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A NEW POLITICAL IMAGINATION: CREATING REALISTIC UTOPIAS

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«**metapolis** is a pluralist space: it is a place to propose ideas that supersede the traditional borders of knowledge, mobilizing them to confront global challenges. **metapolis** is a territory of hyper-connection, liberated from past nostalgia, critical of the present and committed to a sustainable and just future. It does not wait for reform that maintains the status quo, nor does it aspire to do so, either. In fact, in **metapolis** everyone suspects that this future may never come, but still are not convinced to give it up for good. The latest political, economic, technological, environmental, sociological and health emergencies just reinforce the need for us to work harder.»

metapolis is an initiative by common action forum. A collective effort of caf's team, members, collaborators and participants. Our goal is to develop and support a progressive agenda as alternative to the current model that has led us to a world of increasing inequalities, environmental devastation and unaccomplished freedom for most of the global citizenry.

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00. A NEW POLITICAL IMAGINATION: CREATING REALISTIC UTOPIAS

Andrés Lomeña
Patricio Cabello

Jun, 2021

We live in troubled times. We are witnessing how the climate crisis threatens life and jeopardizes the sustainability of the political and economic models in which we have operated for the last hundred years. There are great masses of refugees moving around the world to escape from war and famine, only to encounter fences, walls and ditches. Combined with the devastating impacts of the pandemic, the panorama resembles the end times, which summons and challenges us to herald a new future, via a new political imagination.

The project of promoting this new political imagination would be unnecessary if the old way of thinking about politics were healthy. But this does not seem to be the case. Not only do we need a new language, we need new goals. This is not an easy task, and it demands that we articulate new ideas, with old ideals. The Spanish sociologist César Rendueles recalls how artificial loyalties have been forged between wage earners and other economic actors that destroy our political imagination. This prevents us from fighting for a more egalitarian society, and condemns those who do not live in privilege to depend on the privileged. Consequently, a project for a better society, for a less polarized and unjust world, must be articulated through rehabilitating the political imagination project. This entails rehabilitation, or demolition and then reconstruction of social constructs.

From various perspectives, the poignant need for transformation emerges. The Chilean constituent process provides one example of how citizen demands find a democratic, institutional and deliberative channel. The current Chilean constituent assembly was elected to debate and draft a new constitution from scratch, and more than a third of the body is made up of representatives who do not draw from old or even new political parities, but rather from social organizations that advocated for a process of social transformation without major intermediaries. In this sense, it is a redesign from the bottom up of the political architecture. Although this carries enormous risks, it introduces an unprecedented horizon of possibilities in a country that never seems to finish its transition from authoritarianism to democracy. A process like this certainly allows us to imagine possible futures, and as it was written on the wall in several places, “Neoliberalism will end where it began. Change Chile, change the world.”

A project that leads us to dream of social conquests must consequently leads to the materialization of a realistic utopia. Simple mention of the word “utopia” as a synonym for impossibility leads us to political realism that can only represent brutalization of social, economic, political and cultural life. The reactionary political imagination has constructed powerful myths, from the Laffer curve to the growth delusion (a David Pilling expression). Or, it attributes cycles of economic prosperity to the management of conservative governments, which have too often served out economic jargon in order to sell an outdated development model. A realistic utopia begins with less visible public gestures: free meningitis vaccinations for infants, free

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higher education, removing toll road charges, or redefining the common good. Of course, these measures practically resemble privileges when there is a constant violation of human rights, or weakened democracies.

Meanwhile, corruption and tax evasion continue to nurture the powers that be. Rutger Bregman, the Dutch author of "Utopia for realists" (a book arguing for universal basic income, a world without borders and a 15-hour workday), scoffed at the Davos Forum, as the altruistic commitments were rendered hypocritical as they avoided mentioning taxes. In that sense, benefactor capitalism becomes undisguised

Ideas must continue to spring from the new political imagination, although these proposals now additionally require the capacity to attract, convince, and above all, be endowed with profound realism that allows for their implementation in the short term.

and shows itself for what it really is: empty words. In moving forward, it is key to discuss taxes, infrastructure, and life's material furnishings. Needless to say, shedding light on these issues comes with costs. Bregman himself joked on social media that he had not received an invitation to attend the Davos Forum the following year. There are other, much more dangerous costs: political repression, and the attack on freedom of expression. The search for alternatives that would guarantee fundamental rights has met with opposing economic and political powers that manipulate public opinion through the media, transforming political tensions into judicial battles, criminalizing social protest and waging legal war on progressivism.

The search for alternatives that would guarantee fundamental rights has met with opposing economic and political powers that manipulate public opinion through the media, transforming political tensions into judicial battles, criminalizing social protest and waging legal war on progressivism.

Here we are talking about infrastructure in both the literal and symbolic sense. There are structural ideologies (racism, xenophobia) and material structures (investment, public health, education) that condition ideology. For example, the supply and raw materials crisis affecting the United Kingdom and much of the world will establish new patterns of priorities and political concerns, even though we have not yet resolved the pandemic crisis (although the two are likely related). The fossil fuels industry is an enemy to conquer, although how to do this has not yet been fully articulated. Data can help in this renewed conversation regarding public affairs. For example, there is easy-to-access, hard data on how the working day was shorter until around the 1980s; delving into these socio-economic trends can help in supporting hopeful pilot projects like the four-day workday. Paradoxically, Russia declares non-working days in order to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. In many countries, leisure time will increase as a result of the pandemic's labor shocks and systemic effects, and this will not be a result of increased productivity or a major union victory.

Change that affects infrastructure can be inspiring. In Italy, several viaducts have been demolished in order to adapt to new legal frameworks addressing seismic activity. We have to learn from mistakes in planning an ambitious, but credible program for change. Possibility is not solely a matter of political will; in order for this will to shift, it must be guided by a scientific vision far removed from polarized emotions and feelings. Sentimentality is an affliction among institutions. Frankie, the computer-designed dinosaur that forms part of a UN awareness campaign, manifests as an involuntary self-parody, given countries' inoperability in the face of an unprecedented ecological crisis. Environmental catastrophism seems to be as damaging as willful ignorance of the new climate regime. Clearly, critical consciousness does not represent an ideal that solves the situation if no action is taken. In other words, fundamental decisions must be made about which development model to adopt if we want to survive.

So-called neoliberalism has not only served as an economic project, but also a cultural one. The sooner we understand the cultural impact of anarcho-capitalism, illiberal democracies, and other variations of the old, singular thought process, the sooner we can build a viable political horizon. One of the most complex facets of neoliberalism is its vision for an atomized society, which does not reconcile individual needs with the common good. This causes destruction of the social fabric as it builds a myopic political image, which only distinguishes between the market and the state. These and other questions are what we are concerned with in this issue of **metapolis**.

Below is a varied selection of articles linked by a common theme: possible contributions towards a reimagined future for democracy.

This issue's discussion begins with the article, "Pandemics Occasion the Rethinking of Shared Technology," by historian **Jo Guldi**. Based on cases like that of cholera, Guldi traces the continuity between sanitation networks of the past and the shared technologies of today, allowing us to telecommute. Public broadband at first seemed a caprice of technological experts, but after the events of 2020, it seems it has become a structural necessity in maintaining society. This can assist us in reexamining judicial decisions in the very recent past, including the condemnation of some Spanish city councils offering free Wi-Fi.

Maysoun Douas then advocates for a redefinition of the framework of political coexistence in, "Towards a New Social Contract for the 21st Century." In her opinion, it is imperative that we devise a roadmap allowing for open and inclusive participation, in order to effect systemic change. Charting this new course means incorporating inclusion as the central axis, as exclusion and structural inequality cause profound democratic deterioration, if not completely disabling democracy. The concept of citizenship and social peace are bereft of meaning if successive migratory crises are approached as merely chance and transient. Likewise, the

promise of technological revolution should not be translated into an intensification of surveillance capitalism. Douas writes an ode to the courage of those who seek to refashion social ties in order to make relationships more horizontal and less hierarchical.

In "A Modern Debt Jubilee," economist **Steve Keen** proposes a pragmatic way to avoid drowning in our debt. This means a new economy that understands the true role of banks, rather than the outdated model of neoclassical economics. Keen has dedicated his formidable intellectual work to demystifying the economic paradigm governing us and the role of private debt. Recently, he has decided to bring visibility to the tremendous errors of those who have attempted to calculate climate change's economic impacts. The Jubilee is not a panacea, but he proposes a model that can be complemented with other measures, so long as banks and other institutions do not attempt to revamp the very problems they are trying to correct. Therefore, this serves not only as a guide to reduce debt, but also to cease certain banking operations. Economic sustainability will be key for ecological sustainability.

In turn, **Jesús Rey Rocha** and **Emilio Muñoz Ruiz** co-authored "Science and Democracy: Institutions in Search of a Sociopolitical Identity." The authors demonstrated the need for reinforcing concepts like community. The energy transition or risk analysis could benefit from collaboration between scientific and technological institutions if they remain committed to a plural democracy. The work advocates for reinventing worn expressions like sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, green economy or digital transformation. In order to rise to the occasion, the welfare state cannot bend to the demands of the market.

Then, **Concha Roldán** brings historical perspective regarding how to achieve scientific progress, and ultimately gain understanding of the other in multicultural, globalized societies. In "Historical notes in a reflection on tolerance for a new political imaginary," she traces the etymology and history of the concept of tolerance, noting its origins in modern thought. The philosophy professor emphasizes that tolerance does not translate to relativism or monolithic beliefs. Rather, it is a methodological tool with which to exchange knowledge as we move towards a tolerance that allows for true understanding of the other, alongside rational criticism, in our current and future societies.

For his part, **Joost Smiers** takes us to a little-frequented corner of reflection on the materiality of our lifestyles. In this sense, he writes about noise pollution in "Roaming Noise and Other Unwanted Sounds: Protecting the Public Domain." The Dutch political scientist appeals to the political imagination in order to signal an issue that goes unnoticed: noise as a source of inequalities and conflict. Noise is an indicator of political and urban tensions. Undesirable sound may be found at an airport, which in turn represents a mass tourism model with an ecological footprint. Car traffic noise overshadows other forms of mobility, which could be less pollutive or dangerous in terms of accident rates. In short, noise is an existential key with which we can provide new sensitivity (and new acoustics) to our societies.

The old political imagination was an intentional thought experiment: ideas sprang from a wellspring of social desires in search of the good life. Ideas must continue to spring from the new political imagination, although these proposals now additionally require the capacity to attract, convince, and above all, be endowed with profound realism that allows for their implementation in the short term. This entails making explicit what was previously only dreamed of in a more or less abstract manner. In short, great societal demands must crystallize in a present that cannot wait any longer.

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01. SCIENCE AND DEMOCRACY: INSTITUTIONS IN SEARCH OF A SOCIOPOLITICAL IDENTITY

Jesús Rey Rocha
Emilio Muñoz Ruiz

Jan, 2021

It is frequently either implicitly or explicitly implied that science and democracy go hand in hand, that both are based on and uphold critical thinking, yet in science there are no dogmas or absolute truths. In fact, science and technology do not always go hand in hand with, or remain rooted in, free and critical thinking in the democratic sense. One can theorize about the origin of the universe, discover and manufacture a vaccine, or implement the technology necessary to deploy a 5G network, with no more of a critical attitude than the bare minimum needed to rationally solve the corresponding scientific and technical problems. It is not imperative that science function politically, institutionally and socially according to democratic models. History provides us with examples of less than democratic countries and regimes that have executed great scientific and technical achievements, as well as have committed great strategic errors, as was the case with Lysenko and agrarian policy in the Soviet Union.

The link between science and democracy tends to fade in those countries not particularly characterized by political systems of a democratic nature, yet experiencing scientific and technological progress. We are confronting the beginning of the 21st Century, primarily distinguished by the COVID-19 pandemic. This century could, however, be cast in future history books as one of China emerging as the dominant world power, to the detriment of the United States, where President Trump's mandate seems to have weakened its democracy. It might also be marked by the tiredness of Europe, which still has yet to achieve internal cohesion or a common economic and social model. China, and the countries of the Indo-Pacific region within its area of influence, can challenge the United States and Europe as a political and social model, as well as their economic and scientific-technological leadership.

The sociology of science distinguishes two dimensions of science as a phenomenon or social institution: [1] one internal, and the other external. The first pertains to the norms, uses, values and customs governing the behavior of the scientific community as a group. The external dimension relates to the relationships established between the scientific community and the rest of the societal fabric.

This two-dimensional schema can also be applied to democracy. The democratic model is comprised of three different powers—the legislative, executive and judicial—ideally separate and independent. The internal dimension, at least as relates to the first two powers, which are those most closely linked to political action, is excessively present. It occupies too much space in many of the current democratic regimes, including in the media and in public life. This takes place at the expense of the external dimension, which affects democratic relations between the different communities that constitute the different powers—those of politics—with citizens, their problems and their needs.

Within the framework of this external dimension of democratic political community relations between the institutions and citizens that make up the rest of society, it is possible to incorporate two dimensions: first, a gnoseological dimension, i.e., one of knowledge found in political messages and action; and secondly, an epistemological one, specifically concerning the science of knowledge. A democracy detached from emotions is called for: one in which messages, decisions and political actions aimed at objectives like improved societal well-being, equality, or migration management, are informed by and based on objective data, evidence, or verified expert and scientific knowledge.

In a reality where humanity is subject to extreme emergencies as well as social, economic and political challenges, where the central issue in 2021 is the COVID-19 pandemic, citizens need and demand certainties and proven truths, but when faced with the pressures of immediacy, they find it difficult to accept how science and democracy work.

Dogmatism, religions, totalitarianisms and populisms affect the emotions: they provide dogmas of faith, certainties, absolute truths and simple answers to complex problems, via messages that citizens can easily assimilate. Indiscriminate acceptance is easiest, as it requires little effort and offers what seem to be satisfactory solutions to everyday problems and uncertainties. Many of these are applicable in the short term, and therefore do not necessitate any real reflection and strategy.

Science and democracy do not provide absolute and immutable truths, rather, "evolutionary truths" subject to constant scrutiny and critical analysis, and reexamined through experimentation. Furthermore, they require the effort of reflection and criticism.

On the other hand, science and democracy do not provide absolute and immutable truths, rather, "evolutionary truths" [2] subject to constant scrutiny and critical analysis, and reexamined through experimentation. Furthermore, they require the effort of reflection and criticism.

"Institutions are what matter, but you can overload them in slow motion until one day you wake up and discover that in your country there is no separation of powers, no independent media." José Ignacio Torreblanca, director of the European Council of Foreign Relations (ECFR) in Madrid, [3] makes this revealing statement: we must recognize the signs of the slow and discreet attack (in the eyes of non-experts) suffered by democracy and its institutions at the hands of infiltrating autocrats, disguised in the tulles of democracy. They are armed with populism and dogmatism, and camouflaged by networks of deception, falsehood and lies.

COVID-19 coincides with institutional weakening in many countries. In multiple cases, institutional trust is undermined from within, deliberately, via strategic planning that had already been taking place, even before the pandemic. While some institutions, including that of public health, experience strengthened citizen trust, the institution of democracy is victim to multiple attacks; the media is challenged by unfair competition from the *infodemic* and *infotoxication* that circulates without filter, encouraged and reinforced by the power of social networks. This decrease in trust affects one of the fundamental livelihoods of human societies from their origin, throughout our evolution as a species and until today. [4]

The institution of science faces a dual scenario. On the one hand, due to the pandemic, there is an increase of public trust in scientists, as well as in scientific and academic institutions. At the same time, as we will point out in the following, practices that distort scientific knowledge proliferate, along with attempts to overpower and delegitimize it.

In countries with weak scientific development and institutions, pandemic communication and scientific positions are very frequently offered individually, personally, by scientists and disseminators who, naturally, have experience and work with objectivity. At the same time, these individuals coexist with some others who, propelled by the glare of the media spotlight, end up stepping outside of their area of scientific expertise. Scientific and academic institutions (research organizations, universities, scientific societies, etc.), while striving to respond to the pandemic

through research and the application of science, do not always succeed in providing information and recommendations backed by this institutional strength.

Meanwhile, in more scientifically developed countries, a greater institutional presence is observed, which allows for more evidenced information, backed by these institutions. However, this situation tempts political powers to attempt to control these institutions, by disdaining and belittling certain scientific evidence, and thereby undermining the public's trust. This is the case with the Trump administration, which has been criticized by U.S. scientific institutions for meddling with their reports and ignoring their advice and recommendations. [5]

In turn, citizens are putting a face to scientists, as they discover scientific institutions, societies and journals. Throughout this pandemic, just as we can peer into the homes of journalists, talk shows and experts, we are peeking inside scientific laboratories, which for many citizens were unknown places; this makes it easier to discern truthful, evidenced and reliable information.

Trust in scientific institutions is pitted against attempts to blur and delegitimize scientific knowledge, by certain political parties, conspiracy theorists, denial movements, and social networks, which act to stir the cultural pot; they serve as Petri dishes where the infodemic's hoaxes, lies, and half-truths of proliferate.

It is true that currently, this knowledge and trust is mainly directed towards the field of health. However, as Yuval Noah Harari points out, it is foreseeable that once this pandemic is over, this growing respect for institutions, professionals, scientists and health personnel, will be extended to those in other areas of specialty that very directly affect us, including those experts in climate, ecology, urban sustainability, water management or behavioral sciences.

The economy is a markedly different field, which has acquired a predominant position, privileged with respect to the other sciences, as a result of its capacity for influencing emotions. It offers what appear to be certainties, yet they do not always rest on empirical or objective evidence; it seemingly presents indisputable truths, no matter how much time constantly modifies them, which is either accepted or excused by lack of collective memory or scientific courage. Its role becomes particularly prominent in societies which, like Spanish-speaking societies, do not have a language that has differentiated terms to clearly and precisely distinguish academic economics from that which refers to the organization and management of assets. The English language, by contrast, distinguishes between *economy* (the economy; the system of finance, commerce and industry through which wealth is generated and used) and *economics* (economic science; social science that deals with analyzing and describing production, distribution and consumption of wealth).

Science is advancing the understanding of the current environmental and health emergencies' effects, and the prospective analysis of possible future effects. In fact, for some time, scientists have been warning about the occurrence of pandemics, as well as about global warming effects and the overexploitation of planetary resources. Scientific institutions have the capacity to generate knowledge: consultative, predictive, even didactic capacity. It can also raise populational and institutional awareness. However, their direct capacity is very limited, if not null, beyond the influence they may have on third institutions and on society. They do not have legislative or normative capacity, much less judicial, even though they may try to provide empirical knowledge to the three powers in support of decision-making.

The potential of an impending, substantial transformation once we have defeated the COVID-19 pandemic, commands a new institutional paradigm, and structural change in public and private institutions, as well as in public policies. Moreover, it requires change in the exercise and values of citizenship, along with all the rights and obligations this entails.

Photo_ **Farhad Sadykov**_CC BY 2.0

The potential of an impending, substantial transformation once we have defeated the COVID-19 pandemic, commands a new institutional paradigm, and structural change in public and private institutions, as well as in public policies. Moreover, it requires change in the exercise and values of citizenship, along with all the rights and obligations this entails.

To carry out this change, we prefer that, as with science, institutions stand "on the shoulders of giants," analyzing and critically reviewing what has been done in the past, as well looking to future possibilities. This entails recognizing and correcting the mistakes that have been made, and rejecting erroneous knowledge, or whatever does serve useful in facing the future. This means advancing on the foundations of valid, proven knowledge. We must recognize, as Manuel Cruz [6] indicates, that one's own merits (both individual and collective) are thanks "to the influence and previous work carried out by a previous person, group or a generation," and must also take care to "adopt precisely that same approach when speaking of demerits." We are calling for something fundamental and rare: self-criticism.

Facing this systemic crisis requires departing from the pride and arrogance that characterizes our self-described "developed societies," in order to analyze what is happening to us from a place of humility and modesty. We must recognize that we are facing a situation which, as Alessandro Baricco points out, [7] has found favorable breeding ground among a series of circumstances combined with the inertia of "prolonged and exasperating agony." Far from being a new, divine punishment—as religious fundamentalists interpret it—the COVID-19 pandemic represents the new and bloody manifestation of an Anthropocene period characterized by the human footprint on both planet earth and the rest of its inhabitants. The current health, economic and social emergency reflects and manifests a systemic crisis that affects and derives from the elements composing this breeding ground: "the democratic system, the consumer society, the capitalist system, the Anthropocene, the romantic culture, the elites of the 20th Century," [8] globalized capitalism, overexploitation of natural resources, growing inequality, etc.

Expressing a "new political imaginary," this second volume of **metapolis** invites its authors to reflect on the state of permanent systemic crisis that stagnant public institutions are incapable of mitigating, and appeals to solidarity and cooperation, to realize the full potential of the commons. It invokes values as a core component in responding to this systemic crisis.

Values of solidarity and international cooperation guided the birth of the European Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECE) in 1948, which administered US and Canadian aid within the framework of the Marshall Plan in order to reconstruct Europe after World War II. The OECE would later give rise, in 1960, to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The COVID-19 pandemic is said to be the largest global health, economic and social crisis facing the world since that time. Pedro Sánchez, President of the Government of Spain, and Angel Gurría, Secretary General of the OECD, argue in a co-authored article that the world needs to be once again inspired by these values. [9] At its 2020 Ministerial Conference, the OECD envisioned a "resilient, inclusive and ecological" post-COVID-19 recovery, with an agenda calling for multilateralism. A "strong" recovery, is a somewhat vague qualifier. What should be sought is a firm and solid recovery: stable, well-founded and long-lasting. We appeal to an evolutionarily sustainable socio-political management of the crisis, with a political and institutional framework based on a global political-social ecology, which incorporates the concepts of political ecology and social ecology, politicizing environmental problems and phenomena, and paying greater attention to the social, psychological, institutional and cultural contexts of relationships between humans and the environment.

Likewise, we advocate for recovery and regeneration supported by values-based governance, with participation of both institutions and citizens. Even the application of values can manifest differently, and be interpreted variously. An example includes the governmental and institutional response to large technology companies' growth and power, as well as innovation developments. Ana Fuentes, former correspondent for the SER chain in Beijing, explains: [10] In the Western World, the United States and the European Union, to combat large technology companies' monopolistic practices, seem to appeal to the value of responsibility as articulated by

a the European Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe Vestager; meanwhile, China invokes the value of loyalty, directed towards the national interests that align with those of the party and the government, allowing for innovation, research and technological development if marked by loyalty and compatibility with authoritarianism. This is what Fuentes calls "technosocialism with Chinese characteristics," and this is what we can ultimately consider is part of the different "techno-regimes" ("technodemocracies," where applicable). In different parts of the world, these regimes relate to science in different ways, alongside innovation and technological development, with the corresponding economic and social effects.

Learning, and our species' collective intelligence, should allow us to glean useful lessons from these phenomena and challenges, which require both global responses and local action framed by global thought: "globalization" or, as Manuel Rivas argues, a *universal localism*. [11]

To date, global change and consecutive environmental emergencies seem to result in lessons learned in the technological field. For example, the knowledge gained in containing floods, implementing non-pollutive renewable energies, or creating more sustainable city models.

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In the health field, vaccines have managed to eradicate diseases such as smallpox, and defeat other terrible infectious diseases. Together with epidemiological prevention and monitoring measures, they constitute the battlefront against COVID-19.
And in the political sphere, international coordination and multilateralism achieve progress in the ambits of international agreements and strategies such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Although SDGs do not always achieve the fulfillment of each objective and provision, they constitute advances, even as they confront antithetical forces embodied in the form of nationalist and obstructionist totalitarianisms, and denialism in many forms.
At the same time, democracies have survived multiple challenges in the final years of the 20th, and dawn of the 21st Century. While some countries' democracies seem to have strengthened, others are threatened and subjected to attacks of diverse nature and origin; democracies resist thanks to their intrinsic strength, as well as that of the institutions and their defenders who fight to maintain and secure them.

The strength, reliability and commitment of institutions, supported by the exercise of individual and collective responsibility of citizens, constitute a decisive framework within which to ensure that objectives and agreements, attractively packaged, do not simply remain on paper: sustainable development, corporate social responsibility, green economy, energy transition, circular economy, digital transformation…

The concept of "the collective," applied as an adjective to intelligence, which includes knowledge and action, requires the dynamization of public institutions and fighting inequality. A balance must be struck between individual and collective interests, which allows for overcoming the dual and simplistic debate surrounding the confrontation between the two. The collective relates to what belongs to or pertains to the community, with the common, with the commons: It denotes reunion, the strengthening of ties, collective action. As such, it deals with the common good or benefit (the commons), with collaboration, and with values that should be universal, such as empathy, solidarity, generosity, loyalty and social justice.

The pandemic has reminded us of the importance of interdependence, the value of mutual and reciprocal care, and of institutions that safeguard the common interest and welfare. These institutions include schools, the health system, social services and those that deal with essential services, which have an important role in socialization and equidistribution of resources, services and care.

The European Commission's recovery fund represents a historic agreement in that it is a model pointing to a more supportive response. It is a paradigm shift in comparison to the model adopted in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, which was based on action focused particularly and unilaterally: individualized financial bailout plans paired with austerity policies, both of which lack solidarity by nature. However, how it is finally put into practice, and what results, remain to be seen.

[1] See: Merton, R. K. (1977). La sociología de la ciencia [*The sociology of science*]. Madrid: Alianza Editorial; Manassero Mas, M. A., & Vázquez Alonso, A. (1999). Actitudes hacia la influencia de la sociedad en la ciencia y la tecnología [*Attitudes towards the influence of society in science*]. Arbor, CLXII(637), 45-72.

[2] Muñoz Ruiz, E. (2013). Investigación responsable. Condicionantes de la accesibilidad a los resultados, publicaciones y conocimientos [*Responsible research. Factors in the accessibility of results, publications and knoweldge*]. Medes, medicina en español, Boletín 7, 31-35. https://www.fundacionlilly.com/global/img/pdf/actividades/medes/boletines_medes/boletin-medes-2012_7.pdf

[3] Torreblanca, J. I. (2020). Los autócratas se disfrazan de demócratas [*Autocrats disguised as democrats*]. Especial Ethic: 2020, el año que cambió la historia. https://ethic.es/especiales/especial-2020/#jose-ignacio-torreblanca

[4] Delgado, L. (2020). «Yuval Noah Harari: Si la confianza en las instituciones desaparece, nuestra civilización se vendrá abajo.» Telos. https://telos.fundaciontelefonica.com/yuval-noah-harari-si-la-confianza-en-las-instituciones-desaparece-nuestra-civilizacion-se-vendra-abajo/

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02.

ROAMING NOISE AND OTHER UNWANTED SOUNDS. PROTECTING THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

Joost Smiers

Feb, 2021

It is a majestic sight. Very low, above the centuries-old center of Amsterdam, immense large planes descend towards Schiphol Airport. This spectacle is accompanied by sound. Strangely enough, that hardly bothers me, probably because it is not so hard as it is closer to Schiphol. That seems strange because there are many types of sound, including soft ones, that I cannot handle. I know people in my area who are crazy about it.

However, it could be worse. At the wrong time in the wrong place, a few years ago, a young French conductor passed a just starting motor whose exhaust, without a decibel killer, cut his musical future with one bang. His ears are literally screwed up. He no longer tolerates an orchestra and chamber music is not doing much better. Differentiation in hearing is gone; he no longer hears timbres, no overtones, oboes, and clarinets hurt him.

It might be clear, this text is about sound, whether it is loud or soft, desired or undesirable. But this study is even more about the use of public space: who fills it with sound, who is allowed to do that, with what kind of sound, who likes it, and who is bothered by it, or even gets sick from it? These are no small questions, which actually receive minimal attention. That is understandable: they are almost too complex to touch. Compared to this, the uproar about smoking was a piece of cake: you can get lung cancer and other ailments, and you can saddle people in your area who don't smoke with those ailments, in addition to the fact that they don't like the smell. That is all about it. And how difficult it was, and still is, to publicly draw attention to it and do something about it.

This is different with sound. Many kinds of sound surround us – we live in a cacophony of sounds, as it were, from which it is difficult, even if you wanted to, to withdraw. In addition, one kind of sound is pleasant to you, and the other is too bad for you to say, or vice versa. It then seems that receiving sound is a subjective matter: you like it, or you don't. However, it is not that simple. The core quality of sound is that your ears are always open and sound therefore enters you by definition. If we realize that, it is not enough to say that it is only subjective if you are bothered by certain sounds. Whichever way you turn or turn it, they enter you without being asked and target something in your brain, a state of mind, possibly damage.

The beauty of the ears is that they are always open and you can therefore always be warned of possible danger. At the same time, this is a "gift" from nature that means that you cannot or hardly keep unwanted sounds out of the door —or better out of your hearing. Too much noise you have not asked for and that is actually not necessary can be compared to trespassing. It penetrates you, and you cannot do anything about it, unless you take firm measures such as earplugs, triple windows, or moving, but that does not help against unwanted noise in the public sphere, in the public space, so on the street, in shopping centers (how public they are,

The beauty of the ears is that they are always open and you can therefore always be warned of possible danger. At the same time, this is a "gift" from nature that means that you cannot or hardly keep unwanted sounds out.

that is disputed). Of course, no one can expect it to be whisper quiet outside on the street. And of course, every society has its own portion of sound that belongs to it. But what is included, and what is not strictly necessary, and how does this shift from time to time? Opinions and interests can clash about this, and they do. That is what makes this topic so exciting at the same time. First of all, because it is not high on the social agenda. But secondly, because the number of noise sources —which can cause nuisance or joy— is almost endless, they can be appreciated differently, and often seem almost self-evident, which need not be so.

To illustrate this, let me briefly list the types of sound that are circulating in our societies. Before I do this, I would like to clarify something. In this text, I will usually talk about sound that is desired or not and less about the word noise. Whatever the latter, it is usually loud. That can irritate those who are not pleased with that, but a lot of unwanted noise is not at all loud, think of the sound of the neighbour's television that creeps through the wall of your house at night: probably not loud, but just as likely good annoying.

What kinds of sound surround us in public space? Do not fear, luckily we will not hear everything I am going to list at the same time. A significant source of noise —and probably nuisance— is traffic. We think of cars, buses, trams, airplanes, scooters, motorcycles with an open muffler, advertising planes, but also of race circuits, dirt tracks, pavers, the type of asphalt that has been rolled out, and the permitted maximum speed. A close second, perhaps first in the sound production, comes from the immediate area where you live: neighbors with their quarrels, stomping walking, loud talking, grumpy anger, leaf blowers, mowers, television, accompanied by festivities in the garden or on the balcony with barbecues and drinks. Screaming children in schoolyards and playgrounds can also do something. Then we must not forget buskers, loitering youths, spouting fountains, student houses, groups of tourists, Airbnb trolleys, sirens and a single animal shelter. What naturally plays a role are cultural differences about what is or is not acceptable sound. The ambient noise certainly also includes something that I refer to as roaming noise: people, usually men, who scream in the street or from boats in the canal at night and do not please the sleeping fellow man. Is that the case with church bells, carillons and amplified prayer calls from the minaret?

What is for one person his or her lust and life can be disturbing for another: the nightlife. There are café's where it is quiet, but there are also where the solid sound of voices and music swirls out, and the terraces are lively. Festivals, oh those fantastic festivals, and the basses that carry their sound for miles, the clatter of building the stages, the sound checks and the festivalgoers who don't go home quietly. Brass bands and concert bands have to practice, of course, and that doesn't work on silently. Is it quiet on the beach? Most of the time not in the wide area of beach tents. Enough has been said about fireworks. What remains almost unsaid is the deafening

noise of wind instruments, percussion and basses that orchestral musicians suffer from and damage hearing.

Of a completely different order are the various types of noise from industry, commerce and agriculture: drilling, planing, spraying, pile driving, whistling sirens, the supply and removal of goods from factories and farms, the parcel deliverers, tractors, hum of fans, diesel engines of ships, sound cannons against birds, and road workers and construction workers who want to hear the music from their radios. Energy transition fine, but those wind turbines, not in my backyard? And why should you hear background music in shops, shopping malls, waiting rooms, stations?

In short, what I am discussing is a challenging topic. What can help a bit is to determine what sound is inevitable for the rolling on of our society, and what is absolutely unnecessary to sound so loud. We cannot do without industrial activities, but is it really necessary for music at festivals to sound so loud? I know that even discussing this topic is like cursing in church to some. Still, I'm going to try: with the angle that unsolicited and not necessarily necessary noise causes trespassing.

It enters your ears and you can't do anything about it. The big challenge, of course, is, can we make the sound of activities that we consider necessary for our society a bit softer? There is a lot to be gained in this area. That is indeed happening. ProRail, the Dutch railway infrastructure company, for example, has announced that by 2025 almost all freight trains will run significantly quieter. In the port of Rotterdam, experiments are being conducted to ensure that boats moored at the quay receive electrical energy from shore —shore power— and therefore no longer need to run their diesel engines continuously, which will be a blessing for local residents who can be freed from this noise pollution.

Since the public space belongs to us together, it is not fair for some to over-occupy that space in terms of sound, and others to have to undergo it. It has to be a little give and take.

When we talk about noise in public space, what do we think about it? First of all, the interests of filling the public space with sound can clash considerably. Inevitably, then, it is a blatant fact that unwanted sound —no matter whether it is loud or soft— can cause tension and lead to illnesses. Hearing damage can also arise due to loud sound that is indeed desired, for example, at a festival.

Our ears are disabled. They are no longer of this time. Our hearing permanently connects us with our environment, keeps us always informed of what is going on there. The problem is, that environment is no longer a forest or savanna where we must have lived as primates or early humans. For the majority of the world's population, it is the big city or a more or less urbanized space. As a result, the hearing receives more impulses than in the distant past because it is now subject to a lot of constant stress, irritation and even disruption of sleep. So there seems to have been a disharmony between the senses and the artificial environment that we as (modern) humans have created.

The focus of my research has always been on the public space. That is the cutlery that we all share, regardless of whether it is the streets, squares, parks, meadows or nature reserves and the air above, or whether it concerns the sea and the air in which fish and birds have to do it. trying to save. No one can escape those public spaces: you do your shopping, go to work, visit family, girlfriends and friends, watch a movie in the cinema, and not to forget the restaurant or cafe to eat and enjoy all kinds of delicious food. drink, in good or useful company. Even if you stay at home, you have neighbors who may or may not take it easy.

In that public space there is the sound of people talking, laughing, shouting or arguing, of all kinds of traffic that rushes past one more than the other, of appliances, of what industry, trade and agriculture have to offer in terms of sound, of festive occasions such as festivals and other joys, musical instruments that please the ears, but also burden the ears, church bells and minarets, windmills, children playing loudly or not, background music in shopping centers and shopping streets. It is a cacophony of sound that we hear passing by.

Much more can be done to reduce noise in public spaces than is thought possible. It is the combination of awareness and political will to strike a more or less correct balance between excitement and tranquility.

It must be said, not everything comes at the same time. And there are people for whom quiet environments are not desirable, for them there must always be noise. However, it cannot be ruled out that, if they live near a distribution center, they may not be able to properly handle the noise of trucks and their constant loading and unloading, to say the least.

Since the public space belongs to us together, it is not fair for some to over-occupy that space in terms of sound, and others to have to undergo it. It has to be a little give and take. In order to create clarity in the discussion about this, I have always tried to make a distinction between: which sound can only be loud —it is inevitable— and on the other hand which sound can be a bit softer without too many problems. For the latter, for example, festivals were eligible, and motorcycles that tear over dikes or through the mountains in good weather. Of course, festivalgoers only really enjoy music and motorcyclists enjoy their sound explosions to the fullest, otherwise they wouldn't. Yet the balance tends too much to their pleasure, at the expense of the people who have to listen to it and for whom it is broken ear. They cannot escape that.

On the other hand, there is noise that can hardly not exist: traffic, industry, agriculture, you name it. It is inevitable and is part of the progress of our societies. The challenging question then is, do the sounds of those activities have to be so piercingly loud, or perhaps not even so loud, but unrelenting, endlessly nagging? Would it be possible to filter or encapsulate those sounds more? Even better, to make them a little softer? If the technology stands for nothing, then it should be possible. That may cost something, but these are investments that are more than worth it. It can ensure that crowds of people are not exposed to noise that causes them stress. Such tension is often a dormant process, it doesn't kill you immediately, but it is a «silent» killer. Stress can lead to insomnia, heart complaints and so on and so much worse. If that can be avoided, why not make an effort as a society?

Joost Smiers

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It is nice when people and companies, who fill the public space with their sound a little too broadly, realize that it can also be a bit quieter. And therefore do what is necessary to cut back. But of course it doesn't work that way. Hence, our governments are faced with two big questions. First of all, realize that noise in the public space is something that needs to be considered. It is a fact that deeply affects public health and the well-being of citizens. Secondly, much more can be done to reduce noise in public spaces than is thought possible. It is the combination of awareness and political will to strike a more or less correct balance between excitement and tranquility.

I deliberately did not aim for the universal realization of silence in the public space. That would go too far; it is neither feasible nor desirable. Of course, those who want silence should have the chance to find it. What matters more is that there is a calm rest in our living environments. Not too noisy, but also not the silence of the grave, but, of course, with an occasional peak up or down. That is part of it.

The core issue is protecting the public domain, and ensuring that noise makers do not bite too much of that cake, causing a nuisance to others.

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03. A MODERN DEBT JUBILEE

Steve Keen

Mar, 2021

Our global culture prioritizes individualist values, at the expense of a civilized, healthy society and planet, with vested interests and neoclassical economists exacerbating the situation. Societies with advanced levels of industrialization and knowledge still ignore proposals to ensure shared prosperity such as the Universal Basic Income. That means the refusal to assure someone to survive in society and enable more innovation to take place, while still allowing those whose innovations succeed to prosper.

The COVID-19 crisis is mere foreboding of a more serious, existential crisis to come. At the same time, this could still be avoided if we sought an alternative mindset that values the preservation of life and the extension of knowledge. Within this larger approach to life as we know it, concrete economic proposals can start us in the right direction, including the "Modern Debt Jubilee" proposed here.

The world is drowning in debt, and the situation is only getting worse, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. All types of debt—government, household and corporate—have been rising, relative to GDP, in almost all countries. Debt in the USA is the highest it has ever been. Debt levels for some selected economies shows a representative sample of major economies since World War II. Australia is the worst on household debt, France on corporate debt, and Japan on both government and total debt. Almost all countries have experienced rising total debt since World War II. [1]

All schools of economic thought hold that a high level of debt is a problem—they just differ on what sort of debt they worry about. Neoclassical (and "Austrian") economists worry about government debt. They claim that government debt "crowds out" private sector investment, by borrowing money that the private sector could have used to invest, and that it saddles future generations with the burden of paying back that debt [2]. They do not worry about private debt, because they see changes in the level of private as simply a transfer of spending power from one private individual to another, and they claim that, unless there are huge differences in their tendency to spend money, the effect on the macro economy should be slight [3].

Post-Keynesian (and "MMT") economists worry about private debt. They claim that bank lending creates money, and this adds to demand, directly affecting the macro economy. Financial crises are caused by too high a level of private debt, followed by credit—the change in debt—turning negative [4]. They do not worry about government debt, because they point out that the government "owns its own bank", and can create the money needed to pay interest on its debt, so long as it is denominated in its own currency [5].

In 2014, The Bank of England came down on the side of the Post Keynesians in this dispute: contrary to what economic textbooks argue, bank lending creates money. This new money is borrowed in order to be spent, so that new private debt adds to aggregate demand, driving both GDP and asset prices. The primary explanation for the savage decline in the Spanish economy from 2008 to 2014 was the plunge in credit—the change in private debt—from plus 35% of GDP in 2008 to minus 20% in 2014. [6]

The boom, bust and recovery of American house prices between 1997 and now was driven by changes in the level of household credit. Though the underlying factor in the stock market boom since 2009 has been quantitative easing, changes in margin debt have driven the ups and downs of the market. Our "post-Global-Financial-Crisis" world is thus characterized by excessive private sector debt and a moribund private sector, with economic performance kept afloat predominantly by government schemes (like quantitative easing) and large budget deficits that in turn lead to high levels of government debt. To escape from this impasse, we need to reduce private debt relative to GDP—and preferably without also further increasing the government debt to GDP ratio.

Conventional ideas about how to reduce the level of debt compared to GDP boil down to three solutions: to simply pay the debt down, to grow GDP faster than debt, or to "inflate our way out of debt." However, the empirical record implies that none of these methods will work. Irving Fisher, who developed the "Debt-Deflation Theory of Great Depressions" pointed out that the "pay it down" route fails because reducing debt directly also destroys money dollar for dollar: just as a new loan increases the money supply, paying debt down reduces it. The fall in money can cause a greater fall in GDP, thus resulting in a rising debt to GDP ratio from direct repayment of debt—a phenomenon that I call "*Fisher's Paradox*." [7] [8]

A higher level of private debt, even with falling interest rates, results in a larger fraction of the economy's money residing in the financial sector rather than the real economy—the shops and factories where physical output are produced, and profits and wages are actually generated.

Philanthropist and ex-banker Richard Vague reports in his recent book *A Brief History of Doom* [9] that growing out of debt only worked for economies experiencing sudden, huge export booms, while inflation has never reduced debt significantly. The only way that debt was reduced, he found, was by writing it off: debt cancellations of one form or another were the only way that countries had reduced their debt burdens substantially. Debt-cancellation obviously benefits debtors, but it could force creditors—specifically, banks—into bankruptcy. It also rewards those who borrowed to speculate on rising house and share prices, but does nothing for those who were not party to the gambling. We need a way to reduce debt relative to GDP, without tanking the economy, without creating moral hazard by letting debtors off the hook while bankrupting creditors, and without rewarding those who rode the debt bubble over those who did not, would not, or could not speculate with borrowed money. This should also be accomplished, preferably, without causing a Great Depression and a World War, events that accompanied the last major reduction in debt levels between 1932 and 1953.

A "Modern Debt Jubilee" could achieve this. A Modern Debt Jubilee uses the capacity of the government to create money to reduce private debt by effectively swapping credit-backed money for fiat-backed money:

- Rather than debtors having their debt reduced, everyone—borrower or saver—is given the same amount of government-created money;
- Debtors *must* reduce their debt; savers get cash that *must* be used to buy newly-issued corporate shares;
- The proceeds from selling these shares *must* be used to pay down corporate debt; and
- The Jubilee gives banks the finances needed to buy "Jubilee Bonds," the interest income from which compensates them for the fall in their income from private debt.

The ideas below reflect a simulation that models a Modern Debt Jubilee using Minsky [10], an Open Source (i.e., free) system dynamics program. Minsky's unique feature, called a «Godley Table,» is a double-entry bookkeeping table that makes it much easier to model financial dynamics than it is in standard system dynamics programs. The key outcomes of the model are:

- The Jubilee reduces overall debt levels, relative to GDP;
    - The private debt to GDP ratio falls immediately because of the Jubilee;
    - Government debt rises as much as private debt falls, but the government debt to GDP ratio rises less because of the stimulatory effects of the Jubilee on GDP;
    - The total debt to GDP ratio therefore falls immediately as a result of the Jubilee; and
- Over time, the Jubilee stimulates the economy because the fall in indebtedness boosts aggregate demand, by transferring money from those who spend slowly (primarily bankers) to those who spend quickly (workers).

A policy which requires an initial increase in government debt—as fiat-created money replaces credit-based money—thus ends up reducing both government and private debt relative to GDP, as demonstrated in Figure 1.

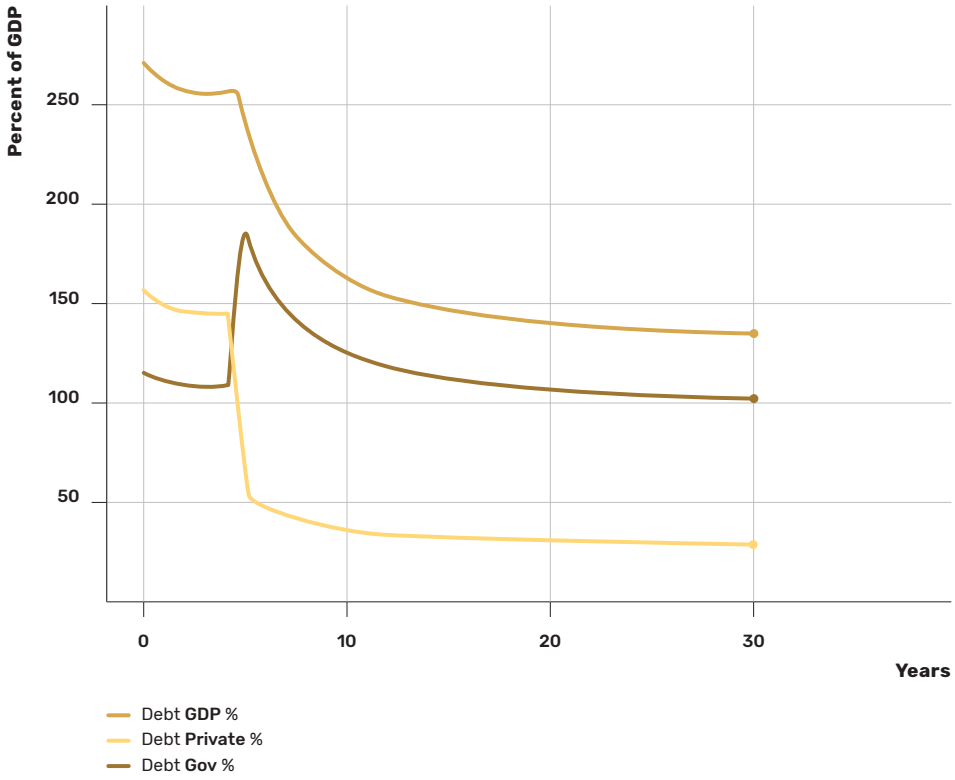

Figure 1_ A Modern Debt Jubilee reduces both private and government debt ratios

How does this magic happen? The basic mechanism is that the Modern Debt Jubilee reduces the inequality that the rising level of private debt has caused.

A higher level of private debt, even with falling interest rates, results in a larger fraction of the economy's money residing in the financial sector rather than the real economy—the shops and factories where physical output are produced, and profits and wages are actually generated. The Modern Debt Jubilee reverses this: by reducing private debt levels, less debt-servicing is needed, and therefore more of the existing amount of money turns up in the hands of workers, who spend much more rapidly than do bankers. Because they spend more rapidly, that money expands activity in the firm sector, causing GDP to rise. The increase in what mainstream economists call the "velocity of money" (see Figure 2) generates more GDP from the same amount of money, and debt to GDP ratios fall over time. A Modern Debt Jubilee thus reverses *Fisher's Paradox*.

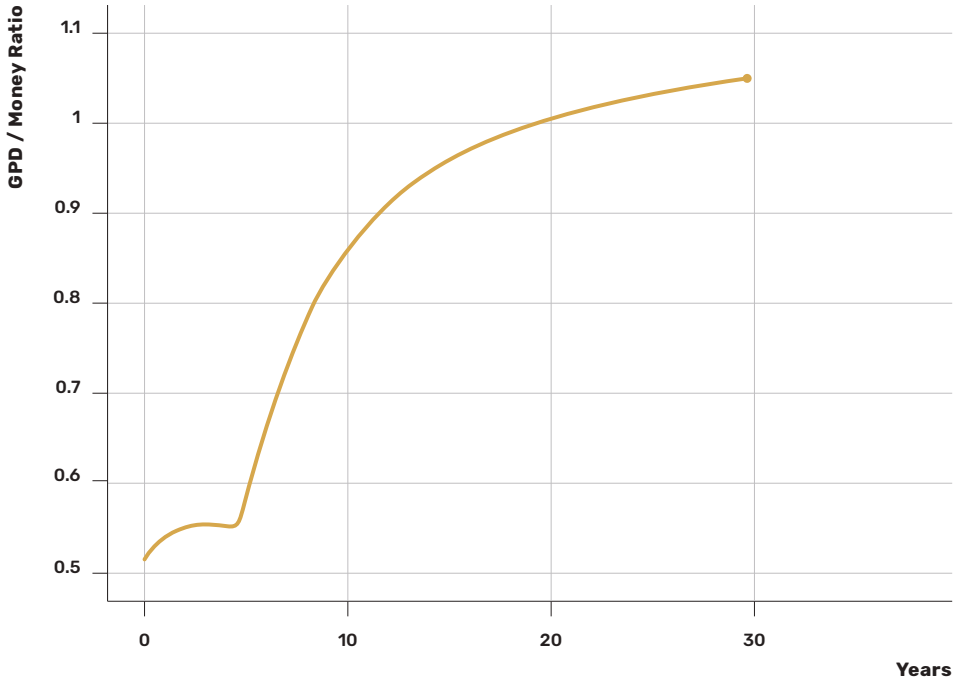

Figure 2_ Rising velocity of money because of the Jubilee

To those who ask, "Who's going to pay for it?," a lesson in accounting is in order. Firstly, the Treasury makes a per capita payment to every adult in the economy. Since most people are employees ("Workers") rather than employers ("Capitalists"), the vast preponderance—say 95%—of the money goes to workers, with the rest going to capitalists. This operation, like all actions in double-entry bookkeeping, has two components: the bank accounts of both workers and capitalists are credited; simultaneously, the Reserve accounts of the private banks at the Central Bank are credited. The Assets (Reserves) of the private banks rise precisely as much as their Liabilities (Deposits) rise.

The increase in Reserves enables the next step: the sale of Jubilee Bonds by Treasury to the private banks. The Jubilee has increased the Reserves of the banking sector; the sale of Jubilee Bonds allows the banks to swap this non-income-earning, non-tradeable asset for Jubilee Bonds, which can be traded and can earn interest, just like standard Government Bonds. This is the key truth to "Modern Monetary Theory»": because the government is a money creator, government spending is self-financing. Financing, in other words, is not the problem: problems, if any, lie with the consequences of that spending, rather than its financing.

Here we have not spending, but a "gift" to the private, non-bank public: the government gives the public money which *must* be used to pay down private debt. Of course, the banking sector will accept this gift—which is why every government bond issue in history has been oversubscribed. There are no "Bond Vigilantes," only "Bond Idiots," who would turn down not one gift but two.

How much this second gift costs—in terms of the interest payments made on the bonds—depends on how much of the bond issue remains with private banks. It is quite possible for the Central Bank to buy all of the Jubilee Bonds from the private banks if it wishes: all it has to do is credit their Reserve balances (the Central Bank's Liability to private banks) and put the bonds on its balance sheet as an Asset of equivalent value. This would then mean that the Jubilee would cost the government nothing, because it would be financed by one part of the Government (the Treasury) going into debt with another part (the Central Bank).

But the biggest objectors to that happening would probably be the private banks themselves, because the reduction in private debt—by roughly 100% of GDP in the simulations here—would reduce their income dramatically. Then, the Treasury paying interest on the bonds to the banks is the "cost" of the Jubilee: it's the amount of interest needed to keep the banking sector happy, after it loses a large source of income from the repayment of private debt. It is quite possible for interest rate on Jubilee Bonds to be set at a level which fully compensates the banking sector for the loss of income from interest on private debt.

We cannot continue operating on the assumption that the financial system is self-regulating.

The interest itself can be raised by Treasury borrowing from the Central Bank—so if the Jubilee were of the order of 100% of GDP, as in these simulations, the annual "cost" of this would be an increase in the Treasury's debt to the Central Bank of 5% of GDP, or $1 trillion per year in the USA. There is also a social bonus to paying interest on the Jubilee Bonds: as well as compensating the banks for lost income on private debt, *it also creates money*: it increases the Reserves (Assets) of the banking sector and its Equity at the same time. [11]
So the «cost» of the Jubilee would be a $1 trillion injection of new money into the banking sector every year.

A Modern Debt Jubilee would thus overcome the problem of an excessive ratio of debt to GDP by affecting the denominator—GDP—more than the numerator—debt, both public and private. Its main effects occur because of its effects on the money supply—both who has it, and how it grows. This reallocation of existing money reverses the historic mistake Central Banks have made via quantitative easing, which was undertaken ostensibly to stimulate the economy, and did by making the wealthy wealthier, via higher share prices.

The model still abstracts from much of the detail of the real world, but it is realistic about money creation, in stark contrast to mainstream Neoclassical economic models, which ignore money creation completely. It implies that there is a way out of our current impasse, and the main impediment to it happening is the ignorance about money creation that mainstream economics itself has caused.

More policies would be needed to support a Jubilee: you wouldn't want to reduce the private debt burden, and then have banks recreate it via the irresponsible lending

practices they have followed in the last 40 years. This would include curbs on bank lending for asset purchases, and encouragement to banks to lend to firms and entrepreneurs, rather than to speculators.

Government policy after the Jubilee should be expanded from targeting only unemployment and inflation to include targeting private debt as well. It needs to be kept at sustainable levels—of the order of the 50% of GDP that it was in capitalism's Golden Age after World War II. It is possible to see this last time we escaped from a private debt trap—the 1930s and 1940s—as a crude version of what I am proposing here. Increased government spending, firstly for the New Deal and then for World War II, enabled the private sector to drastically reduce its debt level.

We just need to avoid the mistakes made back then, of reducing private sector debt by a war rather than a «Jubilee,» and of allowing the private banking genie to get out of the bottle again afterwards. A well-functioning economy needs a balance of fiat and credit money, and once this is restored by a Modern Debt Jubilee, it needs to be maintained by a government that is well aware of the dangers of surrendering control over the money supply to those whom Marx so aptly characterized as *the Roving Cavaliers of Credit* [12]. These actors "can afford to pay a high interest because they pay it out of other people's pockets," setting high interest rates for everyone else while living "in grand style on anticipated profits."

While precisely these «cavaliers» decry debt, they still cling to unquestioned conventional wisdom that bears the worst consequences for those who can least afford it. We cannot continue operating on the assumption that the financial system is self-regulating. Ultimately, following Robert Shiller, economics is more about telling stories than explaining capitalism. Public policy must then draw on authentic knowledge and innovation to reorient society towards the collective benefit, even if it means admitting the beliefs that brought us to this point were mistaken. Such belief systems are the hallmark of being human, but here is where education and the scientific method comes into play: an educated society is a barrier against collectively stupid decisions, and it is time to reverse these decisions before their consequences become irreversible.

[1] There are only a handful of exceptions, like Germany, where public and private debt have been driven mainly by large current account surpluses that have enabled those economies to grow despite little debt growth from either the private or government sectors.

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Steve Keen

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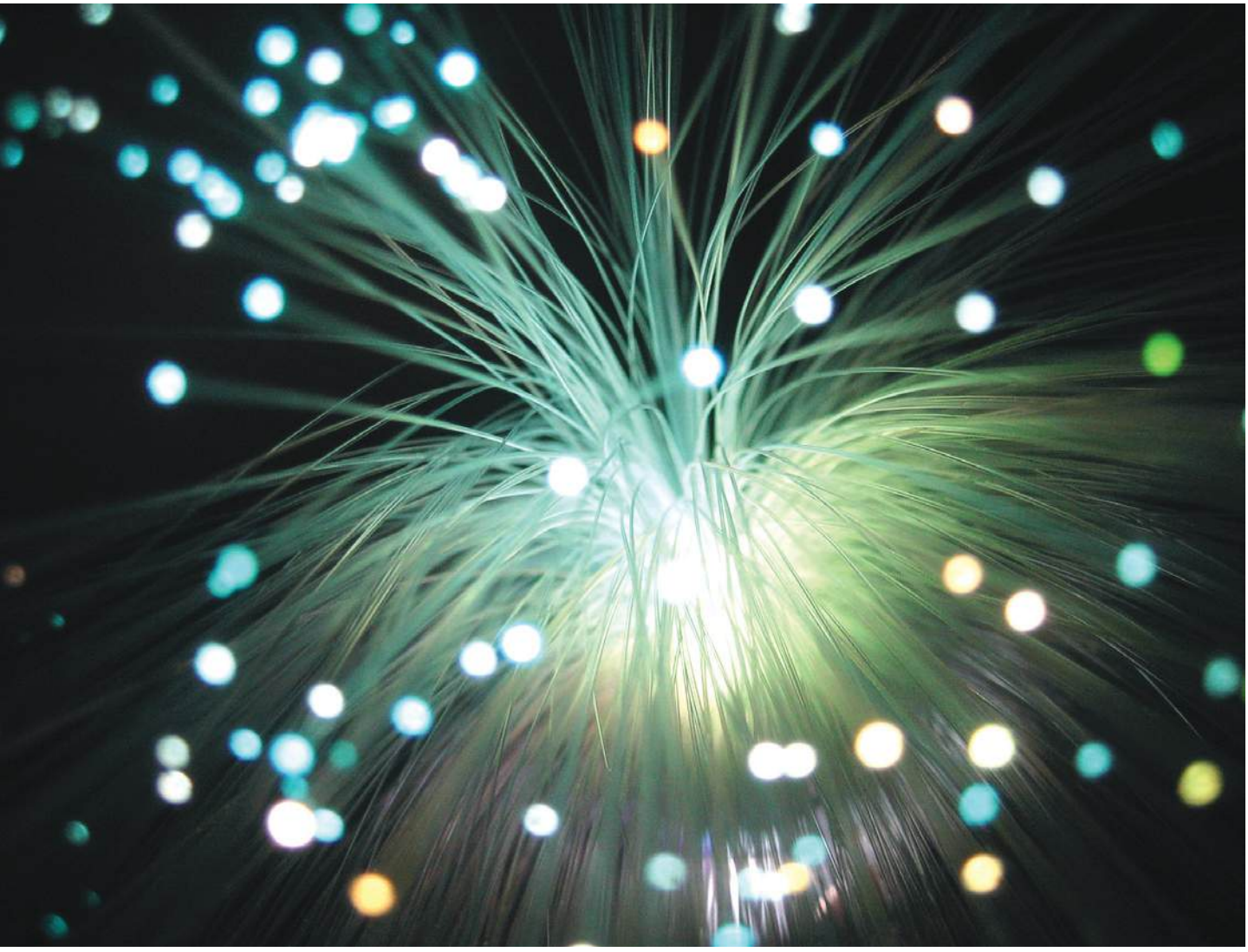

04. PANDEMICS OCCASION THE RETHINKING OF SHARED TECHNOLOGY

Jo Guldi

Apr, 2021

In the Fall of 2020, when groping cautions filled newspapers and universities announced hasty measures to take their history seminars online, I spent a hurried week re-writing my syllabi on British empire to investigate the history of disease.

Across the British empire, among the most fearsome epidemics were the plagues of malaria and cholera. Both have moral lessons to teach present-day readers about the shape of disease. Part of what they can tell us about is the importance of shared infrastructure past. Both diseases had all but vanished from Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. Both diseases endure across Asia and Latin America today, testimony to where money was spent—and where money was not spent.

Many readers know about how cholera inspired Europeans to rebuild their cities. Cholera epidemics prompted the building of municipal sewers and water supplies. But when it came to building sewers for European colonial capitals—say Delhi or Madras—thrift rather than health was the law. As a result, cholera continues to rage across India to this day. European travelers and Indian elites are vaccinated.

The lesson of cholera is about the importance of spending money on infrastructure when an emergency strikes. Bottom line: how much we're willing to invest in reaching everyone right now can determine whether, ten years from now, we look at the COVID-19 pandemic as a distant memory: or whether the COVID-19 pandemic and epidemics like it become a poor peoples' disease, endemic to certain nations and countries, considered beyond our power to fight.

The story of the fight against malaria tells a similar story about disease and poverty. For most of the 19th Century malaria was defined as anything that would be cured by quinine, the bark of the *chichona* tree. So, malaria was classified with a variety of other fevers: anything that could be cured by quinine was classified as malaria, as recent research has shown. After the advent of modern bacteriology in the 1890s, reformers learned to identify malaria and to associate it with the mosquito, which led to campaigns of trying to eradicate malaria by draining swamps and using pesticides.

But identifying the disease did not solve the problem of malaria in most places; it proposed another solution, but not one that the world could afford. The cost of fighting mosquitos across the world was staggering, especially in places left in poverty by European colonialism. Malaria still ravages communities in large parts of Africa and India today; there were 219 million cases in Africa in 2017 alone.

Thus, malaria was eradicated in the U.S. South (because rich whites lived there) and in Panama (because U.S. engineers were building the canal), but not in India—too big, too poor, too racially other. In his survey of world pandemics, the historian William J. Hays suggested that epidemic disease is primarily a reflection of poverty. Whomever societies exclude from education and food, societies tend

to exclude from cures, because cures of any kind are expensive when scaled to the population of the earth. Hays' thesis reinforces a point made by some journalists who have been tracking the spread of Coronavirus through jails and homeless centers and detention centers at the border: whatever divisions we have opened up, whomever we have excluded already, those will be the populations that suffer the worst in an episode of pandemic.

But pandemics can also be a time for human togetherness, and indeed for political and technological innovations that support cooperation and collaboration. Notably, concern for the community and freelance data-collection stopped the epidemic long before science fully understood what cholera was. Before the advent of modern bacteriology of virology, John Snow's famous map of the cholera outbreak in his community led him to remove the handle from a Soho water pump on Broadwick Street, which he suspected as being the source of contaminated water that was poisoning his neighbors.

In Britain and the United States, cholera epidemics prompted communities to invest in sewerage for poor neighborhoods as well as rich ones—and eventually to invest in public water supplies serving all communities. Because of cholera—a disease that spread from poor neighborhoods to rich, refusing to discriminate between rich and poor—London and Paris began to invest in city-wide sewer systems and later systems for insuring clean drinking water for all.

But coronavirus spreads in ways that challenge the preventative measures taken in 19th Century cities. The six- to nine-feet distance required for social distancing means that any public space—from the playground to the classroom to the dormitory or beach—is potentially toxic. Home WiFi and cell phone signals have become the modern infrastructure of sanitation: like clean air and water, they keep families safe from the disease, securing some communities but not others.

There are two possible lessons of history for this epidemic: one is about the likely results of freelance data collection, and the other is about the importance of technology in providing safety to as many populations as possible.

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A first possible lesson of history is that diseases are fought by data collection, even as much as they are fought by medicine. In order to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, we need data about how it is spread—maybe running in advance of medical science. Our knowledge at the moment emphasizes the way that the disease follows vectors of transportation like roads and air traffic. South Korea has used data from cell phone records to track those infected with the disease. How much more might we learn from more data, from a voluntary effort to share and collect information about who was infected, where and how? Of course, for that data collection to happen, we would need several things, including, at minimum, more tests, as well as an infrastructure for collecting information.

The second lesson of past diseases is that broadcast technology has been one major way of fighting disease, and new commitments to technology often come in their wake. If the sanitary technology of cholera was the sewers, the sanitary technology of the coronavirus are those technologies that connect us and allow us to work at a distance—the infrastructure for mass video calls, the tools to collaborate on co-authored documents, shared data troves that many individuals, companies, and governments can use to find results and innovate through the emergency, and broadband.

The lesson of malaria is that the communities that are cut off from infrastructure today stand to be put permanently behind tomorrow. Today, some activists are reaching out for early releases from detention centers and jails; others are looking into making sure that inmates have access to the internet. What if some communities began to look upon basic sanitation and access to WiFi as part of the basic sanitation that even prisoners and immigrants detained at the border deserve?

Investments in common infrastructure means greater resilience in a time of crisis. There are opportunities here for WiFi and broadband providers and the hosts of data repositories to propose a new vision of what the connected—and safe—city looks like, and to sell that vision to the communities that can afford to make a bold investment in their collective resilience.

Consider what it would mean to treat anonymized data about online interactions, video tools, and broadband as a shared resource at this time of crisis. Some communities may begin to demand city-wide WiFi—and the city-owned fiber-optic network to support it—as a public utility. This is something a few forward-looking cities like Chattanooga implemented a decade ago. Today, the cities that made moves of this kind are better-positioned than most metropolitan areas to making sure that all workers have an opportunity to contribute and all children have a chance to receive tuition. Meanwhile, in many other cities across the United States, poorer families have continued to rely on public libraries to access WiFi—public libraries that are now closed to them.

Similarly, communities that build up shared repositories of data—including digitized, appropriately anonymized records of managerial phone calls, classrooms, city management, and telemedicine visits—will supply data analysts with the material to find patterns and create discoveries that can lead to ongoing innovation even during the pandemic. By treating data as a shared infrastructure of community life, rather than the private preserve of a few monopolies, those communities will open up the possibility of a world where universities and even high-school students make their own discoveries about the transmission of the disease, or even about the best and worst practices of a world characterized by online learning, management, medicine, and social interaction.

As the FBI warnings over Zoom failures this week have demonstrated, it is crucial that we make collective investments in forms of technology that allow more people to work remotely. In a world where more and more people are called upon to work remotely, communities will be served by infrastructure that enables connectivity.

Finally, one of the lessons of past epidemics is that those that are left behind today may be left behind for a long time to come. London and Paris got clean drinking water by the close of the nineteenth century, but clean water is out of reach for significant stretches of the world across Asia, Africa and Latin America—a fact that will doubtless contribute to the spread of the coronavirus in those communities, as it has contributed to the intractability of other diseases for a long time.

Nations and cities around the world will be asking themselves, facing this epidemic, whether they can afford utilities of various kinds—from sewerage and drinking water to community broadband and Wi-Fi. It is worth remembering that failing to secure that infrastructure now will leave a community in the lurch facing future challenges of all kinds. The question for poor communities from prisons to immigrants to slums to stretches of the developing world should be not: “Can we afford it?” but: “What is the cost of permanently ejecting that community from our own? How much more might those individuals contribute to our world—tallied not over a year but over a lifetime—if they had been included in our plans?” Infrastructure is always expensive; it is only when tallied across lifetimes, cities, and regions that it begins to look like a profoundly wise investment.

If the sanitary technology of cholera was the sewers, the sanitary technology of the coronavirus are those technologies that connect us and allow us to work at a distance—the infrastructure for mass video calls, the tools to collaborate on co-authored documents, shared data troves that many individuals, companies, and governments can use to find results and innovate through the emergency, and broadband.

Jo Guldi

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05. TOWARDS A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Maysoun Douas

May, 2021

We find ourselves going around in a loop. Our social model is giving out quickly as we exhaust the natural resources of our environment. What we used to call the endless cycle now has an expiration date.

In configuring modern societies, democracy, industrialization, human rights, states, borders and so many other innovations that may manifest in an isolated manner, some converging at certain moments, but mostly they take their separate courses.

To date, conflicts surfacing around our progress were treated as the problems of just a few, worrying and occupying a considerable portion of our global society. It was not until the Paris Agreement on the 2030 Agenda that we linked cause and effect in repairing the unsustainability of our development. We finally perceived a roadmap that allowed for broad, open and inclusive participation in order to generate systemic changes, from the local to the global, the private to the public, and the collective to the individual.

It is great progress for global society to be able to share such an ambitious agenda. It represents a cultural context of transformation that surpasses language barriers, recognizes local idiosyncrasies and facilitates collaboration among peers in order to meet sustainable objectives.

We have now proven we can reduce borders, distances and barriers, but we continue to foment inequalities and maintain complex institutions lacking sufficient efficacy.

But why do we continue to be unable to confront the decline of confidence in democratic systems, to manage climate, social, health and economic crises?

Inequality runs increasingly broad and deep, while polarization hinders any advances, and threats are increasingly hybrid, more internal than external, more social than military. And governance is more than ever local versus global, and multipolar rather than unipolar.

Our social model no longer solely depends on a sustainable agenda, but requires profound reform regarding the relationships that our social contract mediates, including: our systems of wellbeing; our progress as fused societies in an increasingly connected global society; the expansion and actual implementation of human rights; the search for balance in terms of social welfare; the compatibility between the digital and non-digital development; and the health of our natural and patrimonial environment.

Among the issues explored here is the idea of maintaining a “contract” as a link, which can even be conceptualized in terms of a “pact,” “agreement” or “covenant.” It would attempt to overcome the legacy of a time when commodity (or capitalism)

We must understand that the walls that isolated us from others' problems have now fallen, and we face a single type of problem: shared ones.

and industrialization shaped our language, communication and our understanding of reality, moving on from the role of understanding the human being as a citizen who represents an element of production in an industrial chain of profit and productivity, subjected to human needs.

Such a "contract" upholds mediating laws as the protagonists, which provide a tacit commitment, assessing consequences and recognizing the capacities of those parties that comply with it: these are rights and obligations, but also freedom. This "pact" would be a moral alliance, which entails elevating efforts in order to overcome the letter of the law, and take on responsibility developed in a committed social context, adapting morality to societal progress.

The new context has to reflect the willingness of different agents to propel a collaboration for societal wellbeing, in order to eliminate inequality, polarization and the delegitimization of democracy as a governance tool to face our challenges.

Above all, it is crucial to shore up the will to make this "contract" or "pact" flexible, adapting it the fluidity of the moment and the demands of security, protection, and development of life (human or animal), in order to maintain a social justice that meets expectations and needs.

There is unanimous consensus that our current democratic model is expiring. There is a dissatisfaction with processes that limit representation, participation and power, which remain unable to confront problems of public management with the nuances and depth required. This dissatisfaction leaves the citizenry on the margins, where alternative spaces are created that are not based in human rights, nor in the plural construct of society, which undermine the epistemological roots of democracy. Democracy is delegitimized as a construct as it is based in the broken right of "freedom." It must be restored to its supremacy of past centuries.

The last few years have placed a stress on democracy, and evidence of this came to the fore on January 6, 2021, as José María Lasalle pointed out. Before that, the people, not only in Spain, had found that, "Elections fail to satisfy the majority of society's aspirations," as opined Manuela Carmena, who attributes this failing to the very structure of democracy.

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The fact that democratic spaces in Spain and Europe engage in rules and dynamics that prevent resolution of problems that threaten our foundational value furthers this democratic crisis. So does the lack of dialogue, or how noise now substitutes other forms of communication.

If democracy is based in being able to build together, the call to participate should also be encouraged, so that each person feels the duty to contribute and to change things. We must recover the space of citizenship, and rescue dialogue from extremes and polarization.

As Federico Mayor Zaragoza noted following the declaration of the UN Human Rights Charter, "Now we can think, now we can talk, now we can make a new social contract and realize that action has to be communal and joint." We the people, we need to form part of the management of the ordinary. We must understand that the walls that isolated us from others' problems have now fallen, and we face a single type of problem: shared ones. These require solutions from not just a few, but increasingly require the contribution of the rest of society.

We need this reality, a politics of multiple actors, and open and participatory democracy, to begin our journey. We need civil society to unlock its potential, to conduct its crucial work in transforming habits of consumption into sustainable and responsible consumption. We need to recover the energy to define our type of democracy, our type of politics and the dynamics of joint management.

It is necessary to move towards fluid citizenship, towards both representation and participation, at the combined local and global levels.

As Ana Saiz de Miera recognized, "I think now you have to assume that we are all playing this game, that we all have something to say, and that we all roll the dice."

In order to create this joint scenario, we have important challenges to overcome, including the one Andrés Ordoñez recognizes as the construction of negative identity: "During the 19th and 20th Centuries we built a negative *identity discourse*. I am me because I am not you. Now we must build a positive identity discourse. I am me, you are you. But I recognize myself in you and I recognize you in me." This pertains not only to our cultural environments, but also to ideological spaces, to the narratives of ostracism that have stirred the cultural pot via social networks and feeding "cyber populism." This latter phenomenon fills a digital space

without democratic governance, without rules or supervision, compounding to create a hybrid threat that exists in a parallel reality to the one we live in. These environments emphasize hatred towards empathy, and extrapolate it to our political and democratic experience.

Rediscovering communication, as a true counterpower, invokes the need for more intense citizen participation, which is often confused with the existence of unregulated digital spaces. Here is also a need for changing the dynamics of public management, of the basis of the commons. This all underlines the need for renewal.

We must rethink the relationships that unite us so that that there is opportunity for progress. A true redefinition of the rules. As Rafael Heiber put it: "It mean simply updating the relationship between the subject and the world." If our ambition is to look for balance and a better life for all, we must "reinvent politics," as Manuela Carmena urged. We cannot conceive of democracy without people, and of institutions that turn their backs to citizenship. Rather, it is key to incorporate continuous collaboration, as José María Lasalle notes: "Democracy has to become a hospital not only to take care of administration, but of respect and help."

The advances we have lived through have created a new paradigm, where the value lies no longer in what you have, but rather what you do, or what you know how to do as an individual, focusing on the person.

These reflections have led me to conclude that we certainly must create change. We need a new social contract. As the 21st Century launched events that characterize our present and define our future, it is time to renew ties and aspirations, and to incorporate the progress of centuries as well as accept the consequences of the past.

We must assume that this effort entails dialogue, consensus, and a reinforcement of mutual understanding in order to evade military solutions. This means understanding that, in order to reinforce and expand democratic spaces, we must start with citizenship. Sustainability of rule of law is a long process, including local processes that need support in order to adapt to the contexts, realties and difficulties of each society.

We need to confront our responsibility for, and involvement in, migration flows. It is fundamental that we understand these flows are not just transitory, as mobility is and will continue to be a constant in our relationships. In this sense, it is necessary to move towards fluid citizenship, towards both representation and participation, at the combined local and global levels.

Although migration forms part of human evolution, with the construction of urban settlements and the development of civilizations, today's social contract is linked to the movement of people across borders, the same borders that symbolized the transition towards a modern world order with the birth of nation states.

The construction of our social contract focuses on territorialized citizenship, which is united and linked to the nation state, and therefore does not recognize migrants and ethnic minorities within the political, social, cultural and economic community.

Redefining citizenship does not permit delay, not only because of the humanitarian disasters we create. Federico Mayor Zaragoza explained in an interview: "If we want to make a new social contract, the first thing we have to do is admit what horrible things we have accepted!". We must assume responsibility as the first step in amending our past mistakes, and also recognize that we have partially built progress and stability in the last two centuries, in order to commit to our future coexistence.

We must understand that secularization is a path to inclusion, not exclusion. Models of social development and the bases of our civilizations are not neutral, and neither are they innocuous. In denying this we would be denying a part of what we are as humanity. Proceeding from acknowledging these influences on our civilizations, as well as our thought processes, is key in order to advance to our potential, great consensus.

Building a new social contract means expanding the basis of these values that shape our realities and our relationships, going beyond the cultural barriers born from values that represent only a part of the world population within a temporal framework—the West—which moreover does not admit the existence of other truths, or attempts to submit these to its own reality. The social contract constructed in this way is at odds with our reality, which is plural and diverse. Understanding our "truths" is the way towards overcoming the global threats we face.

We must have to go from the economy of "possessing," to an economy that accompanies how we exist, committing to levels of digitization, artificial intelligence and the capacity to calculate quantum computing. This is perceived as a rush for control, efficiency and productivity by solely a few, which obliterates basic and fundamental rights and exposes us to multiple dangers. Consequently, it is essential to pursue models that reduce reality to numbers in a way that does not have consequences for human rights, adopting comprehensive models that include well-being and sustainability in a single, common framework.

For many years, there was an expression that embodied our global society: "you are as much value as what you have," which managed to weave together complex implications from the economic, to education, to universal rights, to the exhaustion of resources, to social relations and even to relationships between countries.

The advances we have lived through have created a new paradigm, where the value lies no longer in what you have, but rather what you do, or what you know how to do as an individual, focusing on the person. Digitization is a new engine of postmodernity, nourished by people's action, and the "things" that surround us, generating value, generating agents of power, whether economic or political.

We must adapt our social contract to this new reality, which is nourished by people, their capacities and their human reactions, in order to generate an economy and a power no longer subject to the rules of a social contract that treated people as a production line, with manufacturing as a primordial need.

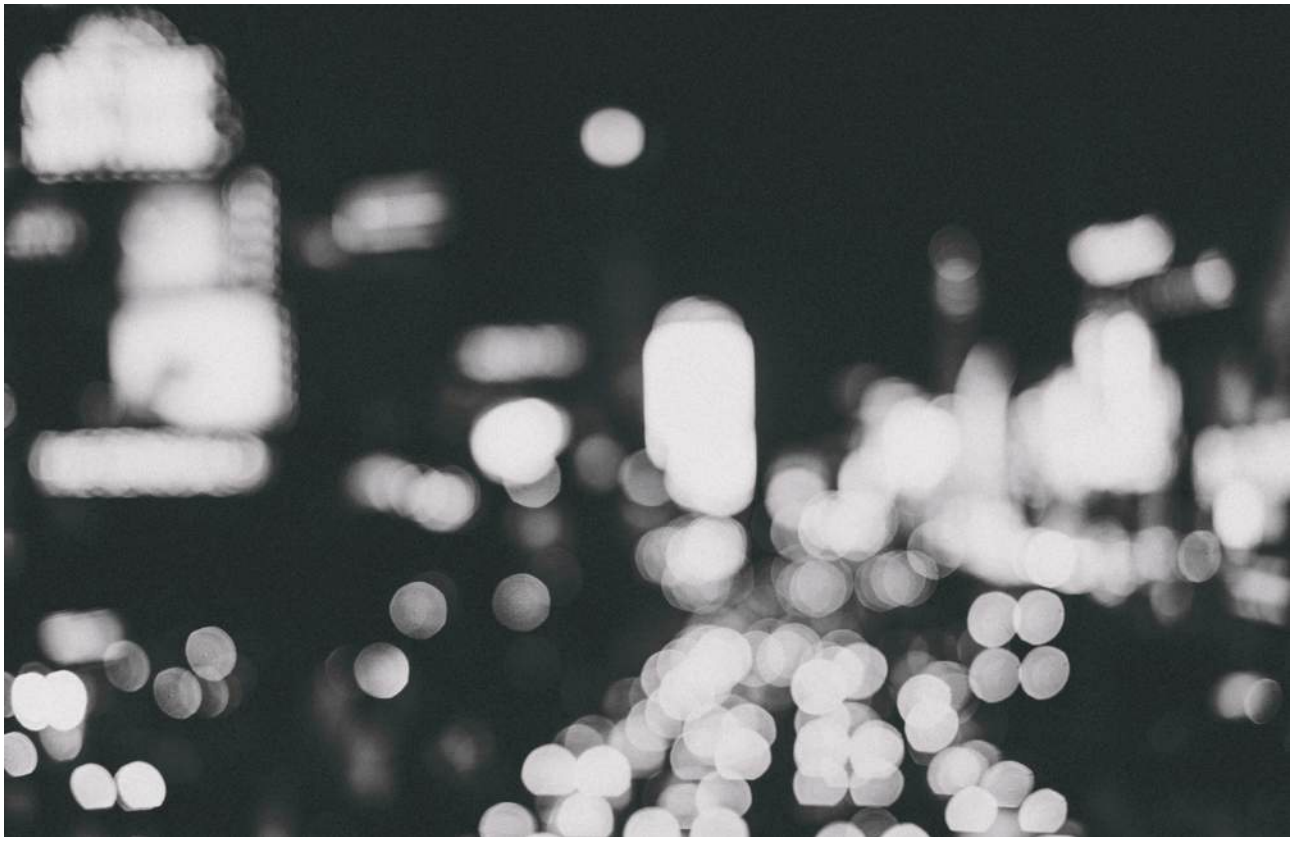
We turn to new economic models, new frameworks for understanding the economy in its broad and open relational dimension, with aspirations to transcend growth as the only observable measure.

We are missing a different, less rigid perspective of what is desirable, less fanatic regarding the moral standards or norms, and less focused on shielding certain actors. If we seek a framework of coexistence that is more flexible to fluid transformation and that emerges from different territorial and relational realities, that looks to understanding as reflection, as a meeting, as rejecting distrust—a feminist perspective that views dialogue as a virtue—a new window of progress opens. We need to rebalance roles and remember what José Luis Sampedro said to youth: "You will have to change the course and the ship."

There are still many frontiers to renovate, and together with democracy as a tool for understanding, they can achieve social justice and sustainability. We are more than prepared to do this, which is why Federico Mayor Zaragoza reminds us of Albert Camus' saying: "He despised them because they could have done so much but dared to do so little." I dare to redefine, to reinvent, for common progress.

Maysoun Douas

Named one of Spain's top 100 women, Maysoun Douas is Madrid City Councilwoman and works on Economy, Education, Employment and Entrepreneurship. She holds a PhD in Physic and serves as President of the Tamkeen Foundation.



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06.

HISTORICAL NOTES IN A REFLECTION ON TOLERANCE FOR A NEW POLITICAL IMAGINARY

Concha Roldán

Jun, 2021

We are used to talk of "tolerance," or of "tolerant," or "intolerant" attitudes, "intolerable" situations in socio-political and religious debates, in the media, and on social networks. But what do we want to say or mean when we talk about "tolerance"? What does it mean to be "tolerant"? What is the origin of this concept, and why has it become so relevant at this moment in history? If we survey all of those around us, we will receive a majority and perhaps even unanimous vote in favor of tolerance and tolerant behaviors. It could not or should not be otherwise in our democratic, plural Western societies and citizenships. We relegate intolerance to totalitarian societies, ruled by dictatorships, dominated by violence, with fragmented and uneducated populations. But is this truly the case? Do we not sometimes brandish the term "tolerance" as an empty fetishism, a banner or decoy without substance?

Furthermore, if it is "good" to be tolerant, does this mean we must accept all convictions and opinions equally, without critique? Is being tolerant the same as being relativist? With whom or with what should we be tolerant—living beings, ideas? Why do we think tolerance is necessary or useful in truly democratic and progressive states?

In the following text, the concept of "tolerance" is examined, both its origin and meaning. The objective is to reach some outline of it, which allows us to answer the initial questions with a better understanding of the facts.

A brief historical approach to the concept of tolerance

The concept of tolerance is relatively recent in our ethical-political arsenal. It dates back to the origins of modernity, as compared to other older concepts (including those of "freedom," "justice," or "virtue," which were already addressed in Greek thought by Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, or Aspasia de Mileto). Tolerance emerges in the history of thought as linked to the wars between Christian religions in the 16th and 17th Centuries. If we were to give it a birth certificate, it could be dated to April 13, 1598, when King Henry the IV promulgated the Edict of Nantes in France, establishing tolerance as the basic principle par excellence of political and religious coexistence, after the massacre of the Huguenots on the night of Saint Bartholomew in 1572. There are many examples of bloody religious struggles in Europe after this date, some specific (such as the 1641 outrage of the Irish in Ulster towards English "heretics," as recounts Hume in his *History of England*), and other longer and intense ones, including the Thirty Years War ending the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Now, if we examine a bit further, we discover that peaceful coexistence of tolerance cannot be attributed solely to dissension between various religious confessions. A clear example includes that of Spain, where (as Ramon Llull pointed out) there had been peaceful coexistence for centuries between the "three cultures" of Al-Andalus (Christian, Jewish and Muslim).

Tolerance and peace emerged alongside the origins of modernity in this sense, as two sides of the same coin. The true causes of wars were not differences between religious dogmas or rites (which the majority of believers were unaware of and even today remain unaware of), but the political, territorial and economic power that linked to religious power in medieval theocracies. Furthermore, religious differences in Europe were associated with the emergence and advance of the Protestant Reformation (initiated by the Augustinian friar Luther in 1517 in Wittenberg), which precipitated the fall of the Holy Roman Empire. This divided Germany and the rest of European countries into a mosaic of kingdoms and principalities governed by the law of "*cuius regio, eius religió*," which meant that the prince's religious affiliation was applicable to all citizens of his territory. The Peace of Westphalia really sought to end territorial confessions by introducing a series of clauses regulating peaceful coexistence in the same kingdom or principality. That is, it would be a guarantee that subjects could practice religions other than that of their ruler "as long as they did not violate his authority." Religious tolerance from its beginnings thus appeared connected to peaceful coexistence between citizens, when the true political ends of rulers were economic and political power as well as territorial expansion. This is something that we can perceive clearly in the failed efforts of philosopher, jurist and diplomat G.W. Leibniz to achieve reunification of Germany's Christian churches [1]. The implicit aim was to create a strong nation that could compete with the French power of Louis XIV, which crystallized into the federal nation we know today. The path of nationalisms can be traced through Europe, but not the secular foundations of states, which are the only entities capable of protecting different beliefs held within them via disassociating various religious institutions form political power and therefore, public education of citizenship.

Tolerance interrupts modern thought

In the context of the first modernity, reflections of philosophers like Pierre Bayle (*Philosophical Commentary*, 1687) and John Locke (*Letter on Tolerance*, 1689), which were widely diffused among contemporaries, acquired indisputable credibility. They were considered the most rich and influential contributions to the concept of tolerance at the time. Other philosophers including Baruch Spinoza (with his critical study of the Scriptures), John Milton or Baron de Montesquieu (and his *Persian Letters*, 1717) dedicated their reflections and writings to the concept of tolerance, with Voltaire (*Treaty on Tolerance*, 1764, ed. R.R. Aramayo, 1997) contributing somewhat later. While this is not an exhaustive account, these authors did agree on the defense of autonomy and the freedom of citizenship. They argued that each individual must be "free to" believe what they consider to be true or appropriate, and that no authority can oblige that individual to ascribe to any confession, solely due to having been born or living in a given place. Tolerance was thus born from freedom, with certain surnames; synonyms include "freedom of conscience," "freedom of belief," "freedom of opinion," "freedom of expression," or "freedom of the press," the latter of which was perhaps established by Milton in his 1643 *Areopagitica*. In other words, each individual should tolerate that another thought, believed, or expressed his opinion, which could be different from their own. Therefore, a good monarch was one who guaranteed social peace by combining these ingredients of heterogeneity. To put it another way, defending the coexistence of different creeds required an aconfessional state, if its political power were to extend to all subjects regardless of their religious beliefs. The state was the guarantor of this idea of religious tolerance, which only necessitated that political authority not interference in private matters such as that of religious choice. For this reason, the idea of tolerance was considered "negative," and criticized by some authors such as G.W. Leibniz for political reductionism. In his arguments he points out that it is the mere deference of a peaceful coexistence between creeds, advocating for a freedom of conscious that does not develop more complex aspects of the knowledge and recognition of the other—of other religions and of other cultures. I will return to this.

The limits of negative tolerance

The negative concept of tolerance manifests an implicit judgement of rejection regarding the "thing tolerated"—there is a pejorative connotation underlying its etymology. In the Royal Spanish Academy's Dictionary, "tolerar" (from the Latin *tolerare*), means to "suffer, bear with patience, allow something that is not considered lawful without expressly approving it, resist, or endure." The same is true in French (*tolérer*), English (*to tolerate*), or German (*dulden*). That is, one tolerates something that is threatening and harmful to them, something "different" or "foreign to their own identity, to what we know or what suits us (for example, a meal). In order to move in the direction of "positive" tolerance, as opposed to the "tolerance of bearing," we have to locate the "tolerance of understanding." Once taking a step towards wanting to overcome difference and the visceral rejection of the "other," we then arrive at the rational terrain of "positive" tolerance," which combines peaceful coexistence with the real complexity of different freedoms in the knowledge and recognition of others. This respect for other beliefs, religions and cultures, compelling one to modify their own and to convince the other to modify theirs, allows for walking together towards the regulative horizon (in the Kantian sense) of a more reasonable "community." This is none other than what Leibniz described as the principle of the *la place d'autrui* [2], which reformulates the traditional "golden rule." In this sense, putting oneself in the place of the other," or "reflectively taking the place of the other," constitutes the cornerstone of the "recognition" of our fellow men as equals with the effect that each individual understands themselves as "one more among others," without privileging their point of view, but with the understanding that each individual carries something valuable in themself. In some languages like Spanish, "the other" is a masculine word, because in its origins in modernity "the other" was not really considered equal and therefore it was not possible to take "her" place, which would be that of a "sexual object," for the "procreation of the species," or a "domestic carer." Philosophy penned by women at the time (Marie de Gournay, Olympe de Gouges, Mme. de Châtelet or Mary Wollstonecraft) focuses on the concept of equality and on the vindication of women's legal and political rights. They could not exercise active citizenship (vote, work outside the home or hold political office). In reality, women were tolerated as long as they did not leave their "natural place," but I digress.

Each individual and community contributes different perspectives to the knowledge of both things (nature), other individuals, their beliefs and their socio-political organizations (cultures).

Towards a positive tolerance of other cultures: justice, perspective and pluralism

In addition to its practical utility, in order to pursue a better coexistence or even to better achieve our goals, the theoretical importance of a principle like "the place of the other" lies in how it allows us to infer the general idea of justice. Given the impossibility of being able to position ourselves from a "objective or impartial point of view," this principle teaches us that "the place of the other, when one places oneself in it, is the true point of view from which to equitably judge," by rendering us "suspicious of injustice in everything that we would find unjust if we were in the place of the other, simultaneously making us carefully examine what we would want if were in that place." The key of positive tolerance is that we are "reflectively putting oneself in the place of the other," which is the cornerstone of our recognition of others as similar, while at the same time not privileging any point of view a priori, and recognizing the validity of the world's plurality of perceptions.

Positive tolerance thus leads to two other concepts—"perspective" and "plurality"—which are of great importance to philosophy and its implications. These are ethical-political application of metaphysical and epistemological principles that defend, on the one hand, diversity, complexity, and human heterogeneity. On the other hand, they establish that in each individual, time, religion or culture we can discover a part or aspect of truth. It is the philosopher's task to contribute to perfecting these different perspectives in order to establish universal justice. Each individual and community contributes different perspectives to the knowledge

of both things (nature), other individuals, their beliefs and their socio-political organizations (cultures). Reflecting on the modern origins of tolerance demonstrates it is evolving—abandoning a world based on myth and belief—and becoming more complex as relates to what Kant calls "cosmopolitan societies," and what in the 20th Century began to be termed "multiculturalism." The discussion appears to have shifted from religious difference to cultural diversity, although in the 21st Century we are witnessing a boomerang of some religious beliefs as they resurface in a powerful and globalized way. These are once again manifested in such a manner that convey less spiritual interest, but rather seem to be oriented towards building impervious identities—impenetrable, incompatible, and thus serving as seeds of violence.

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In this context, the interest taken in Chinese culture in early modernity is noteworthy. Leibniz holds that European civilization was failing to apply its moral principles, quite the opposite of what was taking place with Chinese civilization. As such, beyond the dazzling Chinese culture arriving to Europe at the time (imported silk, porcelain, lacquers), Leibniz proposed a more profound fundamentals of civilization, to ensure that Europe could successfully complete its civilizational process. For years, he argued with the Jesuit Bouvet about his plan to found an Academy in China for research into writing, culture and religion, in order to conduct an exchange with the Academy of Sciences in Paris. In this sense, in a letter to Bourguet in 1710, he went so far as to propose that schools be created in Europe, where the Chinese could teach Europeans, as the latter (convinced of their superiority) would otherwise not inform themselves on Chinese progress. However, there is an epistemological limit in the knowledge of "the other," that draws from our perspectives and convictions. For this reason, Leibniz always referred to China as "the other Europe," or the "Eastern Europe," and looked for similarities between Chinese concepts and those of Europeans. For example, Leibniz identifies the Li of Chinese theology as "universal reason," in which order and natural law or based. He also notes that *I Ching* resembles binary calculus, underlining its civilizational potential. In others' cultures or beliefs, we encounter similarities with our own, as long as we are able to step outside of ourselves, via an "epistemological de-centering," as noted by Carlos Theibaut [3].

In reality, tolerance from its very beginning was a dialogical attitude, with both limits and rules of reasoning: nothing would be further from tolerance than indifference or the absolute relativism of "anything goes."

Tolerance, relativism and conciliation

Introducing the concept of tolerance in modernity [4] undoubtably created the secular bent of Western societies, although we note that the balance in these normative spaces have proven themselves unstable and dependent on dominant religions, or rather on the appropriate religious behavior. Examples include the Northern Irish conflict (the Troubles between nationalists and republicans that ended in 1998 with a distribution of power between Catholics and Protestants) or the recent wars in former Yugoslavia, where nationalist conflict took place after centuries of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians. Modern nation-states had assumed tolerance as a normative principle and a "moral duty" that demanded "respect" from others and a correlated human "dignity" as an "end in itself" that must be reciprocal, general and horizontal (between equals), as Kant wrote. How did this enlightened tolerance evolve throughout centuries of colonial policies carried out by the great powers on other continents—India, Africa, the Philippines, and not least the Americas? The egalitarian approach and recognition in Leibniz's proposal of "universal harmony" between different cultures, between East and West, vanishes with the very concept of colonization, in which colonizers exercise superiority and oppression over occupied territories. The limitations of scope do not allow for further elaboration on the practices of tolerance and intolerance that were brought by purportedly enlightened thought to the "new" lands, and the paradoxes this occasioned. [5] Still, an example—Montesquieu believed that if a religion was intolerant, but already embedded within a country, there was no choice but to tolerate it. However, if new sects could easily be eradicated, tolerating them was not justified.

I would emphasize here that from its very origins, the concept of tolerance was colored with ambiguities and paradoxes, as it attempted to obscure other interests behind the premise of differing religions. Different political powers have sought armed conflict via religions, or rather religious powers and institutions. This is something that many believers resist, as they see that in so-called post-secular societies—now established in Western societies—such arguments are issued spuriously.

In reality, tolerance from its very beginning was a dialogical attitude, with both limits and rules of reasoning: nothing would be further from tolerance than indifference or the absolute relativism of "anything goes." [6] Adopting the other's

point of view does not consist of abandoning our beliefs, or our critical capacity to judge others. In other words, we must respect freedom of thought, but not abandon it. We must criticize, even harshly, harmful ideas and their propagation, because if the idea of tolerance has any methodological function, it is to gradually introduce light and order into the dark labyrinths of human complexity. In the current climate, this applies to hoaxes or fake news that prevent the development of "healthy rationality," where knowledge exchange creates dynamism leading to scientific improvement and progress. [7]

Genuine tolerance cannot defend either relativism, the construction of a single truth, or thought that is the sum of other truths. It defends neither syncretic religion nor a culture, composed of many different ones. Each religion and each culture seeks to remain one and identical with itself, because, in taking inspiration once again from Leibniz, the abandonment of one's own belief can result in the possibility of true conciliation between divergent perspectives, in an expression of agreed truths that reach beyond a mere liberal political principle. The uncritical acceptance and recognition of all cultures, rituals and practices (i.e., female genital mutilation), or advocating for cultural relativism, collides with the universality of human rights and defending the integrity and autonomy of persons.

By way of conclusion: towards a new, situated rationality

In light of this argument, an idea of positive or active tolerance would consist of being open and receptive to the other, respecting plurality and diversity of approaches when it is impossible to determine what is true or good, but stopping short of superstition and fanaticism. These latter two cannot be positioned in a public space on equal footing with other reasonable opinions. This begs the question, should tolerance have its limits? Paraphrasing what Christian Laursen has described as "blind spots" in classical theories about tolerance, [8] which seem incorrect to us today, I would like to remind us of how many mistakes we make, believing ourselves to be tolerant. We are not always tolerant or uncritically adopting intolerable issues or practices, precisely because by definition we do not know what these blind spots are. According to Laursen, many of us move in academic circles described largely as "progressive," rejecting fundamentalist, colonialist, sexist, racist and homophobic behavior. Are we intolerant, or is our intolerance justified? If there are no positive values in these aforementioned behaviors, then it is a question of unraveling the foundations of these ideologies we characterize as harmful, without forfeiting a tolerant attitude towards those that defend them.

In conclusion, and to better contextualize what I have been analyzing, I would like to place the concept of tolerance within the original attitude, and not in the conclusions obtained, which can always be subject to revision. In other words, tolerance is not a way to conclude disputes, but is rather the condition to allow for rational debate. It is a method by which negotiators reformulate their positions until reaching a maximum of common principles, allowing them to locate the points of divergence and agreement. Tolerance is an attitude that needs to free itself from the idea of a single absolute truth in order to develop. It requires a new rationality: flexible, gradual, and hermeneutically imperfect.

Knowing "the other" from other times undoubtably contributes to our awareness that nowadays, not everyone (either in their countries, migratory exile or as stateless persons) has been afforded the minimum tolerance that we advocate for in our globalized, multicultural Western societies. Perhaps this invites us to ask ourselves how we can step outside of our comfort zone and take charge of such situations that are at times dangerous, and always unfair.

[1] With respect to these conversations, see Leibniz's exchanges with Langrave Ernst von Hessen-Rheinfels, Madame de Brinon or Pellison (Gottfried Wilhelm, L. (1984). *Escritos de filosofía política y jurídica [Writings of political and legal philosophy]*. (J. de Salas, Ed.). Editora Nacional. On the reunification of the churches and the political implications, see my work, Roldán, C. (2020). *Leibniz: En el mejor de los mundos posibles [In the best of all possible worlds]*. EMSE EDAPP, pp. 103-110.

[2] V. Opúsculo in the Akademia edition, IV, 3, 903.

[3] Thiebaut, C. (1999). *De la tolerancia [On tolerance], La balsa de la medusa*. Visor.

[4] To read further on the complexity of the contributions to tolerance and its origins, see Villaverde, M. y Laursen, J.C. (Eds.). (2011). *Forjadores de la tolerancia [Builders of tolerance]*. Tecnos.

[5] See Laursen, J.C. y Villaverde, M. (Eds.). (2012). *Paradoxes of Religious Toleration in Early Modern Political Thought*. Lexington Books.

[6] This is where Karl Popper's *Paradox of tolerance* (1945) would enter. He argues that if society is unlimitedly tolerant, its capacity to be tolerant will eventually be reduced or destroyed by the intolerant.

[7] This is something we are seeing very clearly with the COVID-19 pandemic. See Wagner, A. *Coronabulos, conspiranoia e infodemia: claves para sobrevivir a la posverdad*. [Coronabulos, conspiranoia and infodemia: keys to survive the post-truth]. The Converstaion. https://theconversation.com/coronabulos-conspiranoia-e-infodemia-claves-para-sobrevivir-a-la-posverdad-139504

[8] See *Forjadores de la tolerancia [Builders of tolerance]*, pp. 25-41.

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