

We imagine an anarchist society as one that is decentralized and which views the amassing of power and control as a risk that needs to be countered through the design of its institutions and in the culture of working together. To prevent the dangerous intersection of surveillance and public health, community-level clinics could choose to minimize the exposure of their patients. They could encrypt and anonymize health details before sharing them outside the local community, something that is much more unlikely in state and capitalist health systems. An anarchist society would also be one without any single organization or institution in control of the rest. Unlike the world we live in now, no one organization (even a workplace taking on an important task) would have the universal ability to inspect all records, much less the ability to back up such a demand with force. Instead, when a priority arises, the collective best prepared to address it would approach others for their cooperation.

Surprisingly, the situation with Ebola now foreshadows some of such a process. Truly effective response to Ebola requires community involvement and active participation in prevention education, treatment, and alterations to daily routines of life. None of the regional states are really strong enough to force that kind of compliance upon outlying rural communities or dense urban neighborhoods. As with many day-to-day necessities, consent and persuasion are the channels through which things actually get done. Anarchists strive to generalize that principle as much as is humanly possible.

How would a society without a state respond to Ebola?

A classic question about anarchism is “Who cleans up the trash in an anarchist society?” In contrast to capitalist society, where the answer is someone who needs the money more than they dislike the job, anarchists generally talk about either the absolute need to take responsibility locally, the possibility of rewarding people for doing undesirable tasks, or the creation of a rotational system where everyone has to do some of the hard, undesirable, or dangerous work. “Nobody wants to, so everybody has to,” can become a society-wide slogan, perhaps with a system of mutual confirmation, making sure things get done.

Public health, though, is a little more complex. First, public health systems are complex and interdependent. Doctors and nurses rely on fully stocked supply rooms, sterilized equipment, and carefully tested medicines. So, we’re talking about multiple workplaces, coordinating together. On the model of worker-run cooperatives around the world and telephone and transportation systems during workers’ uprisings across history, we envision people maintaining careful collaboration among themselves. Indeed, we suspect that excessive hierarchy, the profit motive, competition among private firms, and billing paperwork often get in the way of meaningful coordination.

In terms of recruiting people to step forward and

treat a threatening illness, the current crisis shows that motivation is not the problem. Whether through independent initiatives like Doctors Without Borders, state-run cooperation agencies like Cuba’s, or recruitment efforts like that recently carried out by Avaaz, a volunteer-based system is adequate to staff response during moments. Given the opportunity, many, many people are willing to take risks, do repetitive tasks, and apply the skills they have to common problems. Rather, the challenge is to make sure that needed skills are widely taught, that systems for healing people are kept in place, and that supplies are made to flow smoothly to where they are most needed.

Still, the effort to treat people with infectious diseases, take the necessary precautions to prevent infection, or administer immunizations to an entire population requires both detailed, onerous work and careful monitoring of populations at large. One face of a health system is the collective workplace of healers and caretakers, but another is factories that produce basic supplies and adequately cleaned rooms, and still another is a monitoring system that records the health of both patients and the public. How do we take these less glamorous and more factory-like and state-like roles seriously? If we envision a less factory-like and less state-like society, how do we maintain enough of these ways of working to maintain life-sustaining systems like health care for all?

An ongoing continuous effort to provide health support locally is the most vital, and most missing, ingredient in the region (and this explains why and how MSF has been able to step forward so decisively). Relief organizations like MSF, community- and neighborhood-level clinics, public health systems, and the scientific community are all examples of the type institutions we need to maintain. Likewise, most coordination among them is done a way that is voluntary, and based on mutual agreement rather than coercion and commands.

Dealing with an Ebola outbreak does mean

taking some actions extremely quickly. Rapid mobilization of doctors, building of treatment centers, or supplying of sterile equipment this month is the equivalent of several times that effort next month. The current crisis demonstrates that no existing social system does this kind of acceleration very effectively.

Massive spare capacity to act logistically, and to supply medical personnel (currently expressed through the US military's capacity to build infrastructure, and the Cuban medical systems capacity to send doctors to any place on Earth) are other prerequisites for action. We envision a cooperatively-run economy to be capable of diverting these capacities from other uses more flexibly than either a capitalist or state-socialist order: if work is self-organized then any collective of workers might deploy to assist in a crisis, not just those that are part of the state or a purpose-built NGO. Imagine workers at FedEx being able to choose to dedicate some of their planes for sending vital supplies, or a builder's union in Nigeria erecting a dozen Ebola treatment centers. If profit were not the constant purpose of most labor, what other human priorities might be put to the fore? What compromises or hardships would individuals and communities willingly choose in service of helping others? Outside of crisis, how might the gross disparities in resources, preparedness, and necessary tools for caring for human lives be undone, erasing the vulnerability created by centuries of extracting wealth from Africa?

Vision Question 5: We know that capitalism overproduces private goods and services (for the wealthy) and underproduces goods and services that can be enjoyed by all. Yet despite some efforts to reclaim common spaces or provide free goods/services, there is a void in analysis by contemporary anarchists in the USA about redistributing social effort towards the collective needs or desires. How do we start talking about that kind of public goods anarchism?

Vision Question 6: What model of public organizations do anarchists see as becoming

more commonplace in an anarchist social order? A vast, networked MSF? Expanded or reduced institutions like the CDC and the WHO? A National Health Service in every country, or in no country?

Vision Question 7: Are quarantines compatible with anarchist ideas about freedom from coercion? In a society without a state, who should consider themselves empowered to coerce someone else to save lives, and under what conditions?

In closing, the Ebola outbreak is a difficult problem, but a solvable one. The current outbreak thrives on conditions created by colonialism, capitalism, and war. Late in the day, governments and wealthy individuals have put themselves forward as the solution to this crisis, even though much of the hard work is being done by local community members and independently-funded, modestly compensated volunteers.

People curious or skeptical about anarchism are right to ask how a stateless society would handle a challenge like this one better than the current world order is. Those of us who envision a society that works differently ought to have serious answers to their questions. This article is meant to both sketch out that answer and prompt discussion among those striving for a radical transformation of society, asking what we need to re-think or clear up about our politics to engage seriously with issues like this. Ebola is far from the most difficult problem we will face in our lifetimes. We anarchists are part of the world community that confronts such problems here and now. Our zeal to make the world just and free must lead not just to imagining an ideal society, but fighting for necessary care and wisdom in collective decisions today. We need to ask ourselves how to fight for the lives that are at risk when these decisions are made by institutions we rightly distrust.

An Anarchist Response to Ebola | Part Two: Envisioning an Anarchist Alternative was originally published on <https://www.anarchistagency.com/commentary/an-anarchist-response-to-ebola-part-two/>

Clarifications by Giorgio Agamben

Recently an Italian journalist applied himself, in the usual way of his profession, to publishing distortions and falsifications of my thoughts regarding the ethical confusion into which the epidemic has thrown this country, where there is no longer any regard even for the dead. It would be no more worthwhile to name the writer than it would be to address in detail the misrepresentations. All those who so desire can read the text of “Contagion” for themselves on the website of Quodlibet. Here, instead, I would like to publish some additional reflections — which, despite their clarity, will no doubt also be misrepresented.

Fear is a bad counselor, but it is revealing many things to which people have turned a blind eye. The first thing clearly shown by this wave of panic that has paralyzed the country is that our society no longer believes in anything except bare life. It is clear that Italians are willing to sacrifice practically everything — normal living conditions, social relations, work, and even friendships, affections, and their religious and political beliefs — when confronted with the danger of getting sick. Bare life, and the fear of losing it, is not something that unites men. Instead, it blinds and separates them. Other human beings, as in the plague described by

Manzoni, are now seen only as possible carriers or vectors, to be avoided at all costs and kept at least one meter away. The dead — our dead — no longer have the right to a funeral; it is unclear what is happening to the corpses of our loved ones. The neighbor has been erased, and it is curious that churches are silent about this. What happens to human relationships in a country that becomes accustomed to living this way, not knowing for how long? What is a society that has no other value than survival?

The second thing that the epidemic clearly shows, no less disturbing than the first, is that the state of exception, to which governments have long made us accustomed, has truly become the normal condition. In the past, there have been more serious epidemics, yet no one thought to declare a state of emergency, as in the present case, such that we are prevented even from moving about. We have become so accustomed to living in conditions of perennial crisis and perennial emergency that we do not seem to notice that life is being reduced to a purely biological condition in which the social and political — even the human and emotional — dimensions are lost. A society that lives in a permanent state of emergency is no longer a free society. Indeed, our society, having sacrificed freedom for the sake of so-called “security concerns,” has condemned itself to a perennial state of insecurity and fear.

It isn’t surprising that the virus is talked about in terms of war. Indeed, the emergency measures are effectively forcing us to live in curfew conditions. But a war with an invisible enemy, one that can lurk within every other man or woman, is the most absurd of wars. It is, in truth, a civil war, and the enemy is not somewhere outside, but within us.

The concern is not — or not only — for the present but for what comes after. Just as wars have bequeathed to peace a series of harmful technologies, from barbed wire to nuclear power plants, so it is very likely that, even after the emergency ends, various experiments now

begun (ones that governments have failed to carry out in the past) will continue: the closure of universities and schools and the move to online classes; putting a stop, once and for all, to gatherings and personal discussions about political and cultural concerns and moving those conversations to digital means; and the introduction of machines wherever possible to replace every contact — every “contagion” — among human beings.

— 17 March 2020

“The neighbor has been erased.” But isn’t the goal of “flattening the curve,” which requires radically cutting off personal and individual contact, forbidding funerals and other measures, not also an expression of neighborly love? These strategies are intended to protect the weak, the sick, and the elderly. Isn’t the imperative to care for human life or lives — albeit conceived on the social and political plane, directed by trained professionals and other authorities, and recognizable in our “public health” approach — synonymous with love for the neighbor?

We have only to look at the parable of the Good Samaritan, with which the discourse of “neighborly love” originates, to find details that at least complicate that view. In the parable, agape is exemplified by a solitary individual, a Samaritan, who picks up the dirty body of a wounded, sick traveler — a Jew — found by the side of the road. The Samaritan washes the body of the traveler, carries him to an inn and feeds and cares for him. There was no particular responsibility or demand to aid a member of an out-group in this way — one of the points of the parable, according to Ivan Illich. The Samaritan was moved from within to take a risk rather than to minimize risk. The Samaritan did not, on feeling

concern, report the problem to someone else, a local authority. The parable says that a priest and a Levite had both passed the dying stranger before the Samaritan did. There’s no reason to think that they didn’t feel appropriately bad about what they saw — or make the appropriate phone calls, so to speak. The Samaritan was moved to overstep injunctions, norms, and expectations, including expectations of “social distance,” in order to make an extraordinarily intimate and irreducibly personal contact with the stranger.

The difference between the two paradigms is significant. What are we to make of the fact that their logics work so differently and seem to lead to different judgments, decisions, or, at least, areas of concern, such as whether or not to prohibit all funerals, as has apparently been decreed in Italy. And what to make of their apparent connection? As I understand it, these questions are part and parcel to the “ethical confusion” to which Agamben refers.

Ivan Illich suggested a precise historical origin for the confusion. It arose, he suggested, in the Middle Ages when the Church began institutionalizing agape, with the founding of hospitals and so on. The effort to realize the love ethic without the corresponding Christian emphasis on radical powerlessness resulted in powerful institutions — the Church, and later, modern institutions and an entire professional and managerial class— exercising social and political power under the auspices of agape, and on behalf of the powerless. Obvious modern enormities like “servant leadership” are the inevitable result of this: all of the contradictory discourses and the contradictory outcomes with which we are familiar.

In lieu of more of my own words, here is an excerpt from a passage from Charles Taylor about Illich. Taylor writes, “Illich, in his overall vision and in the penetrating historical detail of his arguments, offers a new road map, a way of coming to understand what has been jeopardized in our decentered, objectifying, discarnate way of remaking ourselves, and he does so without simply falling into the clichés of anti-modernism.”

From the introduction to *The Rivers North of the Future* by Charles Taylor

In Latin Christendom, the attempt was made to impose on everyone a more individually committed and Christocentric religion of devotion and action, and to suppress or even abolish older, supposedly ‘magical’ or ‘superstitious’ forms of collective ritual practice.

Allied with a neo-Stoic outlook, this became the charter for a series of attempts to establish new forms of social order. These helped to reduce violence and disorder and to create populations of relatively pacific and productive artisans and peasants who were more and more induced/forced into the new forms of devotional practice and moral behavior, be this in Protestant England, Holland, or later the American colonies, or in Counter-Reformation France, or in the Germany of the *Polizeistaat*.

This creation of a new, civilized, ‘polite’ order succeeded beyond what its first originators could have hoped for, and this in turn led to a new reading of what a Christian order might be, one which was seen more and more in ‘immanent’ terms. (The polite, civilized order is the Christian order.) This version of Christianity was shorn of much of its ‘transcendent’ content, and was thus open to a new departure, in which the understanding of good order — could be embraced outside of the original theological,

Providential framework, and in certain cases even against it (as by Voltaire, Edward Gibbon, and in another way David Hume).

The secularization of Western culture and, indeed, widespread disbelief in God have arisen in close symbiosis with this belief in a moral order of rights’ bearing individuals who are destined (by God or Nature) to act for mutual benefit. Such an order thus rejects the earlier honor ethic which exalted the warrior, just as the new order also tends to occlude any transcendent horizon. (We see one good formulation of this notion of order in John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*, in which he argued for a human origin of the authority to rule.) This understanding or order has profoundly shaped the modern West’s dominant forms of social imaginary: the market economy, the public sphere, the sovereign ‘people.’

This, in bare outline, is my account of secularization, one in which I think Illich basically concurs. But he describes it as the corrupting of Christianity. To illustrate he draws, again and again, on the familiar parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus’ story about an outsider who helps a wounded Jew. For Illich this story represents the possibility of mutual belonging between two strangers. Jesus points to a new kind of fittingness, belonging together, between the Samaritan and the wounded man. They are fitted together in a proportionality which comes from God, which is that of agape, and which became possible because God became flesh. The enfleshment of God extends outward, through such new links as the Samaritan makes with the Jew, into a network which we call the Church. But this is a network ,not a categorical grouping; that is, it is a skein of relations which link particular, unique, enfleshed people to each other, rather than a grouping of people together on the grounds of their sharing some important property. Corruption occurs when the Church begins to respond to the failure and inadequacy of a motivation grounded in a sense of mutual

belonging by erecting a system. This system is to master it, to extend the web of control so incorporates a code or set of rules, a set of disciplines to make us internalize these rules, and a system of rationally constructed organizations — private and public bureaucracies, universities, schools — to make sure we carry out what the rules demand. All these become second nature to us. We grow accustomed to decentering ourselves from our lived, embodied experience in order to become disciplined, rational, disengaged subjects. From within this perspective, the significance of the Good Samaritan story appears obvious; it is a stage on the road to a universal morality rules.

Modern ethics illustrates this fetishism of rules and norms... Not just law but ethics is seen in terms of rules — as by Immanuel Kant, for example. The spirit of the law is important where it is so, because it too expresses some general principle. For Kant the principle is that we should put regulation by reason, or humanity as rational agency, first. In contrast, we have seen, the network of agape puts first the gut-driven response to a particular person. This response cannot be reduced to a general rule. Because we cannot live up to this — ‘Because of the hardness of your hearts’ — we need rules. It is not that we could just abolish them, but modern liberal civilization fetishizes them. We think we have to find the right system of rules, of norms, and then follow them through unflinchingly. We cannot see any more the awkward way these rules fit enfolded human beings, we fail to notice the dilemmas they have to sweep under the carpet: for instance, justice versus mercy; or justice versus a renewed relation, as we saw in South Africa with Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a shining attempt to get beyond the existing codes of retribution.

With this perspective, something crucial in the Good Samaritan story gets lost. A world ordered by this system of rules, disciplines, and organizations can only see contingency as an obstacle, even an enemy and a threat. The ideal

of that contingency is reduced to a minimum. By contrast, contingency is an essential feature of the story of the Good Samaritan as an answer to the question that prompted it. Who is my neighbor? The one you happen across, stumble across, who is wounded there in the road. Sheer accident also has a hand in shaping the proportionate, the appropriate response. It is telling us something, answering our deepest questions: this is your neighbor. But in order to hear this, we have to escape from the monomaniacal perspective in which contingency can only be an adversary requiring control. Illich develops this theme profoundly...

This is why Illich’s work is so important to us today. I have found it more than useful, even inspiring, because I have been working over many years to find a nuanced understanding of Western modernity. This would be one which would both give a convincing account of how modernity arose and allow for a balanced account of what is good, even great, in it, and of what is less good, even dangerous and destructive. Illich’s understanding of our modern condition as a spinoff from a ‘corrupted’ Christianity captures one of the important historical vectors that brought about the modern age and allows us to see how good and bad are closely interwoven in it. Ours is a civilization concerned to relieve suffering and enhance human well-being, on a universal scale unprecedented in history, and which at the same time threatens to imprison us in forms that can turn alien and dehumanizing. This should take us beyond the facile and noisy debate between the boosters and knockers of modernity for the Enlightenment project.’

Illich, in his overall vision and in the penetrating historical detail of his arguments, offers a new road map, a way of coming to understand what has been jeopardized in our decentered, objectifying, disincarnate way of remaking ourselves, and he does so without simply falling into the clichés of anti-modernism.

Codes, even the best codes, can become idolatrous traps that tempt us to complicity in violence. Ilich reminds us not to become totally invested in the code — even the best code of peace-loving, egalitarian variety — of liberalism. We should find the center of our spiritual lives beyond the code, deeper than the code, in networks of living concern, which are not to be sacrificed to the code, which must even from time to time subvert it. This message comes out of a certain theology, but it should be heard by everybody.

Clarifications was originally published on <https://d-dean.medium.com/clarifications-giorgio-agamben-3f97dc7ed67c> by Giorgio Agamben

Caring geographies: The COVID-19 interregnum and a return to mutual aid by Simon Springer

Introduction

As the COVID-19 pandemic began to cast its long shadow across the globe, our communities appeared to be spiraling into desperation and doubt. Businesses were shuttered, entire sectors decimated, people were laid off en masse, and essential items like toilet paper vanished from store shelves. Yet in spite of these monumental and in many cases life-changing disruptions, there is significant reason to consider this strange moment of uncertainty as one of possibility and hope. If you look closely at the human spirit, listen carefully to our collective

heartbeat as a species, and learn from our shared past, such optimism is not difficult to find. It is illuminated by the everyday acts of care and a proclivity for compassion that radiate in spite of this pandemic, igniting the prospect that this could be the beginning of a great restoration for human societies. Not a return to Keynesianism, to the Middle Ages, to Classical Antiquity, or even to the Stone Age. The presently unfolding phase is a revisiting of something much older, enduring, and infinitely more integral to our wellbeing than these brief instants of our history.

The resurgence of reciprocity that we are witnessing in every nook and cranny of the planet is a clarion call for change. It serves as a testament to the fact that the selfishness of capitalism was never going to produce a world in which we could find comfort. It was always out to strip us of our humanity, alienate us from all other life on this planet, and serve as a catalyst for conflict. As people reconnect in spite of the lockdowns and social distancing between us by lending a hand wherever it is needed most, we are bearing witness to and actively participating in the reconstruction of the unshakable and fundamental basis of all life on this planet: mutual aid.

The heart of all life

Historically, the state and capitalism worked in concert to destroy mutual aid, largely through the imposition of private property. Instead of tightly knit community bonds, the state sought to replace these affinities with a nationalist allegiance, a condition not rooted in an ethic of compassion and care, but rather in obedience and othering. By transforming exchange into a transaction of assumed value relative to scarcity, as opposed to the former practice of reciprocity according to need that human societies hinged upon, capitalism worked to eradicate mutual aid over the course of several centuries. While capitalism and the state appear as the dominant mediators of our everyday lives, and they certainly manipulate our capacities and constrain our thinking in profound and

unsettling ways ([Barrera and Ince,, they have not succeeded in annihilating mutual aid. It has continued in myriad and mundane forms, such as watching your neighbor's kids, car pooling, caring for a pet, passing the salt when asked, taking a picture for a stranger, and through the conviviality of virtually every friendship that has ever existed. Mutual aid is just what we do. Thus the reason for this resilience is quite simply owing to the fact that mutual aid actually the wellspring of all life on this planet, both human and nonhuman. In times of crises, mutual aid is pragmatic and comes to define our responses at a community level and as a species precisely because it is the most paramount element of our survival. As [Peter Kropotkin recognized, mutual aid is promoted through natural selection and is a factor in evolution.

The idea that survival of the fittest alone shapes the trajectory of evolution has always been a willful misrepresentation of Darwin's work, demonstrating how scientific discourse is never immune to politics. Kropotkin was averse to such a reading precisely because it was used to legitimize capitalism. His life's work was dedicated to explaining how cooperation was essential to prosperity within the animal kingdom, pivotal in many Indigenous and early European societies, vital to the organization of medieval guilds, and was routinely practiced among the poor as an essential means to ensuring their survival. Kropotkin never denied that competition exists within the natural world or even among humans. Rather, he emphasized that cooperation was equally, and, in point of fact, even more important in the perpetuation of life. When we consider this from a multispecies perspective, it should become obvious. No single species, even an apex predator, can live without a reliance on other species, even if the connection is only as a source of food. Life itself is an intricate and beautifully complex web of mutual aid relations. While individual members of a species may compete over resources in times of scarcity, even for solitary animals, it is more in their benefit to ensure that other members survive since this is the only way to guarantee the continuity of their species. In this moment of COVID-19, we are seeing how it is in fact reciprocity that is saving us from complete catastrophe, and we are beginning to understand that we have the ability to expand our circle of care beyond family and friends. Such activity is vital to the functioning of our societies and even our survival as a species. We would have never made it this far into the human odyssey without mutual aid.

Life beyond the metropolis

We could treat COVID-19 as a message from the planet. It might serve as a warning that the scales have been tipped too far in the favor of a single species. Given how much we have taken from the Earth in our attempts to force it to heel to our will, we might even humble ourselves into a recognition that perhaps we should have seen this coming. Capitalism is a system that deliberately destroys the planet to service the hubris of humanity. It produces scarcity as a means to empower some, while disempowering others. It revolves around the production of deprivation and desire. It is the creation of inequity and the primary source of all conflict in this world. It treats the natural world not as a source of communion, but as a site of extraction and subsequent disposal). There is only so much turmoil we can generate before we inspire revolt, which applies as much to our own agency within existing political systems as it does to the agency of nature within our ecosystems. Through the wholesale destruction of the natural world and the profound intensification of animal agriculture, we laid the groundwork for the virus to make the jump to humans. And through four decades of neoliberal austerity and the fervent roll back of health care, we created a perfect storm wherein it could proliferate. But what stings the most is that none of this was inevitable. We chose to do this to ourselves. We welcomed it by empowering both states and capitalism, which from their very first breath have worked in unison to beguile us and reinforce our separation from each other and from the natural world. Instead of symbiosis and synergy, we adopted hierarchy and rank order, a

gamble that now manifests itself in the form of some arguing that it is better to sacrifice our elders on the altar of Wall Street than it is to stop the madness of capitalist production.

Profit over people is the true pandemic. It is an affront to what has, up until now, ensured our survival. Mutual aid is infused into our DNA. It is the glue that keeps human societies together. Every other economic model that has ever been devised fails to understand that ‘the mediator between head and hands must be the heart’. This notion is most strongly evidenced by the love that a mother has for her child and the selflessness of her routines. It is the robust emotional connection of one to another that is paramount to our endurance as a species. The outpouring of generosity we are witnessing is simply humanity responding in the best way that it knows how. It is a throwback to time immemorial, and marks a profound revival of mutual aid in our political awareness. Humans, which is one of the reasons why this virus hurts so much. It separates us. But the quarantines will subside and the isolation will eventually end. When the tempest of this virus finally passes, we will look back with bewilderment at the world we left behind. How could we not notice that the decades of disemboweling healthcare under a bad neoliberal dream were only going to leave us vulnerable? How could we not see that our leaders were little more than bumbling fools and talking heads that never had a real plan? How could we not recognize that centuries of plundering the environment wasn’t going to come back to bite us in the most profound way?

Conclusion

In the shell of the old, we are rediscovering that all of the skills, ingenuity, strength, and innovation that we are able to muster as a species depend not upon the state, not upon capitalism, and not upon the command of any authority, but on our collectivity. It is the caring geographies of togetherness that make us who we are, and it is reciprocity that has brought the human journey to the present moment. The

COVID-19 interregnum may well be remembered as the moment that marks the transition toward recovering a world that has always been with us. The silver lining to this virus, then, is that we are reawakening to the possibilities of our fundamental connection to one another. It would seem that the only thing that was needed to bring us back together was something that has threatened to keep us apart.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Reuben Rose-Redwood and Richard J. White for their helpful feedback.

The COVID-19 interregnum and a return to mutual aid was originally published on <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2043820620931277> by Simon Springer

COVID-19: Between society and state by Maria Rachmaninova



It is difficult to imagine a more radical and sudden shift in our interaction with reality than COVID-19. Everyday life is plagued by alarming news, masks, rubber gloves, 1.5 meters distance. Our days are being spent in the privacy of the room, stuck in a frozen space and in a foreign and stretched present.

For many, self-isolation has become the first extensive period of time they have had to spend with themselves and a true test of ones character; for the majority - the opportunity to see the world at least partially without humanity (this reflection gave rise to a whole wave of memes, jokes, images). When you look at it from this perspective, COVID-19 is a kind of milestone dividing today into “before” and “after” - at least at the presentational level.

One of the truly troubling aspects of this division is the socio-political one.

In "Abnormal" M. Foucault examines the influence that the plague epidemic in Europe had on the intensive development of technologies for control, isolation and accounting:

The plague town — and here I refer to a series of regulations, all absolutely identical, moreover, that we republished from the end of the Middle Ages until the beginning of the eighteenth century — was divided up into districts, the districts were divided into quarters, and then the streets within these quarters were isolated. In each street there were overseers, in each quarter inspectors, in each district some — one in charge of the district, and in the town itself either someone was nominated as governor or the deputy mayor was given supplementary powers when plague broke out. <...> The danger required intervention. It was at this point that individuals were sorted into those who were ill and those who were not. All the information gathered through the twice-daily visits, through this kind of review or parade of the living and the dead by the inspector, all the information recorded in the register, was then collated with the central register held by the deputy mayors in the town's central-ministration. <...> It is not exclusion but quarantine. It is not a question of driving out individuals but rather of establishing and fixing them, of giving them their own place, of assigning places and of defining presences and subdivided presences. <..> We pass from a technology of power that drives out, excludes, banishes, marginalizes, and represses, to a fundamentally positive power that fashions, observes, knows, and multiplies itself on the basis of its own effects.

Thus, the new experience of the emergency situation formed a new basis for improving the technologies of the authorities, which, of course, after the epidemic were not going to return to the previous level of development. Every emergency works in a similar way. And COVID-19 is unlikely to be an exception. This is troubling for a number of reasons.

To discern them, one should turn to the very source of the coronavirus: to the bat that was either eaten — as is done in China with many animals that are not included in agricultural cycles, or they were trying to test on it in the vivisection laboratory, where it, however, managed to break free and rebel against its tormentors, and then infect them, wounding them in a battle.

One way or another, everything that happened afterwards raised many questions around the world for China in relation to their practices of treating animals. For example, Great Britain has given China an ultimatum: revision of gastronomic traditions, or exclusion from profitable commercial projects.

What is interesting is that at the same time the situation of international partnership with China, the legal status of animals turned out to be not a reason, but, rather, an excuse. A lot of countries sued China not so much in connection with animals, but in connection with the damage to their economies. However, in a specific case, these issues turned out to be closely related to one another. Contrary to popular belief this close connection has always existed, but its been fully exposed now.

Judging by the rhetoric that filled the upper layers of the media, it is not so easy today to get close to this problem, bypassing the cornerstone of neo-racism. Many Internet commentators and observers from all over the world — previously completely ignorant to the fate of animals in their own states, spontaneously united in a furious and rather essentialist censure of the Chinese people for "barbarism", "savagery" and alleged perversity.

Alas, this did not in any way change their attitude towards animals in general, and the causal relationship of their political statements. In fact the opposite of what was proclaimed happened: it is not that the attitude toward animals has become an excuse for racism, but

racism is looking for justification of its own existence — for example, in relation to animals.

All this, however, should not stop us from truly criticizing the real treatment of animals in China. The main thing is to do it consistently.

For a long time, a consensus existed within the global "democratic" population in the comparative autonomy of the cultural practices of each state in the face of international law.

The only exceptions were practices of harming a person — however, very situational. Sometimes they were supplemented by sporadic campaigns to protect endangered animal populations, initiated by environmental activists.

Eating non-farm animals politically correctly remained outside the attention of the world community — under the plausible pretext of preserving China's cultural autonomy and non-interference in the affairs of a hermetic and distinctive society (which, at first glance, should be fully approved by everyone, including anarchists). Today, when the results of China's own practices have affected the world, the institutions of international law seem to be close to redefining this polite neutrality, but on which grounds?

Indeed, from the perspective of obvious political rhetoric, only two ways of interaction in such a situation can be seen: "delicate non-intervention" — seeming, at first glance, the only non-authoritarian strategy (alas, as it turned out, with the risks of unknown diseases), and "indelicate intervention" — with an authoritarian violation of autonomy (similar to the spread of "democracy" by USA).

If indifference towards China is broken, the second option will become inevitable. But in this case, the unfortunate history of Eurocentrism and colonialism will only be supplemented by another case of the imposition of a universalist project on everyone and everything, which constitutes the good old truth of the West.

The falsity of this dramatic dilemma is revealed by anarchist optics, which have their roots first of all in social autonomy and second of all in the scientific picture of the world. So, with social autonomy (at first glance) everything was in order in China (it really wasn't), then something clearly went wrong with the scientific picture of the world. And in that case, we are not talking about the development of industrial technology or other industries demanded by the market, but about a holistic picture of the world, relayed by culture and society. So what truly happened then?

For a number of obvious reasons, all of us — living outside of China — know very little about modern China. However, thinking about its history, and reading the news from there from time to time, we at least understand that we are talking about a closed and extremely authoritarian state — a state that is actively experimenting with rigid electronic control systems and other dystopian practices that look very frightening even from afar. Obviously, progress in China means the progress of market capacities (on which, by the way, the West is very dependent in the conditions of the global capitalism it has established), on the one hand, and on the other systems of state control.

In this state of affairs, the gap between what is good for society and what is good for the state constantly becomes more visible. When we are talking about the progress of technology we are talking about the progress of the subordination of society by the state. And in this sense, the "cultural autonomy" of China, which until now has been delicately tolerated by the world community, is not the autonomy of society, but of the state.

So, far away from the centre, there are still some areas that remain free from electronic totalitarianism. Even their world retains a centuries-old disconnect with the rest of the world, deprived of access to external reality. In this case, the effect of the state is not direct, but indirect (suppression of society) - if we interpret

society's actual definition as a dynamic living structure prone to constant renewal in accordance with the logic of its own internal structure. The time of such societies was stopped by the states that enslaved them more than a century ago. Deprived of connections with other societies and worldviews, they found themselves immersed in sleepy cycles of inertia, which are of course convenient for the state because of its transparency and predictability.

If it is true that thought is only born from collision with other thoughts, and growth occurs only through meeting with other experiences and rethinking one's own through its prism, then it is also true that the thought and growth of these societies were stopped along with their time. The rejection of such compulsion to inertia was studied in detail by J. Scott in his brilliant monograph "The Art of Not Being Governed" — on the example of societies that formed a stateless unity called Zomia.

Meanwhile, this disaster has affected many societies around the planet, captured by states and "bewitched" by their compulsory order, one after another they fell into suspended animation, unable to reflect on themselves in history, nor to revise stable practices: bodily, ritual, religious, agricultural, economic, practices of interaction with animals, and so on. No matter how monstrous they may look from the perspective of modern scientific knowledge — insofar as it is directed not to the preservation of the political status quo of the West, but to more or less relevant working ideas about reality.

Apparently, this is the main reason for the preservation in modernity of the practices regarded by the enlightened West as "barbaric" (note: which is fundamentally wrong: historically just those were called barbarians who evaded the state proclaimed by civilization. But in this case it's about those who remained in the state, and whose time was stopped by it). Whether we are talking about the Arab world, about Pakistan, about the countries of Africa, or even about close Dagestan — every time we see

exactly such a society: closed and suppressed by the state, which stopped its time and movement. confrontation between the interests of society and the state. Even such ambiguous and (paradoxically) celebrated current-day thinkers

Alexander Fyodorov, the director of the film "They Too Dreamed", dedicated to contemporary Dagestani women, aptly caught this trend. After the premiere in St. Petersburg, he was asked a sarcastic question from the audience about how he proposes to solve the problems of these women without destroying the culture of their society, he replied: "I do not think it is right to impose Western norms on Dagestani society. But I consider it necessary to help it ensure openness so that it can develop, proceeding from its originality, thanks to the possibility of meeting with something other than itself — with the outside world."

However, in a COVID-19 situation, the nature of the danger is due to a different model. Consistently deprived of political subjectivity (first for centuries, and then for decades after the revolution), Russian society has practically reached the bottom, plunging into an infantile neurosis with addition of heavy Oedipus complex and its characteristic identification with the sacred Father. The tragic events of 2014 (occupation of Crimea and the east of Ukraine by Russia) and the subsequent two years of celebration demonstrated the proximity of this bottom. In such a situation, the unconditional, uncomplaining, almost enchanted adoption by the Russians of a whole series of the most draconian laws and measures that violate an ever wider range of their own interests looks quite natural.

Similarly, in Chinese society, there is simply nowhere to take reflections on their own cultural practices — including the practice of eating fruit bats. Closed and suppressed by the perfect machinery of power, it is doomed to hypnotic wandering in its own circles of past centuries, being deprived of any political subjectivity, and therefore not seeing itself either in the present or in the future. And today, for the first time, it becomes truly clear: it can be unsafe not only for the very inhabitants of such a society.

But, like any infant in the stage of identification, Russian society was doomed to inconsistency, which was only looking for a chance to reveal itself: somehow it was necessary to show disobedience. But how — without angering the strict Father?

The virus, which burst out of the darkness of age-old rituals and habits, spread throughout the planet. Because the world is no longer a closed system. Even if authoritarian regimes tend to continue to hide it. Even if this is unknown to a resident of a remote Chinese village, accustomed to breakfast, lunch and dinner with bats (or worse). The reality of the planet has changed, and societies that did not have time to consciously take these changes into account but keeping their autonomy, turned out to be dangerous for it through no fault of their own. China is an obvious example of this.

COVID-19 presented the answer to this pressing question. Finally, there is an opportunity to disobey without touching on the political. The baby knows: minor offences will not anger even a strict Father, but can touch him — like a cute prank. Having listened to the first order on the self-isolation regime, the Russians happily went to violate it. With all the ensuing consequences in terms of an increase in the number of infections. The dusty spectre of Soviet bravado about indestructibility has become a common justification for this spontaneous frivolity.

But not the only one. Russia may well serve the others. Having an experience of authoritarian regimes similar to the Chinese, historically it quite repeats the considered drama of Instead of popular advice and a collective consensus on strategies for caring for oneself and each other, or even a powerless stupor, which is more familiar to Russian reality, joyful

festivities suddenly began. As if the post-Soviet world was not alien to them in its normal everyday life, and did not surpass most other worlds in gloom and necroticism. This paradoxical disobedience naturally gave rise to new control measures — and new technologies to improve them. Will they disappear after the epidemic? And what will the world be like if it has gained experience in using them? Today we can only guess.

So far, only the danger of such a society to itself is obvious — just as a baby is dangerous to itself. Especially if we take into account the cases of bullying of the infected, the news about which in the media is increasingly common.

However, while partially retaining its tightness, similar to the Chinese, in most of its territories, and mostly cut off from the global cultural process (in science, art, technology, etc.), Russian society — like Chinese — remains stopped in time of past Russian statehood. In this sense, it is doomed to reproduce the inertia of archaic reactions and patterns of behavior that are no longer relevant to the contemporary era. At the same time, devoid of political subjectivity, it is not able to outgrow these models and independently formulate a vision of itself in the present and the future, and therefore become commensurate with the era in which - against its own will — it is still included. Apparently, this is the reason for its inability to adequately respond to the challenges of our time. Including such a complex one as an epidemic.

We have considered only two examples of the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and the phenomenon of statehood. However, the trajectories of events in other countries and the incredibly high mortality in some of them suggest a more general nature of this relationship.

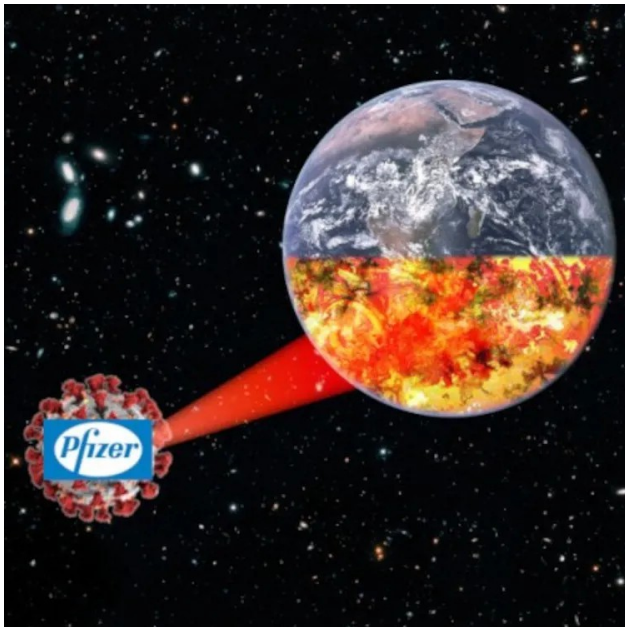
So, the fundamental feature of today is that for the first time in history, statehood demonstrates its danger to society and the human being in

such a multifaceted vivid manner and at the same time, all over the world. Stopping the time of societies as dynamic units developing in accordance with their own internal logic, depriving them of political subjectivity and disorienting them in history, takes away from them the opportunity to move in unison with each other and the growing knowledge of mankind. And it decisively hinders their adequate reaction to the significant events of today - to the extent that now they inevitably concern everyone.

Locked in the inertia of the past — as in China, numb in oedipal infantilism — as in Russia, or suffering from the mechanistic nature of neoliberalism — as in the West, all of them today find themselves in the face of a new, not yet comprehended unity. And within it today, only two paths are visible: a revision of current political projects with access to a radical historical subjectivity, and — a high-tech strengthening of statehood, which has mastered new scenarios of control. The latter will inevitably serve as the achievement of new abysses in the peak, the natural stage of which was Covid-19.

COVID-19: Between society and state was originally published on <https://akrateia.info/covid-19-mezhdu-obshchestvom-i-gosudarstvom/> by Maria Rachmaninova

Debunking the arguments for vaccine apartheid by Cory Doctorow



The Biden administration's (carefully worded) support for a WTO IP waiver on vaccines may not be the full-throated support the issue warrants, but it was still a complete reversal of decades of subservience to Big Pharma, and the industry is waging all-out war.

The arguments against allowing poor countries to make their own vaccines are a mix of racist condescension ("poor brown people are too primitive to make high-tech vaccines"), misdirection ("patents aren't the problem") and bad faith ("we don't have enough materials").

Writing for Counterpunch, Sonali Kolhatkar teases apart each of these arguments. Take the argument that poor countries can't make vaccines – laughable on its face, given India's centrality to the world's vaccine supply. (<https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/05/20/why-big-pharmas-arguments-against-patent-waivers-dont-add-up/>)

The problem isn't that India doesn't know how to make vaccines – the problem is that India's

brutal, variant-driven outbreak has caused the country to hit pause on exports, halting the supply of vaccines to much of sub-Saharan Africa.

(<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2021/05/biden-has-power-vaccinate-world/618802/>)

The idea that poor countries are especially prone to unsafe practices that make people hesitant to get vaccinated is pretty rich, given the US experience, where government cronies raked in millions of dollars while spoiling millions of vaccine doses. (<https://arstechnica.com/science/2021/05/emergent-got-27m-a-month-to-prep-vaccine-plant-then-ruined-15m-jj-doses/>)

Countries in the Global South can make their own vaccines, but only if the WTO green-lights it. It's not enough for Moderna to promise not to enforce its patents, because the WTO can still do it for them, raining down terror on poor countries.

Pharma has some very high-profile champions, and chief among them is Bill Gates, who evidently sees defending "IP" in principle as the key to advancing his ideological agenda, both personally and through his foundation. I discussed Gates's ideology in depth in this interview with Luke Savage for Jacobin, where I explore the core idea of "IP" as an ideological construct: that the law should empower firms to control their customers, competitors and critics. (<https://jacobinmag.com/2021/05/cory-doctorow-interview-bill-gates-intellectual-property>)

IP is the tip of the spear for all right-wing ideology, which Corey Robin clearly identified in THE REACTIONARY MIND: the belief that some people are born to rule, and others to be ruled over, and any attempt to thwart destiny makes us all worse off. (<https://coreyrobin.com/the-reactionary-mind/>)

That's why Gates personally intervened to scuttle the Oxford team's plan to make its

publicly funded vaccine research free to all, claim that once the rich world has been vaccinated there will be capacity to vaccinate the rest of the world reveals the bad faith in the argument that the world doesn't have the raw materials to make vaccine doses for all.

coercing them into doing an exclusive license deal with Astrazeneca. (<https://khn.org/news/rather-than-give-away-its-covid-vaccine-oxford-makes-a-deal-with-drugmaker/>)

AZ promised to sell vaccines at cost to the Global South...once it's done providing doses to rich countries. This is also the premise behind Gates's COVAX initiative, whereby poor countries can register for donations from philanthropists, corporations and wealthy countries.

As Gates describes it: "Some of the rich countries including the US and the UK, even this summer will get to high vaccination levels and that'll free up so that we're getting vaccines out to the entire world in late 2021 and through 2022." (<https://news.sky.com/story/covid-19-bill-gates-hopeful-world-completely-back-to-normal-by-end-of-2022-and-vaccine-sharing-to-ramp-up-12285840>)

That's the deal that Gates – and other COVAX boosters – want: poor people shouldn't expect to help themselves. They should "wait their turn." Some are born to rule, some are born to be ruled over, and upending this natural order will do no good.

Whether driven by greed, racism or ideology, this is not a folly the world can afford. Allowing continued spread through the 125 poorest countries (pop 2.5b) will kill hundreds of thousands, if not millions. 2021 is on track to have a higher covid death-count than 2020. Even if you identify with the rulers, and not the ruled-over, this is madness. Every time the virus infects someone, it undergoes millions, even billions of replications. Each replication carries a small chance of mutation. Each mutation has a small chance of becoming more virulent, more lethal, more vaccine-resistant. No one is safe on a half-vaccinated planet. You can't declare only one end of the swimming pool to have a "no pissing" end. The fact that COVAX backers

Adopting COVAX instead of a WTO waiver means that access to vaccines can come with strings attached – demands to privatize publicly owned infrastructure or knuckle under to other demands. A WTO waiver would put poor countries in charge of their own destiny.

The Gates camp is big on being in charge of your own destiny – if you're one of the born rulers. Just listen to how Gates and ghouls like Howard Dean talk about how strong protections for their privileges provide the "incentives" needed to produce live-saving vaccines. (<https://pluralistic.net/2021/04/08/howard-dino/#the-scream>)

Nevermind that mRNA vaccines owe their existence to tens of billions of dollars in public investment, with the monopolistic pharma companies only coming in after all the risk was shouldered by what Mariana Mazzucato calls "the entrepreneurial state." (<https://pluralistic.net/2021/05/15/how-to-rob-a-bank/#roll-the-dice>)

It's a point that was beautifully made by Rep Katie Porter with one of her trademark whiteboard-based Congressional grillings of the CEO of pharma company Abbvie during a hearing on price-gouging. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aabrV1OmLU0>)

Porter asks the CEO how much money his company spends on R&D, marketing, compensation and stock-buybacks and other forms of financial engineering. She already knows the answers, and has circles of colored construction-paper ready to show the relative spending. All of this builds to a triumphant climax in which Porter affixes a vast blue circle representing "Stock buybacks and dividends" to

her Whiteboard of Justice, a circle so big it dwarfs everything else on the board.

The vaccine manufacturers absorbed billions in public cash and have told their shareholders to expect a rosy future in which they charge \$175/dose for annual boosters. Their CEOs took home tens of millions in bonuses based on those promises.

Those are the true stakes here: not "IP" as an incentive for those who were born to rule to deign to develop the medicine we all need. We get that from public funding, from competition, and from the scientists who do the real work – not the executives who privatize it.

The cost of letting poor countries control their own epidemiological destiny is depriving monopolists of that control.

- Saving millions of lives
- Preventing vaccine-resistant, more lethal variants
- Giving people control over their own destiny rather than making them beg with multinational corporations and elite philanthropists for their very lives

Debunking the arguments for vaccine apartheid was originally published on <https://pluralistic.net/2021/05/21/wait-your-turn/#vaccine-apartheid> by Cory Doctorow

Corona van onderop samen te lijf by Peter Storm

Net als iedereen zijn ook anarchisten overvallen door de corona-pandemie. Vrij snel werden de contouren van een aanpak zichtbaar in analyses en verklaringen. In veel van die analyses wezen mensen er vooral op hoe corona staten het excuus verschafte dat ze gretig gebruikten om die repressie op te voeren. Niet zozeer het virus als wel de lockdowns en wat die aanrichtten, werden doelwit van furieuze kritiek. Ik vond en vind dat problematisch, want juist de pandemie zelf vroeg en vraagt om een solidair en anti-autoritair antwoord.

De kritiek op lockdowns en dergelijke was helemaal geen onzin! Want ja, staten hanteerden hun uitgaans- en samenscholingsverboden behendig, ‘tegen het virus’. Mensen met kantoorbanen konden veelal thuiswerken: dat scheelde besmettingsgevaar via collega’s, en ook bespaarde het riskant vervoer in drukke bussen en treinen. Maar arme mensen die wel naar buiten moesten om de kost te verdienen, nog armere mensen die de straat op gedreven werden uit woede omdat ze inkomens kwijt waren: pech gehad. En natuurlijk waren bij handhaving van lockdowns de doelwitten selectief gekozen: hoe donkerder de ‘overtreder’, hoe gretiger de handhavers, of het nu boa’s waren in Rotterdam of Carabinieri in Bologna.

Ook de selectiviteit van lockdowns sprong in het oog. Kids mochten niet op straat rondhangen, want avondklok. De kids mochten ook niet meer naar de kroeg, want lockdown. Dezelfde kids en anderen ‘mochten’ wel dag in dag uit naar slecht geventileerde en dus coronariskante bedrijfsruimtes – callcentra, slachthuizen, distributiecentra – om daar ‘essentiële arbeid’ te verrichten. Dat virus werd op deze manier halfslachtig afgeremd – want drukke samenkomsten die niet door gingen scheelden besmettingen – maar mocht rondrazen als het bedrijfsbelang dat vereiste.

Als de kids pech hadden, ‘mochten’ ze ook naar school waar het al niet veel veiliger was dan in een bedompte bedrijfshal. Wat heb je aan zo’n lockdown? Eentje die wel de fun uit het leven haalt, maar het virusgevaar hooguit halfslachtig indamt, en vaak zelfs dat niet?

Van hieruit kun je twee kanten op. Je kunt wel zeggen: effectievere lockdowns, graag! Weg met de gaten erin, weg met de hypocrisie, ga dat virus nu eens echt indammen! Dat was, vooral aanvankelijk, de benadering van een groep als Containment Nu. De kracht ervan was dat dit het duidelijk maakte hoe nalatig de overheid is in de taak die ze zichzelf wettelijk hebben toegedicht: het beschermen van mensen tegen ernstige ziekte. De zwakte was dat er voor een oplossing heel erg geleund werd op de overheid als onze redder, wat die overheid natuurlijk helemaal niet is. Dat doet trouwens aan veel van de kritische inzichten die in en om Containment Nu geformuleerd zijn, niets af. Wat mij betreft hebben we een bottom-up versie van containment en virusbestrijding nodig, maar daarover verderop meer.

Je kunt ook zeggen: weg met dat hele hypocriete en ineffectieve lockdownbeleid! Trotseer avondklok en samenscholingsverbod! Overtreed hun regels, weerstreef de repressie! En ga niet mee met het verhaal er achter: dat drastische beperkingen van samenkomsten en ontmoetingen nodig zijn om de pandemie in te dammen. Anarchisten in Griekenland en Italië, maar ook in Duitsland en Canada, legden hier de klemtoon. De eigen gezondheid en die van elkaar werd niet vergeten: om relatief safe te zitten maar niet in totaal isolement te raken, kon je als het ware je eigen bubbel vormen, en daar met elkaar afspreken welke mate van risico je acceptabel vindt. CrimethInc. koos zo’n lijn.

In deze pleidooien zat veel nuttigs, maar ik zag ook zwakke plekken. Te vaak gingen pleidooien tegen lockdowns gepaard met relativeringen van het corona-gevaar. Via cherrypicking slaagde men er dan in om wetenschappers te vinden die stelden dat het percentage mensen dat na

besmetting daadwerkelijk ziek werd en dood ging, nauwelijks hoger was dan griep. Collega-wetenschappers namen zulke wetenschappers gedocumenteerd onder vuur, maar die kersen werd dan niet uitgekozen.(1) Ook trof ik in verslagen over protesten tegen lockdown-repressie een enkele keer de inmiddels toch echt volledig gediscrediteerde, maar toen ook al zeer dubieuze griep-vergelijking aan. Na een bericht uit april 2020 – van Dialectical Delinquents, gepost op de anarchistische website Enough 14 (2) – uit Thessaloniki, Griekenland, over voetbalsupporters die met traangas uiteengejaagd waren, lezen we dat er volgens de overheid 216 corona-doden waren in Griekenland. En dan er achteraan: ‘In het griepseizoen van 2018-2019 waren er 150 doden, toegegeven: over een langere periode’. Ja, je vergelijkt een heel griepseizoen met een pandemie die nog maar net is begonnen. En je laat ook het niet onbeduidende feit weg dat er tegen die griepepidemie geen beperkende maatregelen waren, en bij corona dus wel, hoe halfslachtig ook.

Verderop in hetzelfde stuk dezelfde vergelijking. Dan gaat het over Niger. ‘Botsingen als de politie mensen belet om naar de moskee te gaan tijdens de virus-avondklok’. En dan er achteraan: ‘Niger heeft 20 doden gehad door het virus. In 2019 waren er 59 doden door griep.’ Een paar weken corona vergelijken met een heel griepseizoen is misleidend. Aantallen griepdoden in een situatie zonder lockdown vergelijken met aantallen coronadoden met lockdown is ook misleidend, behalve als je bij voorbaat helemaal zeker weet dat lockdownmaatregelen sowieso geen enkel effect op besmettingen hebben. Maar precies dat was natuurlijk de vraag.

Een andere vraag dient zich aan: als de aantallen corona-doden in Griekenland en Niger toen al veel hoger waren geweest dan het aantal griepdoden, had(den) de schrijver(s) van dit verslag dan anders aangekeken tegen lockdowns? Wordt hier niet vooral ingespeeld gevoel dat die hele pandemie vreselijk werd

overdreven om de staat van een repressie-excuus te voorzien? Ik geloof zelf dat avondklok en samenscholingsverbod sowieso verwerpelijk waren en afgewezen horen te worden. Maar daar hebben we geen relativering van corona voor nodig, geen het-is-maar-een-griepje praat.

Intussen ontbrak er in deze teksten iets heel essentieels: ambitie tegen de pandemie zelf. Het was alsof anarchisten zich enkel bekommerden om de gevolgen van de pandemie – mensen in nood te ondersteunen via wederzijdse hulp projecten; door bescherming van onszelf en elkaar tegen het virus zoveel mogelijk te waarborgen met veilige bubbels; door te ageren tegen de lockdown-repressie en die ook daadwerkelijk te trotseren. Wat veelal werd bepleit en gedaan was: overleven in de pandemie, en intussen de strijd zo goed mogelijk gaande houden. Waardevolle, onmisbare zaken! Maar wat niet gedaan en nauwelijks zelfs maar bepleit werd was: de pandemie zelf bestrijden. De nalatigheid en ineffectiviteit van het staatsbeleid werd fel en met goede argumenten gehegeld. Maar van een eigen aanpak om de pandemie niet alleen te doorstaan maar ook te verslaan, was weinig sprake.

COVID werd gezien als weer een monsterlijk product van het kapitalisme. Dat kapitalisme moest dus weg, om ons van het pandemische gevaar te verlossen. Dat klopte allemaal, maar moest intussen niet ook de pandemie zelf gekeerd worden? Hadden we geen aanpak nodig die er voor zorgde dat steeds minder mensen besmet raakten, ziek werden en dood gingen van het corona-virus? Dat laten we toch niet aan het systeem en de machthebbers over?

Ik vind dit hiaat frappant. Het is soms alsof veel anarchisten zeggen: het fascisme is een product van het kapitalisme, de overheid lost het niet voor ons op, maar zelf beperken we ons tot het overleven van de fascistische dreiging, we wagen ons niet aan het verslaan ervan met alle mogelijke en minstens een dozijn onmogelijke

middelen. Het is soms alsof we in de klimaatbeweging wel vaststellen dat het systeem de schuld is en dus weg moet, maar ons niet inzetten om elk project en elk besluit te blokkeren, saboteren en torpederen waarmee nog meer fossiele brand- en grondstoffen worden gebruikt en dus nog meer dodelijk broeikasgas in de atmosfeer gebracht. En alsof het genoeg is om mensen te leren hoe je klimaatrampen – overstromingen, hittegolven, volg het dagelijkse nieuws van juli 2021... – via wederzijdse hulp kunt doorstaan. Dat zou toch merkwaardig zijn?

Met dit hiaat missen we ook nog eens kansen! Want een anarchisme dat niet alleen helpt om rampen te doorstaan maar ook om die rampen daadwerkelijk te keren, krijgt iets onweerstaanbaar aantrekkelijks. Wie wil er nu niet van verschroeiing en overstroming, steeds vaker en steeds heviger, af? Wie wil er nu niet van dat rotvirus af? Ik geloof dat anarchistische principes ons bij beide taken kunnen helpen. Wat hieronder volgt zijn wat suggesties richting een corona-aanpak die niet alleen de gevolgen van corona binnen de perken houdt, maar daadwerkelijk deze pandemie kan verslaan op een manier en met een effectiviteit die staten en autoritaire politieke stromingen nooit kunnen.

Maar eerst: ik ga het niet uitgebreid hebben over de zorg in engere zin, over ziekenhuizen, testbeleid en vaccinatie. Voor gezondheidsinstellingen geldt: in gemeenschapshanden brengen en organiseren op basis van zelfbeheer door personeelsleden, voor vaccinatie geldt: de greep van de commercie breken, weg met de patenten en dergelijke. De hele zorg natuurlijk kosteloos en vrij toegankelijk maken. Geen hogere wiskunde, doodgewoon anti-autoritair antikapitalisme dus. Geen reden om er hier heel gedetailleerd op in te gaan. We gaan het vooral hebben over: hoe bedwingen we op sociale en anti-autoritaire wijze de pandemie? Daar gaat-ie.

Corona verspreidt zich door de lucht. Uit zichzelf kan dat virus niet reizen. Mensen

vervoeren het virus. Ze ademen (en hoesten, en niesen) het uit, andere mensen ademen dan met virus besmette deeltjes weer in en raken besmet. Daar ligt dan ook ons aanvalspunt tegen pandemie! Dat is de rationele, epidemiologische kern van lockdownbeleid: als je voorkomt dat mensen elkaar ontmoeten, voorkom je ook dat mensen elkaar besmetten. We wijzen de manier waarop de staat onze bewegingsvrijheid inperkt om ontmoetingen en besmettingen te voorkomen af. Terecht! Maar daarmee is noodzaak om ontmoetingen te beperken niet weg. Het alternatief is Brazilië onder Bolsanaro, Nederland onder Rutte: een voortrazend virus, steeds meer zieken en ontzagwekkende sterftcijfers.

Wat we nodig hebben is het nuttige effect van een lockdown, maar dan van onderop, gezamenlijk door ons zelf, en zonder repressie. Heel in het begin van de pandemie zag je voorbeelden. Ouders en docenten wachtten in maart 2020 niet op schoolsluiting van hogerhand. Ze dwongen die feitelijk af, van onderop. Ze begonnen zelf de kinderen thuis te houden. Fabrieksarbeiders in de VS en Italië wachtten niet altijd tot de overheid de bedrijven dichtgooide waar ze werkten. Ze gingen in staking om dat af te dwingen, of minstens goede veiligheidsomstandigheden op de werkplek te eisen. Dat deden ze voor eigen gezondheid en veiligheid, niet om de pandemie als geheel te bestrijden. Maar je kunt de logica van dit soort acties wel doortrekken en er een strategie tegen corona uit destilleren.

We kunnen prima zeggen: niet hun lockdown, maar onze shutdown! Horeca dicht – door het personeel zelf, dat immers het meeste en meest directe gevaar loopt. Fabrieken dicht, want het zijn besmettingshaarden, net als het woon-werkverkeer. Scholen dicht, via een staking van docenten, een schoolboycot door leerlingen en via ouders die hun kinderen thuis houden, met name waar die te jong zijn om zelf zo'n boycot in de praktijk te brengen. Al dit soort plekken pas weer open als er adequate veiligheidsmaatregelen – vooral ventilatie – zijn

genomen, en ook dan met flink afstand houden en mondkapjes op. Ja, die dingen helpen, maar vooral als vrijwel iedereen ze draagt. Ook hier zie ik een actiemogelijkheid: waarom niet, individueel en in groepsverband, het dragen van mondkapjes promoten op de plekken waar we wonen, werken, reizen, boodschappen doen? Een van hogerhand opgelegde mondkapjesplicht is onverteerbaar. Een van onderop geregelde afspraak dat we op onze werkplek, school, de kantine, noem maar op mondkapjes dragen is vrije associatie in de praktijk – want waarom moet ik me associëren met mensen die mijn veiligheid in gevaar brengen door geen mondkapje op te doen?

Dit is de aloude anarchosyndicalistische strategie van de algemene staking in moderne bewerking. Staken tegen virusverspreiding! Met het stakingswapen kunnen we tegelijk afdwingen dat mensen die thuis zitten – vanwege de sluiting, maar ook als ze positief op corona zijn getest, als ze ziek zijn en dergelijke – van hun inkomen verzekerd blijven. De maatschappij gewoon een handvol weken – zoveel mogelijk dichtgooien en platleggen – eigenhandig en gezamenlijk. Intussen gedragen we ons voorzichtig en zorgzaam: afstand houden, mondkapje, drukte mijden, afzien van samenkomsten.

Het lijkt hier misschien alsof we ons hier gaan gedragen zoals de overheid dat van ons vraagt: voorzichtig, met afstand, en soms met mondkapje. Oppervlakkig gezien is dat zo. We houden dan echter afstand – fysieke, geen sociale! –, niet omdat Rutte dat beveelt maar omdat we het zelf verstandig vinden. Wat is er anarchistisch aan het overtreden van ge- en verboden, enkel en alleen omdat het ge- en verboden zijn? Wat is er anarchistisch aan het om zeep brengen van iemand, enkel en alleen omdat er een wet is die zegt dat dat niet mag? Iets doen omdat het verplicht is, iets nalaten omdat het verboden is, dat is gezagsgetrouw. Iets doen omdat het verboden is, iets nalaten omdat het verplicht is, is net zo goed gezagsgetrouw, alleen in spiegelbeeld. De nee-

fase van opgroeiende kinderen is slechts een vraag op: moet dit werk sowieso wel gedaan worden? Als we toch aan het staken zijn en stap in het groeiproces naar autonoom gedrag, niet meer. Autonomo doe je pas als je iets doet of nalaat ongeacht of de staat het verboden goed stilgelegde slachthuizen en verplicht of enkel toegestaan heeft, als je wapenfabrieken – ik noem maar iets - helemaal gewoon je eigen geweten en verstand gebruikt, dichthouden en mensen die daar werken je eigen plan trekt.

Het thuisblijven dat via een shutdown gerealiseerd wordt, dient draaglijk en mogelijk te zijn. Niet iedereen heeft een thuis, en vaak is het thuis onveilig bovendien. Een shutdown wordt niet veel als niet iedereen een veilige en relatief comfortabele plek heeft om te verblijven. Dat betekent werk aan de winkel, en de ruime ervaring inzetten die in anarchistische kringen met kraak- en bezettingsacties is opgedaan. De wederzijdse hulp waar anarchisten vaak in uitblinken, komt extra van pas voor al die mensen die ziek of in afwachting van testuitslag thuis zitten, en bijvoorbeeld ondersteuning nodig hebben bij de dagelijkse boodschappen. We doen die shutdown samen, we helpen elkaar door de akelige kanten van die shutdown heen zoals stakers en sympathisanten ervoor zorgen dat niemand honger lijdt en dakloos wordt vanwege inkomensverlies. En zoals bij de docentenstaking in West Virginia in de VS in 2018 er alternatieve dagbesteding en voedselvoorziening geregeld werd door stakers en hun organisaties (de lunch die kids op school kregen moest worden vervangen!), zo kunnen we zoiets in een shutdown tegen corona ook op poten zetten.

Het drastisch terugbrengen van ontmoetingen en besmettingen via zo'n shutdown kan natuurlijk niet het hele verhaal zijn: je kunt niet aan het staken blijven. We kunnen echter de stakingsdruk gebruiken om adequate veiligheid – afstand, ventilatie, mondkapjes – af te dwingen, of beter nog: het werkproces en de werkplek zelf reorganiseren en afspraken maken zodat het er veilig wordt. Dit gaat in de richting van arbeiderszelfbestuur, iets dat anarchisten bekend zal voorkomen.

Bij sommige bedrijven dringt zich natuurlijk de

Ik weet dat het bovenstaande een weinig realistisch klinkende schets is. Het is denkbaar, maar is het meer dan een anarcho-fantasie? Het aardige is echter dat we het kunnen uitproberen, in het klein. Mondkapjes dragen kan bijna iedereen. Ik weet dat het voor sommige mensen medisch of mentaal geen optie is. Het gaat me er om dat mensen voor wie daar geen obstakel ligt, niet zeuren en het ding gewoon dragen. Rond die mondkapjes kun je al kleinschalig campagne voeren (op zo'n kapje kan een logo! Waarom zie ik niet overal A's met een cirkel op dat ding?). Een algemene staking trekken we niet zomaar van de grond met dertig of driehonderd anarchisten. Maar op school stoken tegen de heropening van de scholen na de zomer kan wel, als docent, als ouder en vooral ook als scholier. Wedden dat je snel een paar medestanders vindt? Voor werkplekken en horeca geldt hetzelfde. Beginnetjes maken kan in principe iedereen. Waarom je clublocaal of sociaal centrum niet uitroepen tot coronavrije safe zone, door daar goede afspraken te maken over afstand houden, mondkapjes dragen en ventilatie?

Door de gedachtegang achter deze aanpak helder te promoten – een solidaire aanpak die de pandemie aanvalt zonder in ruil daarvoor een repressieve staat aan te moedigen, een aanpak die tegelijk iets van een zelfbestuursalternatief voor deze maatschappij suggereert – doen we veel meer dan 'enkel' een pandemie dwarsbomen. We verbreiden een anarchistische houding, en een anarchistische gedachtegang er achter. EN we vergeten natuurlijk ook niet om

het systeem aan te wijzen als bron van de pandemie, en de machthebbers als degenen die de pandemie, al dan niet ‘gecontroleerd’ over ons uitstorten en intussen het geld hun kant op laten rollen.

Ik heb voor de hier beschreven aanpak ook al een leus. ‘Samen krijgen we corona onder controle’. Maar dan echt, en zonder te leunen op een staatsgezag dat de pandemie laat razen zodat het geld kan blijven rollen. Bij ieder daadwerkelijk solidaire ‘samen’ zijn Mark Rutte, Hugo de Jonge en Jaap van Dissel zeer nadrukkelijk niet inbegrepen.

Noten

- ‘On the Anarchist Response to the Global Pandemic’, Montreal Counter-Information, <https://mtlcounterinfo.org/on-the-anarchist-response-to-the-global-pandemic/> gevonden via Enough 14 waar het op 5 februari 2020 verscheen: <https://enoughisenough14.org/2021/02/05/on-the-anarchist-response-to-the-global-pandemic/>
- Hier wordt verwezen naar de wetenschapper John P. Ioannidis, die meende te weten dat corona qua dodelijkheid nauwelijks gevaarlijker was dan griep. Misschien had zijn betoog destijds nog een zweem van geloofwaardigheid, en we waren in die tijd allemaal nog zoekende naar antwoorden. Intussen weten we dat hij niet alleen een tegenstander was van lockdowns, maar ook bij Trump aan het lobbyen was al voordat hij zijn argumenten via onderzoek openbaar had onderbouwd. Zie bijvoorbeeld: Stephanie M. Lee, ‘An Elite Group Of Scientists Tried To Warn Trump Against Lockdowns In March’, BuzzFeed, 24 juli 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/stephaniemlee/ioannidis-trump-white->

[house-coronavirus-lockdowns](#)

- ‘Contestavirus 12th – 21th of April’, The Plague and the Fire, <https://plagueandfire.noblogs.org/contestavirus-12th-21th-of-april/> gevonden via Enough 14 waar het op 22 april verscheen: <https://enoughisenough14.org/2020/04/22/contest-a-virus-12th-21th-of-april/>

Corona van onderop samen te lijf is an original work by Peter Storm, premiering in this zine.

After the Pandemic, We Can't Go Back to Sleep by David Graeber

In an essay penned shortly before his death, David Graeber argued that post-pandemic, we can't slip back into a reality where the way our society is organized — to serve every whim of a small handful of rich people while debasing and degrading the vast majority of us — is seen as sensible or reasonable.

At some point in the next few months, the crisis will be declared over, and we will be able to return to our “nonessential” jobs. For many, this will be like waking from a dream.

The media and political classes will definitely encourage us to think of it this way. This is what happened after the 2008 financial crash. There was a brief moment of questioning. (What is

“finance,” anyway? Isn’t it just other people’s debts? What is money? Is it just debt, too? What’s debt? Isn’t it just a promise? If money and debt are just a collection of promises we make to each other, then couldn’t we just as easily make different ones?) The window was almost instantly shut by those insisting we shut up, stop thinking, and get back to work, or at least start looking for it.

Last time, most of us fell for it. This time, it is critical that we do not.

Because, in reality, the crisis we just experienced was waking from a dream, a confrontation with the actual reality of human life, which is that we are a collection of fragile beings taking care of one another, and that those who do the lion’s share of this care work that keeps us alive are overtaxed, underpaid, and daily humiliated, and that a very large proportion of the population don’t do anything at all but spin fantasies, extract rents, and generally get in the way of those who are making, fixing, moving, and transporting things, or tending to the needs of other living beings. It is imperative that we not slip back into a reality where all this makes some sort of inexplicable sense, the way senseless things so often do in dreams.

How about this: Why don’t we stop treating it as entirely normal that the more obviously one’s work benefits others, the less one is likely to be paid for it; or insisting that financial markets are the best way to direct long-term investment even as they are propelling us to destroy most life on Earth?

Why not instead, once the current emergency is declared over, actually remember what we’ve learned: that if “the economy” means anything, it is the way we provide each other with what we need to be alive (in every sense of the term), that what we call “the market” is largely just a way of tabulating the aggregate desires of rich people, most of whom are at least slightly pathological, and the most powerful of whom

were already completing the designs for the bunkers they plan to escape to if we continue to be foolish enough to believe their minions’ lectures that we were all, collectively, too lacking in basic common sense do anything about oncoming catastrophes.

This time around, can we please just ignore them?

Most of the work we’re currently doing is dream-work. It exists only for its own sake, or to make rich people feel good about themselves, or to make poor people feel bad about themselves. And if we simply stopped, it might be possible to make ourselves a much more reasonable set of promises: for instance, to create an “economy” that lets us actually take care of the people who are taking care of us.

After the Pandemic, We Can’t Go Back to Sleep was originally published on <https://jacobinmag.com/2021/03/david-graeber-posthumous-essay-pandemic> by David Graeber

ANARCHIST

LIBRARY

BOOKS

EVENTS

COFFEE

BOLLOX, EERSTE
SCHINKELSTRAAT 14-16
AMSTERDAM
EVERY SATURDAY 14:00-18:00

