

From Marx to CoViD-19: the fallout of the capitalist mode of production on societies

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Abstract

The author argues that Marxian theories have been confirmed in the current health crisis, highlighting the interrelation between the predatory global economic developments of the last century and the critical dialectic of Marx in the confrontation with the capitalist production process.

The initial part concerns the treatment of the first contradiction of capitalism, that is the relationship between capital and work; the next part focuses on the discussion of the second contradiction of capitalism, or the relationship between capital and nature; the third part considers the implications of the CoViD-19 pandemic in all its kaleidoscopic facets.

Keywords: CoViD-19, Ecological Crisis, Metabolic Rift, Lockdown, Value-Labor

Introduction

In the scientific field there is currently no extensive economic literature about the attention that Karl Marx showed towards Nature, above all towards the relationship between Nature and man, even if He consecrated Nature as an essential element for human survival and development.

Probably because about two centuries ago the environmental and eco-systemic problems were considered remote, or scarcely considered. With the brief references provided in his masterpieces on the relationship between man and nature, he left an indelible imprint for scholars of these disciplines in the modern era. Also, an indelible imprint of the economic anthropology of ancient societies has been left by the substantivists (Boas 1979; Herskovits 1965; Malinowski 1910), but in this research we will deal with the distortion, in the economic field, in the man-nature relationship in modern industrialized societies using an anthropological study.

A great contribution to fully understand the cyclical problems of modern societies, development, socialism and globalized capitalism, is provided by Hann and Hart (2011), however this research only examines the man-Nature question above all referring to Marx.

We can consider the scientific contributions published in 2016 by Foster and Burkett where they endorse the environmental perspective of Marxian thought; but, also the great contribution of Saito, of the ‘Metabolic rift’ school who states that it is not possible to understand the full extent of the Marxian critique of political economy if one ignores its ecological dimension (Saito 2017: 13-14). Saito brings a new source for a broad debate with the next Marxian notebooks concerning ecology, given that the ecological and economic crises of capitalism follow one another cyclically.

After that, for the present investigation we will move precisely on the field of the relationship of interconnection and interdependence between man and Nature and we must investigate how the capitalist process has had its boost in the mode of production, consequently on the ‘ecological crack’, endemic and immanent to capitalism.

This ‘ecological crack’ or, as Marx defines it “metabolic rift” (see also Córdova 2021), is generated from the moment when capitalism subsumes the whole system based on the natural environment and on the becoming of its perfection, ‘*Natura Naturans*’, through a perpetual dynamic generating, productive and reproductive activity. Thus, the critique of this type of relationship between Nature and capitalist societies let us to orient towards a unified reading of the world, go ourselves from the division between the natural sciences and the social sciences, and therefore from the division of ecology from the economy. This interpretation of the world has provided the means to highlight the contradictions inherent in capitalist accumulation that have produced the recent ecological crises. Marx’s intuition was prophetic if we place over time the unfolding of these destructive processes to the current global viral pandemic, bursting into humanity. But according to Córdova, paving the way for a bottom-up science of conservation could eventually bridge the metabolic rift.

Marx states:

«When you ask yourself the question about the creation of man and Nature, you abstract from man and Nature. You place them as non-existent, even if you want to place them as existing. And now I tell you: if you renounce your abstraction, you must also renounce your question; if you want to remain faithful to your abstraction, you must be consequent, and if you think of man and Nature as non-existent, then think of yourself as non-existent too, because you yourself are also Nature and man» (Marx 1978: 124).

If one tries to ignore one’s existence from the generosity of nature, it means that one does not consider holistic gratuitousness. On the other hand, Nature is not free from human activities but rather it represents the matrix in which human activities materialize, just we think that it is, and cannot be anything else, one of the ‘cheapest natures’ (Merchant 1988; Pickles 2004; Moore 2017), together with the

labour-power, energy and food, so the end of Nature would inevitably lead to the end of man.

However, this '*débâcle*' leads us to reflect on a reshaping of lifestyles, *ergo* of a reorganization of life, of a more responsible and more rational relationship with nature for a future projected towards sustainability and sharing, even if man put up resistance to any change.

Inertia to change one's lifestyle habits is matched by inertia to change one's ideas about the world. The worldview or conception of the world is mostly that acquired through education (Tamagnone 2007: 7-8).

Towards the enhancement of work

In the capitalist system, work is impoverished of its essence to the extent that it assumes the connotation of exploitation, consequently the work-value loses its nature and takes on the configuration of 'distorted work'. It is not a coincidence that since work is represented by the produced commodities, work must take the form of utility in order to generate use values, and then we can well understand the Marxian statement that nothing can be value without being an object of use and therefore if the object is useless the work contained in it is also useless, it isn't considered as work and therefore it does not constitute value (Marx 1980a: 73). In fact, the work process is a finalistic activity for the production of use values and appropriation of natural elements to satisfy human needs (Marx 1980a: 218). Therefore, to reproduce their labour-power, workers must rely on the exchange of goods as use values (Mulcahy 2017).

Marx states:

«The production process, as a unit of the labour process and the process of creating value, is the process of producing goods; as a unit of labour process and valorisation process, it is a capitalist production process, a capitalist form of the production of commodities» (Marx 1980a: 231).

According to Marx the value of a commodity is indicated by the labour inside itself and he states that only human labour creates value and the relative labour-power has a value like all other commodities which is determined by the labour time necessary for production (Marx, 1980a: 203). In addition, from the manuscripts of 1844 we understand how the worker becomes poorer and poorer by producing more and more wealth, this justifies the worker when he becomes more and more a cheaper commodity, consequently the object produced by the work is considered as something foreign, such as a power independent from the direct producer as the work is embodied in the object, so we have the objectification of work and the lack of

realization of the workers, *ergo* estrangement (*Entfremdung*) and alienation (*Entäusserung*). About this, with pungent sarcasm and Socratic cynicism, Lafargue wrote: «Work, work proletarians, to increase social wealth and your individual misery; work, work so that, becoming poorer, you have more reasons to work and to be miserable. This is the inexorable law of capitalist production» (Lafargue 2013: 26).

And that's not enough, when Marx in the Manuscripts develops the concept of alienated labour subsumed by capital, it is difficult to understand that his critique had its foundation in the removal of man from the earth, from Nature as a source of subsistence: this began with enclosure of common land and with expropriation of the agricultural population from the land.

But since the wealth produced by a form of social reproduction organized in a capitalist way presents itself as a great accumulation of commodities, according to Marx value is considered as a real abstraction from the concrete wealth of hard and laborious social work (Marx 1987: 32). Social work is produced by the social actor: the reification and commodification of the social actor, initially reduced to the monorole of the consumer and, finally, to commodity itself (Palmisano 2017: 74).

So we can deduce that capital is detached from a human and social aspect where the use value is totally subordinate to the exchange value, to the reproductive purposes of the capital itself. Indeed, to consolidate this system, an effective subordination of labour to capital has been achieved with the consequent hierarchical social division, based on waged and fetishized labour. The vital functions of individual and social reproduction have been deeply altered, erecting a complex of reproductive functions that Mészáros (2010) defines as 'second-order mediations' where all relationships, from those between the sexes to material and even symbolic productive manifestations, like works of art, have been subordinated to the imperatives of valorisation and reproduction of the capital system (Antunes 2016: 200).

Concerning this, it is necessary to mention Baudrillard:

«In its 'wild' ethics, capital, moreover, did not care about the use value, nor the good use of the social - it was the insane enterprise, without limits, aimed at abolishing the symbolic universe in an indifference more and more marked and in a continuously accelerated circulation of exchange value. Since this is capital: the limitless realm of exchange value» (Baudrillard 1986: 13).

We can say that worker is related to the product of his work as a foreign object, he chains his life to an object, so that life no longer belongs to him, but to the object.

Against the barbarism of capitalism, Paul Lafargue wrote in 1883:

«Capitalist morality, a pitiful parody of Christian morality, it hits with anathemas the flesh of the worker; it assumes as its own ideal to reduce the producer's needs to an absolute minimum, to suppress his joys and passions, and to condemn him to the role of a machine that provides work without respite or mercy» (Lafargue 2013: 11).

Indeed, when Marx in Volume III of *Capital* considers the notion of socially necessary labour by contrasting it with the actual labour time for production, he does nothing but highlighting the distinction between the social value of the commodity and its individual value (Burns 2017: 1). In fact, Marx himself affirmed that capital decrees the separation between workers and the means of production where the needs of capital's self-reproduction override the human and social ones.

Concerning the wealth produced, Adam Smith highlights the value that workers add to that one of raw materials with their work, and states that it is divided into two parts: the first part pays the wages to the workers and the second part realizes the profit of the entrepreneur (Smith 1776); Marx refutes Smith's thesis according to which the wealth produced by labour is naturally distributed among social classes, therefore, according to Smith, there is no problem about the distribution of wealth, either that one of the imbalance between rich and poor and adds that it is the work that determines exchange value: with these statements he develops his 'theory of value-work'.

According to Marx:

«Work is the source of all wealth and all civilization, and since useful work is possible only in society and through society, the income from work belongs wholly, by equal right, to all members of society. The emancipation of work requires to rise the means of work to the common property of society and the collective organization of all work with a right distribution of labour income» (Marx 1976: 23-27).

But what is meant by 'right distribution' if not the common ownership of the means of production, or the organization on a collective basis of all the overall work, or the integral income from work with equal rights to all members of society? And it is just from the assumption of the historical process of separation of the producer from the means of production that 'original accumulation' is generated: it is not the result of the capitalist process, but the origin of the capitalist mode of production, the prehistory of capital and the corresponding mode of production.

In addition to labour, the global value of a commodity is composed of three other types of value:

- 1) The value produced by the necessary labour (variable capital);
- 2) The value produced by the means of production in use (constant capital);
- 3) The value produced by surplus labour (surplus value),

these elements are strongly related to each other if we consider the socio ecological implications that arise from an examination of the capital accumulation process following Marx's claim that the natural fertility of the soil can satisfy the increase in constant capital (Marx 2012: 517).

By convention, human labour is paid with a wage value that corresponds to the necessary labour time to produce it, but always lower than the total value generated, and it is just this surplus value that increases capitalist production: however, this overall value generated, must be higher than that one which the worker can consume.

Marx highlights two conditions for this to happen:

«Direct producers must work beyond the time necessary for the reproduction of their labour-power, for the reproduction of themselves: they must in general provide surplus labour. This is the subjective condition. But the objective condition is that they can also provide surplus labour: that the natural conditions are such that a part of their available labour time is sufficient for their reproduction and conservation as producers, and that the production of their necessary means of subsistence does not exhaust their entire labour-power» (Marx 1980b: 735).

However, if we spend the right amount of time on this argument, we notice a 'boomerang effect', that is to say that if the capitalist reduces wages in order to increase his capital, he reduces the consumption capacity of workers, but if more capital leads to a greater productive capacity, by reducing wages it is no longer possible to satisfy a greater sale of the goods produced: this represents one of the paradoxes of capitalism.

But, along with the value of the productive labour of commodities and capital, there is another type of value generated by a form of 'abstract social labour', extra-human, unpaid, free and producing 'genuine' wealth, whose exploitation generates an increasing in the rate of surplus value and therefore in capitalist production through appropriation. It is called abstract labour when productive labour in Marxian terms as producing value and rate of exploitation, is representative of a social nature value and not of an individualistic nature value:

«If the characteristics of abstract social labour are control and exploitation, those ones that define abstract social nature, are control and appropriation» (Moore 2017: 102).

The metabolic rift

Economic growth and industrial development, today more than ever, need an environmental readjustment. As written in the introduction of this article, economics and ecology must be equally the references on which to base a synergistic and sustainable development, so that environmental productivity *caeteris paribus* must be a source of growth like that one of productivity from human labour. In fact, when Marx stated that man is unable to produce anything without the generosity of Nature, without the sensible external world and through which it produces (Marx 1978: 72) and he highlighted the affirmation that production, understood as social and material process, is bound and shaped by natural conditions, he did not point out the main road to exploit Nature in order to achieve capitalist development, he did not point out the way of appropriation and consumption of natural resources in faster times than those of regeneration of the same, but he pointed out, on the one hand, the limited mode of producing and on the other hand, the ethical way of satisfying needs to avoid the breakdown of Eco-systemic equilibrium. Instead, with the dominant idea of the free trade, the resulting metabolic fracture is considered the variant that establishes the difficult relationship between nature and the contemporary capitalist world, but this generates the “social metabolic rift” in societies. Polanyi defined the free trade as “the civilization of the 19th century”, the destruction of peoples, and defined, as a “double movement” the dynamic of affirmation of the free trade and the subsequent defensive reaction it generates in populations through social movements and transnational activist network (Polanyi 1944).

The break of the Eco-systemic equilibrium inevitably leads to the onset of two global problems that are difficult to solve:

- 1) The overshoot day;
- 2) The metabolic rift.

If in the year natural resources are consumed more than the earth can produce, the overshoot day is encountered, that is the day of the year when the ecological footprint (consumption of natural resources) exceeds the global earth bio capacity (production of natural resources), and it is represented by the following relationship:
 $365 \times (\text{global bio capacity} / \text{ecological footprint})$.

The concept of “ecological footprint” was introduced by Wachernagel and Rees (1996).

It has been elaborated a table on the relationships between the ecological footprint, ecological debit/credit, the bio-productive capacity and the per capita reserve of some states (Andriola, 2019), deducing that the global sum highlights a strong ecological debt.

In 1970 the disproportionate consumption of natural resources began and the overshoot day took place in December 29th, then gradually more and more anticipated, on 23rd September 2000, on 29th July 2019, on 22nd August 2020 due to

the CoViD-19 pandemic, but in 2021 the overshoot day came back to July 29th, on 28th July 2022 (Global Footprint Network data).

The break of the Eco-systemic equilibrium implies, in the Marxian thinking, the metabolic rift.

Any progress in capitalist agriculture means a progress not only in the art to impoverish the worker, but also in the art to impoverish the soil; any progress in the increase of its fertility for a certain period of time, is at the same time a progress in the ruin of the lasting sources of this fertility. The more a country leave from big industry as the background of its own development, the more rapid is this process of destruction (Marx 1980a: 552).

Marx hopes for a way of producing without nature becoming an object of exploitation and alienation and without destroying the metabolic balances of the soil, instead capitalism generates imbalance by taking more material from the soil than it can give back.

Liebig, concerning capitalist industrial agriculture, affirmed that large landed ownership decreased the agricultural population and contrasted it with the constantly growing industrial population, creating a great rift in the social organic turnover established by the natural laws of life, so that the products of the earth are exported beyond their own borders (Liebig 2013). In fact, according to Liebig, the growth of cities coincides with a systematic impoverishment of agricultural production conditions.

On the other hand, capital is like an organism that cannot live without going beyond its borders to feed on its environment. The outside is necessary for him (Negri 2002: 214). This immanent expansionism in capital inexorably takes the form of imperialism.

The tendency to create the world market is inside the strict sense of concept of capital. Each limit presents itself here as an obstacle to be overcome (Marx, 1970: 9). It should be emphasized that both Rosa Luxemburg (1972) and Karl Marx agree in affirming that the historical motivation that pushes capital to expand and leave its own borders is to incorporate new markets to expand its range of action.

And on an ethical and organizational level:

«If we do not succeed in making the farmer better aware of the conditions under which he produces and in giving him the means necessary for the increase of its output, wars, emigrations, famines and epidemics will of necessity create the conditions of a new equilibrium which will undermine the welfare of everyone and finally lead to the ruin of agriculture» (Kapp 1975: 35).

In reference to capitalist accumulation, Marx affirmed that the precondition for the existence of absolute surplus value is the natural fertility of the soil (1971), so that on the one hand he was concerned about the ecological crises due to the

exhaustion of the soil and the on the other hand, Liebig was concerned about how to increase production by sustainable means to face the Malthusian problem of population growth.

Marx, defining the concept of metabolism (*Stoffwechsel*) as the central point of the relationship between man, nature and production, made it explicit that the work process in a capitalist system is the metabolic relationship between humanity and Nature. In fact, even the Hungarian philosopher Mészáros (1970: 99-119), in support of Marx's theory of alienation, affirmed that the 'conceptual structure' of this theory implied the triadic relationship among humanity, production and Nature, underlining that production represented a form of *trait d'union* between humanity and Nature, so that humans are considered as being 'self-mediators' of Nature. It should be emphasized that Mészáros was the pioneer in providing us with the essence of the Marxian critique of the current ecological crisis.

According to Marx, in a society other than this one they, all conflicts between human beings themselves and human beings with Nature can be resolved, so that human beings will be able to solve the problems of satisfying needs in harmony with Nature. And then there will be a more unified ecological vision of the world, which will be detached from a cultural separation between the social sciences and the natural sciences, and studies in these fields will be complemented by a study focused on the rational exploitation of natural resources.

But, since the metabolism between society and nature is also a social process, it is always possible for concepts obtained from it to react on the class struggle in history (Lukács 2000: 103-113).

We know just one science, that one of history. History can be considered having two aspects and be divided into the history of Nature and the history of mankind. However, these aspects are inseparable: as long as men exist, the history of Nature and the history of men influence each other (Marx and Engels 1972: 14).

As Moore argued, what has caused climate change, cannot be considered a series of disconnected events but must be considered as elements of a single system to be observed as a whole. Precisely the interdisciplinary study as a whole can help us to detect how the roots of capitalism have resulted in ecological crises: economic growth, social domination and inequalities are the structures responsible for the global crisis and are interconnected, these structures are immanent in the capitalist system. and without them such a system would be non-existent, *a fortiori* these crises are crises of the State and the market, Mauss and Polanyi propose alternative models to both neoliberalism and post-Keynesian neo-statism. And I add that in historical materialism the man-nature interaction, that is the dualism of naturalism and sociologism, materialism and idealism, must be recognized as categories dialectically connected in their one-sidedness, and must be transcended together, since they represent the alienation of capitalist society (Foster 2000: 11). According to Foster, materialism must be conceived as a theory of nature that originates in the Greek

philosophy of Epicurus: In its most general sense materialism claims that the origins and development of whatever exists is dependent on nature and ‘matter’, that is, a level of physical reality that is independent of and prior to thought (Foster 2000: 2). That is, at the basis of materialism there is the premise of the preexistence of the natural world and which is independent of the existence of human thought.

However, these dynamics mark the transition to modernity, built on industrialism and the elements of Nature, nevertheless they mark the dark period of humanity and contemporary economic history, bringing out the relations of power and production and reproduction in the modern world-system. In fact, it should be emphasized that industrialism, urbanization and the transport system have the power to overwhelm the great forces of Nature (Steffen et al. 2011: 615). Consequently, there is a great prospect of change in consideration from ‘capitalism and Nature’ to ‘capitalism in Nature’, that is to say that capitalism is the product of man and Nature as a whole. This combination generates a modernity characterized by the exhaustion of soil fertility, atmospheric pollution and climate change.

Indeed, the depletion of soil fertility and pollution are problems that date back to the nineteenth century (Foster 2000: 149), when in the mid-1800s the new industrial methods generated by the second agricultural revolution has been useful only to rationalize a process of ecological destruction, effectively creating a great crisis. But what characterizes this crisis is the failure to maintain soil reproduction (Foster 2000: 155; Marx 1980a: 550-553), Marx defines this as the destructive side of modern agriculture. Originally, he accuses industry to dissipate and to destroy the labour-power, hence the natural power of man, and he accuses large-scale agriculture to dissipate and destroy the natural power of the soil too, but then in the later course of development the two great systems come together and provide agriculture with the means to impoverish the earth (Marx 1980b: 926).

About the second contradiction of capitalism

After analysing the classical contradiction inherent in the capital-labour relationship regarding the productive forces and the relations of production, defined as the crisis of realization of the surplus value created in production and exposed by Marx (1971a: 5), O’Connor presents us with a more innovative concept of crisis compared to the classic one just mentioned. In his essay he shows a second contradiction, that is the relationship between capital and Nature, as the relationship between the economic crisis and the ecological crisis (O’Connor 1998; O’Connor 2021: 24-28). Here, the essence of the Marxian critique of the current ecological crisis, to which reference has been made previously, has been organically enriched thanks to the climatic events that have taken place exponentially in the last thirty years and that refer to the crisis of capitalist production. Together with the productive forces and the relations of

production, the conditions of production were also examined, e.g. (1) the natural elements that increase capital, (2) the labour-power separated from the means of production (3) and the conditions community of production, that is, the means of communication and urban space (O'Connor 2021, preface: 25).

In the first contradiction capitalism is increased by continues crises to find more efficient modes of production, while in the second contradiction capitalism destroys its own conditions of production because they are not produced as commodities and in this case the renewal of the conditions of production is politicized through the state intervention. This succession of events generates social struggles against the capitalization of nature.

According to O'Connor, from this second contradiction three new movements arise in relation to the three types of production conditions: (1) feminism in relation to the body (2) environmental movements in relation to physical-natural elements (3) territorial movements in relation to community conditions (O'Connor 1998: 64-74).

The resolution of these two contradictions of capital would pave the way for socialism. The conditions are recognized, *inter alia*, (1) in the non-subsumption of labour to capital, (2) in the non-separation the workers from means of production (3) in the knowledge of the production cycle by the workers (4) in the need for a greater use renewable energy in the production cycle.

The supporters and precursors of the second contradiction: from the 16th to 20th century

We start from the assumption that man lives in nature, nature incorporates man in a universal way.

O'Connor affirmed that the ecological crisis, as a transformation of nature, implies social transformation (O'Connor 1988: 3-4). This statement leads us to argue without delay that society is con substantial with nature. But an aberration arises when the use and abuse of nature by capital is perpetuated, so that anti-capitalist social relations give life to civil society (O'Connor 2009: 11-38).

Marx in the 'Manuscripts' states that the worker cannot produce anything without nature (Marx 1978: 72). Nature is indispensable for man, she is aware of it because it is written in its specific laws, and when nature embraces man and encloses him within it, it reunites with itself and with man they give shape to a universal whole, so for this reason, if man with his activities transforms nature, he violates it, he transforms himself incontrovertibly.

By acting through this movement on external nature and transforming it, he transforms his own nature at the same time (Marx 2013: 249).

Friedrich Engels (1968) observed that both science and nature have so far neglected the influence of human activity on his thought; they only know nature on

the one hand and thought on the other. But the peculiarity of human thought is the transformation of nature by the hand of man, so that his intelligence grows to the extent that he modifies nature, in fact man dominates nature, unlike the animal which is limited only to use them.

But already Francis Bacon in the 16th century. gives an image of nature as a woman on whom one can perpetrate violence, while Telesio tried to legitimize the independence of nature from the human world: nature cannot be subjected to either divine or human laws, Marx would define them as 'the laws of capital', in reality it will be man's task to discover the internal laws that regulate the life of nature in immanence: rules that still remain unknown. According to Telesio, the specific laws that regulate the life of nature are based on three principles: heat, cold and matter. Hot and cold have the property of perceiving and being perceived, but to carry out their action there is a need for the third principle, matter, on which they can generate their effect without maintaining an intimate relationship.

The Covid-19 pandemic

The force of creative destruction has inexorably hit the globalized world and the whole world is experiencing deep upheavals generated by the new normal life. Considering that the CoViD-19 pandemic would have been originated by a very close relationship between humans and wild Nature, (Lytras et al. 2021) Spill-Over, we can notice how man is inside capitalist social relations in ontological and teleological terms and making use, *inter alia*, of the new technologies that facilitate the capitalist system of production he points out a contradiction with Nature and ecosystem.

The original outbreak of a pandemic in one place is itself related to humanity's destructive march into the wilderness led by capitalism (Wallace et al. 2020).

«The global spread of CoViD-19 is also related to the limitations deriving from the neoliberal model of the modalities of regulation and accumulation of development. Its proactively capitalist competitive mode of regulation has been ideologically promoted, institutionally built and managed by the major regulatory agencies of the United Nations, and it is now embedded in the institutions and expectations of national agents. However, it is radically unsuitable for the forms of international cooperation needed to control a global pandemic» (Neilson 2021: 199).

And again:

«Sars-CoV-2, like other dangerous pathogens that have emerged or re-emerged in recent years, is closely related to a complex set of factors including: (1) the

development of global agribusiness with its expanding genetic mono cultures that increase susceptibility to the contraction of zoonotic diseases from wild to domestic animals to humans; (2) destruction of wild habitats and disruption of the activities of wild species; (3) human beings living in closer proximity» (Foster and Suwandi 2020: 10).

The socio-political implications of pandemic management

Therefore, it cannot be considered that the CoViD-19 cleaver is an exogenous shock, as capitalist development draws strength from the consumption of the land and from the capitalization of the value of human and extra-human resources, as already mentioned, endangering the reproducibility of life itself. International institutions are aware of this: they re-establish hegemonic roles to reconfigure the balance of power. In fact, the crisis of capitalism of 2008, accentuated with the onset of CoViD-19, was papered over the cracks with the massive intervention of money printed by the European Central Bank (Quantitative Easing), now Next Generation EU, justifying the issue to support the recovery of Europe, but really to save the capitalist economy in agony. After the crisis of September 2019, 9 trillion dollars were disbursed in six months, not considering the hypothesis suggested by many US and EU economists, of nationalizing the banks and setting them up as a public service after any bankruptcies.

Ultimately, the pandemic has highlighted a comatose capitalist-financial state which on the one hand, under the screen of CoViD-19, needs to be rescued, and on the other hand, already in crisis, is not able, in a structural way, to face the interconnected environmental and socio-health challenges, but being itself responsible, it can only respond by feeding the social fracture and trying in every way to avoid responsibility. In fact, the pandemic, reason for commercial globalization crisis, has given us the opportunity to move away from that vicious circle of an artificial vision of the world to get closer to a basic vision, to a holistic vision where no one can save himself alone.

Pandemics must be seen not as an episodic problem but rather as the reflection of a general structural crisis of capital, as explained by Mészáros (2010).

And not only that, the pandemic has also highlighted what Neo-liberism had hidden: the presence of the state not only in economic facts but above all in emergency conditions that generate fears in individuals and self-limitations, as well as uncertainties. These conditions reinsert the state at the centre of power, through coercive interventions and social subsidies. Really the policies of the authoritarian state are settling down in the form of ‘authoritarian democracy’ capable of repressing freedoms and alternative forms of expression.

The current pandemic has highlighted the formation of two schools of thought: the first one accepts the directives of the scientific world, namely those ones

according to which the vaccine to fight Sars-Cov-2 would be the only weapon; the second school of thought is made up of deniers, those who in addition to denying the danger of the virus by comparing it to a normal flu state, affirm that the vaccine is a weapon by which multinationals determine power over communities, so the pandemic has highlighted a world split in two with a pro-vaccine prevalence. It is interesting to note, however, that the pro-vaccine majority is predominantly left-wing and has a revolutionary or reformist ideology or democratic while the minority no-vax is neo-liberal and has a right-wing or populist ideology or republican that affirms individual freedom. It should be noted, in this regard, however, since the introduction of COVID-19 vaccines, the excess death rate among Republicans was 10.4 percentage points higher than among Democrats, or 1.5 times that of the Democrats (Morabia, 2023, p. 349).

Shock of international trade

During the pandemic crisis, to face the recession some advanced economies implemented large monetary policies to stimulate recovery but they achieved an unwanted effect. Trillions of liquidity have been injected into the system: speculators have invested in energy and agricultural raw materials by raising their prices, and also the prices of processed products, consequently causing the highest inflation in recent decades, close to that of 1973 and 1980. This inflationary process has generated inconvenience to energy-intensive companies, companies that, for their production cycle, need large quantities of electricity, they risk being put out of the competitive market.

To inhibit or slow down the spread of Sars-CoV-2, an immediate measure was the blocking of freight transport, and the limitation of supplies generated the shock of international trade: according to the WTO, in 2020 international trade decreased by 10% while in 2021 there was an economic growth thanks to the progressive removal of restrictions and progressive vaccinations against CoViD-19. In fact, between the third wave and the fourth wave (February-September 2021) the strong demand, due to the expectations of economic recovery, and the supply interruptions, still linked to the pandemic, got worse the situation of the supply chain: they led to an increase in prices and a delay in deliveries. The massive liquidity in the system and the interruption of international trade generated high inflation with negative repercussions on fixed income, poor families and employment levels. According to the December 2021 report of the CEBR (Center for Economics and Business Research), this inflation went hand in hand with a growth in world GDP.

The supply chain crisis generates an imbalance between supply and demand, this means that the consumer wants to buy goods but the supply system does not have the capacity to supply in adequate times.

The stringent measures adopted at the beginning of 2020 in countries all over the world to local and global transport, in addition to affecting the level of inflation, negatively affected health. In fact, in the case of shocks in the food supply, there are negative repercussions on the balance of diet and nutritional intake, this can increase the vulnerability of people to contract the virus (Short et al. 2018). Furthermore, a prolongation of the shock in food supply causes a direct impact on food transport, it affects the availability of packaged goods by food processing industries and ultimately it reduces future agricultural production and consequently also reduces current incomes (Mahajan and Tomar 2020).

Now let's consider the effect of food prices on the population. We observe that the price of food is the most suitable index for measuring the degree of individual well-being and provides a more careful assessment of food scarcity than any other indicator (Weinberg and Bakker 2014).

However, we note that the catastrophic dynamics of food transport due to CoViD-19, which increase prices to the final consumer, implode and give rise to undesirable phenomena:

- 1) They generate social unrest (Bellemare 2015);
- 2) Extreme poverty, nutritional deficiency;
- 3) Psychosocial stress and decline in social capital (Headey and Fan 2008).

Finally, another aspect that should not be underestimated is the increase in the perception of risks and the volatility of the markets: to overcome these problems, some companies have already begun to downsize their structures based abroad, i. e. companies that previously had relocated, for various reasons, some sectors are moving back within their own national territory. This economic phenomenon called re-shoring, the opposite of offshoring, has the advantage of making up for the shortcomings of the material that comes from abroad, it has the advantage to reduce significantly costs and to produce with the brand of its own country. In Italy, the sectors that have mostly applied re-shoring are fashion and electronics.

The lockdown: political measure VS health measure

Since the birth of the pandemic crisis, the state institutions of the various sectors have implemented measures aimed at containing the contagions for the fight against CoViD-19, such as the ban on gatherings, quarantine, closure of borders, the fight against fake news, the rules for vaccinations, social confinement and lockdown. If on the one hand these measures represent suitable health tools to save millions of people in the world from death, on the other hand they are suitable political instruments that enable the State to understand its degree and its ability to control a society in continuous change.

The anti-pandemic organization highlighted the inadequacy of governments and the lack of health care facilities in western countries with an advanced economy, as they are not ready to face the emergency; for previously they have implemented policies aimed at reducing health care costs.

«Private extra profit has prevailed over the common good of health; the interests of pharmaceutical companies, the power of commercial business, the business of producers have had priority over the citizens lives» (Di Cesare 2023: 72).

The reduction of health costs and therefore the weakening of the health system derives from liberalization programs *tout court* over the last thirty years to advantage of the private health sector, but in this emergency, even if by decree for temporal problems, policies have prevailed in defense of human life at the expense of the continuity of consolidated capitalist economic normality. This process was immediately stigmatized by social containment, by the lockdown. Let's analyze this provision in its various aspects.

While this measure represents a suitable tool to limit infections, on the other hand it denotes that the individual placed in isolation, alienated from the social body, becomes the object of media sensationalism and sometimes suffers mental damage. The sensational trend caused by the media, in this phase of CoVid-19, accentuates doubts, arouses mistrust, fear and panic. Instead, social media intelligence must communicate information that rapidly reduces the spread of fears and uncertainty and strengthen public confidence in public health measures (Depoux et al. 2020). We refer to social intelligence, that is, the ability to relate to others effectively and in a constructive and emphatic way, in order to make their life enjoyable. Therefore, only by collaborating can the measures adopted be effective: since reliable and unreliable information circulated on the net during the pandemic period, the WHO (The Lancet 2020) has created a web page to correct the disinformation on the CoVid-19 epidemic (infodemic): The mass panic can only be fought with information. The term "infodemic" was coined by Rothkopf (2003) and indicates an excess of reliable or false information that creates disorientation towards a topic.

Another aspect of the lockdown to consider is the anomaly that arises between the supply and demand of food production. In the short prelockdown period, due to restrictions on the transport of food, due to social panic and uncertainty about the future, the consumer increases their food supplies leading to a vicious circle of rising product prices (Vercammen 2020).

On the supply side, interruptions in the supply chain cause the reduction of production in turn caused by the reduction of work activity: increases in transport interruptions cause, in a less than proportional way, increases in layoffs in various sectors (satellite industries). The most affected commodity offered is the perishable

one. A more in-depth analysis on the heterogeneous effects of the lockdown on food products was carried out by Fang, Wang and Yang (2020).

An important aspect of the anthropological implications is represented by the set of effects that the restrictions and the lockdown have had on children between the ages of 12 and 18. Surely adolescents are the subjects who have suffered the greatest repercussions on their lives, they have seen their social relationships limited, which in that age *range* are at the basis of the development of neurobiological mechanisms and of the metamorphosis of the Self. Their socialization has undergone a slowdown in the inter-generational transfer of cultural values and social norms that guarantee the adolescent the continuity of social systems in a manner consistent with civil norms and ethical values. Communication via the PC screen has in fact blocked that emotional process typical of adolescents; they have not been able to experience what there is to experience in that age group, loves, music, passions, sports; their evolving body has allowed itself to be abandoned in the isolation of their own bedroom, only illusions and fantasies remain, but at the same time fears and anxieties, the psychosis of the contagion of the other, whoever it is.

The lock downs had only one merit, but great, that of revitalizing Nature: only a few weeks were enough to undergo substantial changes. Satellite images from NASA's Earth Data CoVid-19 Project report that air pollution has decreased by a third in a few weeks of lockdown and the quality of air and water has improved by more than 40%. The cities have repopulated the fauna that by now had moved to more welcoming places, and in the silence of the built-up area the ancestral sounds and noises of Nature have re-emerged. Nature, albeit for a short time, has recovered its spaces, because it has not suffered capitalist harassment.

Discussion

The paper show that we are witnessing an overcoming of the capitalist mode of production (creative destruction, value-labour, accumulation) within the same framework of the capitalist mode of production. In the Marxian argumentation, it does not seem to be an overcoming of capitalism for new forms of production, but it is an overcoming of the classic form of capitalism which, if on the one hand frees itself from its traditional structure, on the other hand it preserves its bases and methods by reinforcing the structure.

Not considering the Sars-CoV-2 pandemic at the centre of Marxian insights on man-Nature relations in a dialectical context and scientific pragmatism, means ignoring the historiographical knowledge of global economic geography and the practice of capitalist accumulation.

What about if we addressed the question to anthropologists?

“We think it is time for anthropologists to go further and to deal the world economy as a whole” (Hann and Hart 2011: 5). In the capitalist production process, among the productive forces, the earth and Nature have a preponderant role and human economic behaviour significantly involves other social spaces, in addition to economics and also biology, therefore it is necessary to direct the study towards similar disciplines. “The contaminations between economics and biology are very successful in this period, for example in the field called ‘evolutionary economics’, which analysed the interaction between the socio-cultural and natural spheres, on the model of Darwinian cultural ‘co-evolution’. ...The greatest gain for economic anthropology was a deeper understanding of the complex motivations in production, distribution, exchange and consumption, and the awareness of how this human economy is linked to behaviours in all other sectors”. (Hann and Hart 2011: 10-17). But even Marx, with his training as a German philosopher and with his knowledge of French sociological thought, defined the new order as an objective system of commodified social relations (Hann and Hart 2011: 34).

When Nature is commodified, social commodified relations including Welfare and social work, when everything is done for profit, without considering the role of belonging of each element with its own meaning, we are faced with a degeneration of production, for example. Covid-19. This is the emblem of market society, Polanyi opposed the ‘naturalness’ of market society, defining it rather as a historically ancient product of human society where everything becomes an object of exchange (Polanyi 1944).

As a consequence of what has been said, the analysis and discussion must be supported by integrating similar sectors:

«Anthropology is the only one interested in the entire extension of the human sciences and therefore we must question the barriers that divide them, not strengthen them. Last of all, we are less interested in labels and borders than in developing new strategies to direct the category towards the planet we all share» (Hann and Hart 2011: 202).

Conclusion

If we intend to analyse the new era of human relations with the rest of nature, we must start from its origins in the 15th century, after the crisis of the Black Plague, considering it was geographically organized by the expansive relationships based on commodities in the modern Atlantic. With the expansion of capitalism, the environmental transformation by geographical expansion after 1450 occurred five to ten times faster than the events of medieval Europe (Moore 2017: 61-62). The speed

of deforestation in various parts of the world was the emblem, the consequences are present today.

We need a radical reconstruction of society in general to promote a sustainable “planetary metabolism” (Foster and Suwandi 2020: 7).

Ultimately, the epilogue of the capitalisation of Nature should be the de-capitalisation of the same, to give back to Nature the role of regulator of all forms of life that coexist on Planet Earth.

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