


**CORONAVIRUS AND THE IMPACTS TO THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM<sup>1</sup>***CORONAVÍRUS E OS IMPACTOS DIANTE DO SISTEMA CAPITALISTA* Uilmer Rodrigues Xavier da Cruz <sup>a</sup> Ricardo Alexandrino Garcia <sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup> Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG), Minas Gerais, MG, Brasil**DOI:** 10.12957/geouerj.2021.53009**Correspondência:** uilmer@ufmg.br**Recebido em:** 22 jul 2020**Aceito em:** 24 jan.2021**Review DAVIS, Mike, et al: Coronavírus e a luta de classes. Terra sem Amos: Brasil, 2020**

This book has six authors. The first to be cited is Mike Davis, an American writer and political activist whose research is related to the class / power struggle. The second David Harvey, a professor at New York University, whose contributions are spread in the field of Urban Geography. Then Alain Bihr, French sociologist, with a line of research focused on libertarian communism and author of studies that permeate socialism and the labor movement. In turn, Raúl Zibechi, who stands out as a researcher of social movements in Latin America. The next author is Alain Badiou: philosopher, Maoist militant, defender of communism and the foreign working class in France. Finally, Slavoj Žižek is a philosopher and professor of philosophy at Ljubljana University.

The capitalist system, among other losses seen on a daily basis - such as the destruction of biomes, from the constant and predatory exploitation of resources, especially since the 1970s - is also responsible for worsening public health conditions. An example of this is the new Coronavirus, whose initial epicenter was China, with the first case dated December 2019, and, since then, has expanded to the rest of the planet.

Davis (2020) provides a quick analysis of the immediate and other impacts of the virus in question on US territory. According to the author, the United States is not prepared to contain the crisis caused by the disease, specifically highlighting the deficit in public health in the country.

Neoliberalism strengthened and assumed by Democrats, even during the Reagan administration, in the 1980s, was responsible for the increase in bed closings and the provision of funds to public hospitals. This

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strategy was used in the country so that the population swelling in hospitals would serve as a justification for increasing the profit of the private health system.

According to the author's arguments, this 'scrapping' of the health system has been fed back into the current government and, with Donald Trump, has worsened, including the closure of the office created by the previous president, Barack Obama, responsible for pandemic management (created during H1N1, in order to provide immediate responses to situations like the current one). Davis (2020) also States that, based on a survey carried out in the country, only 8 of all States would be able to receive people with severe conditions of the disease.

The health crisis, directly linked to the predatory interests of the economically wealthier classes, thus affects the poorest and hardest working part of the population, who must choose between maintaining income or maintaining security (to avoid spreading the Coronavirus).

For this scenario to change, as in other policies, guidelines such as health, as well as the environment, must be central and intrinsic to economic guidelines. Davis (2020) States that a socialist look at the economy must restore public and universal health, guaranteeing the right of access for the entire population.

In this sense, like Davis (2020), Harvey (2020) seeks to establish a discussion that relates the new Coronavirus to the crisis in various social sectors, which started with the disease boom at a global level. However, it is in the economic aspect that the author concentrates most of his discussion.

In addition, regarding capitalist dynamics as a resource depletion, Harvey (2020) argues that the 40 years of North American and South American neoliberalism are responsible not only for facilitating the expansion of diseases, such as the Corona, but also for not provide the necessary structure for the treatment and containment of these diseases.

Capitalism, from a Marxist perspective, works in four stages: production, consumption, distribution and reinvestment. This constant and inexhaustible 'spiral' seems to end, at least momentarily, from effects that directly affect one of these stages.

In 2008-2009, the crisis that mainly affected the northern hemisphere, mainly the United States, was responsible for the drop in the population's consumption pattern. This drop in consumption is directly related to the increase in unemployment and, of course, to the lack of money on the part of the working class. China, at the time, had been the main responsible for rebuilding the world capitalist economy with a strong injection into the industrial structure and, in other countries, with the flexibility in the financial structure. However, in the present reality, this is no longer possible, given the fact that the country was one of the main affected by the disease.



Thus, Harvey (2020) States that only strategies with a more socialist bias can save the economy, strategies that, according to the author, should ironically be inserted, even if maskedly, during the Trump administration, in search of an injection, for part of the State, of financial capital for the population, favoring their purchasing power. As the author States, what causes the crisis is not the 'non-sale' of merchandise, but the delay in selling it.

Only through strong State action will it be possible to resume the economy more quickly, preserving jobs and survival conditions for the broad working population, heavily affected by the virus that, contrary to what they claim (that everyone is affected) equally), it is more affected by the high exposure, by the deprivation of health equipment (scrapped, when public) and by the future unemployment caused by the closure of numerous jobs.

A practical example of the crisis in the public health system is that of France, generated from the neoliberal molds of capitalism that, as already present in Davis (2020), as well as in Harvey (2020), favor health entrepreneurs, strengthening private plans and scrapping the public system.

Bihr (2020) brings in his reflection the notion that the current pandemic has brought to light what was in the dark or, in other words, camouflaged in the neoliberal discourse: health, contrary to what they claim, is not a personal and individual good, but a public good and should be universally accessible.

According to the author, the main argument for the scrapping of the Public Health System - through cuts in funds, personnel, and lack of investment in hospital structures - is based on the notion that each individual is responsible for their conditions health care and, therefore, one should not inject State money into public facilities. The Coronavirus translates the enormous contradiction present in this discourse, since it takes away from the population the right to care when they are in a serious condition due to the disease. That is, health collapses due to factors like this, as it goes beyond the individual's purview. In the words of Bihr (2020), individual health is a reflection of social health, of the collective.

Thus, it is essential that State policies - aimed at maintaining health as a universal good and to be guaranteed by governments through taxes paid by the population - change to include all individuals. The author again brings the example of France, which can be replicated in several other countries, such as Brazil and the United States, which are experiencing the worst scenarios in relation to COVID, which has been aggravated by the lack of infrastructure aimed at the entire population (in mostly working).

Zibechi's (2020) collaboration on the stigmas generated by the pandemic of the new Coronavirus revolves around the control mechanisms of the Chinese State, which, according to the author, were based on the 'excuse' of the pandemic to use extremely oppressive and controlling instruments.



The author argues, with a strict and preliminary view, that the policy of containing the advance of the disease in question, in the province of Wuhan, in China, was disproportionate in relation to the capacity of infection of the virus that, supported by another professional, claimed to be 1 to 2 people per infected person (which currently shows to be different). However, it is a fact that, throughout human history, the State has taken advantage of discourses that cause fear to print its asymmetries in power relations, aiming at controlling the majority of the population, which is the working class.

Zibechi (2020) States that the percentage of healthy people in China, especially in Wuhan, was too small for the 'drastic' measures of State containment and, furthermore, argues that other countries have replicated this model, such as Italy and Taiwan. However, nowadays, it is known that the power of infection of the disease is much greater than predicted at the beginning and that countries such as China, Vietnam and New Zealand, through the lockdown, demonstrated success in containing the problem, while countries that insist in more flexible models, such as the USA and Brazil, they are paying expensive prices with the exponential and daily increase, both in the number of infected, as in the number of deaths.

Such as Bihr (2020), Badiou (2020) collaborates in the practical example of France and in the way the State governed by Macron is acting in the face of the problems generated by the Coronavirus pandemic. Badiou's small contribution (2020) revolves around the understanding that, as in times of war, the current reality generates exceptions adopted by States that, at other times, would not be adopted.

Macron, in France, created mechanisms to support artists, informal workers and small businessmen who, due to the pandemic, had their businesses closed. Other mechanisms used by the government that flirt with more progressive and, perhaps, socialist ideals are exceptions to the rule, as argued by Badiou (2020).

According to the author, these aspects of 'improvement' of the State apparatus for the population are momentary and would not pass as permanent, given the history of few changes in government contexts focused on the protection of the working class, over time. Thus, he argues that the problematizations surrounding the current system and the need to think about policies that go against what is currently known are necessary, even in times of social detachment.

Finally, Zizek (2020) presents a perspective with more 'hopeful' looks on the other side of the 'coin', about the results of the new Coronavirus pandemic. The author argues that, with the advancement of the virus on a global scale, some issues, in addition to those that sadden and make clear the losses due to the disease, can be considered 'beneficial', such as the perception that the social mode as up to now relations are ruled bankrupt and unprepared in relation to facing situations like the current one, especially in the economic sense.



Finally, the author invites us to reflect on the necessary change, not only in the current standards of capitalism, but in the fall of it for a system that strives for the freedoms of individuals, and also for the guarantee of the population's access to the goods and services they confer quality of life. According to the author, from this, it is important that a wave of hope for the 'new' takes place and goes hand in hand with the restructuring of the economy (in other ways, different from those built so far).

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