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INTERVIEW

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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES OF CONTEMPORARY CORRUPTION RESEARCH: AN INTERVIEW WITH DONATELLA DELLA PORTA

FELIPPE CLEMENTE
LUÍS DE SOUSA
LUCIANA ALEXANDRA GHICA

Abstract. This is an edited and revised version of an interview recorded in September 2021, which served as closing remarks for the 3rd edition of the **Research Methods School on Corruption and Anti-Corruption Analysis (CORAN)**, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon (Portugal), 27-30 September 2021. The event was organized jointly with the Centre for International Cooperation and Development Studies (IDC) of the University of Bucharest, as part of the 7th edition of the *International Interdisciplinary Conference of Political Research SCOPE: Science of Politics*. The notes and specific references were added to support especially younger researchers who may not be very familiar with the field or with certain past events.

Keywords: corruption, political corruption, definitions of corruption, corruption studies, court cases, criminal investigations, scandal, methodology, legal protection of scholars, deregulation, super-rich, impact of COVID-19

Donatella DELLA PORTA is currently Professor of political science, Dean of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, and Director of the doctoral program in Political Science and Sociology at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence, where she

also leads the Center on Social Movement Studies (Cosmos). Previously, she held research and/or teaching positions at several institutions, including the European University Institute (EUI) Florence and the University of Florence (Italy), Cornell University (USA), Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung (Germany) and the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques (France). As author or editor of more than 90 books, 150 articles and 150 contributions in edited volumes, and as Principal Investigator of major European research grants and programs, she contributed significantly to the development of several research areas at the intersection of political science and sociology, especially social movements, corruption, political violence, terrorism, police and protest policing, civil society and democratization. Throughout her career she received numerous awards and distinctions, including the ECPR Mattei Dogan Prize for distinguished achievements in the field of political sociology (2011) and the Forschungspreis of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, as well as several honorary degrees. Since 2015 she is Doctor Honoris Causa of the University of Bucharest.

Luís DE SOUSA: Thank you very much for having accepted our invitation. You are a reference to many scholars, not just in the field of corruption (Della Porta & Vannucci 2012; Della Porta & Vannucci 2007; Della Porta & Rose-Ackerman 2002; Della Porta & Vannucci 1999; Della Porta & Mény 1997), but in so many other fields, most notably social movements and protest (Della Porta 2009b; Della Porta & Caiani 2009; Della Porta 2007; Della Porta & Diani 2006; Della Porta & Tarrow 2005; Della Porta, Kriesi & Rucht 1999; Della Porta & Diani 1999), extreme right (Caiani, Della Porta & Wagermann 2012), democracy (Della Porta 2013a; Della Porta & Rucht 2013; Della Porta 2011), party politics (Della Porta 2009c) and local (Della Porta 2006; Della Porta 2004), regional (Della Porta 2009a; Della Porta & Caiani 2006) and global governance (Della Porta et al. 2006; Smith et al. 2007; Smith et al. 2014). There are also topics on which you wrote many years ago, during the early days of your career, such as terrorism and political violence (Della Porta 1995; Della Porta & Pasquino 1983; Della Porta 1990), and that you have brought back to debate in recent publications (Della Porta 2013b). You are also known for your work on research methods in social and political sciences (Della Porta 2014; Della Porta & Keating 2008; Della Porta 2002; Cotta, Della Porta & Morlino 2001), which has been handy to many students. This is an incredible array of subjects. Your first major

work on corruption – *Lo scambio occulto: Casi di corruzione politica in Italia* [The opaque exchange: Cases of political corruption in Italy] (Della Porta 1992) was published three decades ago, the very same year that the Tangentopoli investigations kicked off with the arrest of Mario Chiesa[1] in Italy. These investigations had a spill over effect to the rest of Europe. Everybody was following these developments taking place in Italy. So, naturally, I would like to ask you first what made you dive into this very complex subject in a country that is also quite complex in terms of politics and society. Also, how developed was research around such topics, in Europe, back then?

Donatella DELLA PORTA: Thanks a lot for this interview and thank you for the possibility to develop my thoughts about political corruption. One of the main reasons why I started to work on political corruption was that, as a political scientist, as well as a political sociologist looking at Italy in the 1980s and early 1990s, it was impossible not to consider corruption. Even before I started doing empirical research on the topic as a scholar, as a simple citizen I had the impression that there was a visible world of politics that counted very little and there was also an invisible world, of hidden exchanges, that we knew little about. At that time, I had been already working on other types of phenomena that were not usually addressed by mainstream political scientists, but which I believed exerted a strong impact on institutional politics. I was working, for instance, on social movements, which I considered to be mainly the progressive and positive side of politics, while political corruption was its dark side. And I thought that this was so much embedded in institutional politics that it was not possible to think about the Italian political parties or the Italian government, at local or central level, without considering these hidden exchanges. In fact, one of the

[1] "Mani Pulite" (eng. "Clean hands") were a series of judicial investigations on political corruption that took place in Italy in the 1990s, following the arrest of Italian Socialist Party member Mario Chiesa for accepting a bribe from a company. Left politically isolated and publicly humiliated, he started to provide information that revealed a much more complex system and network of political corruption. This system was often referred to in the media as Tangentopoli (eng. "Bribesville). For further details on these matters, see for example Della Porta & Vannucci (2012).

first pieces on which I worked together with Alberto Vannucci singled out the types of political actors that corruption brings to the surface (Della Porta & Vannucci 1994). This is how we started to ask how the normal, visible type of structures within the political system had been gradually transformed by the arrival of business politicians.

Was this type of research widespread at that time? Not at all, at least not at all in Italy. In Europe in general, it was also a field that was considered and analysed mainly in connection to development and the Global South as we would say nowadays. Even in countries for instance in southern Europe, where the perception that corruption was very widespread, there was very little sociological research. In *Lo scambio occulto*... that you already mentioned (Della Porta 1992), I analysed in depth three cases of corruption. However, at that time, it had been very challenging to find these cases, especially to find sources that I could use to document and analyse them. Eventually, I finished the book – it was a sort of luck for me, and luck for the country – exactly when the "Mani Pulite" investigations started. They happened roughly around the same time with the publication of my book, so I could not get the ongoing investigations too much into account. However, while I was doing research for the book, I had been in contact with judges that were investigating political corruption. Therefore, I could also understand better how that side of anti-corruption worked.

Luciana Alexandra GHICA: You often used legal documents, legal materials, and court cases when you tried to dissect and understand through the lenses of sociological analysis the anatomy of corruption, its actors, the resources. Sometimes as scholars, we tend to consider such documents as more accurate when collecting data, although this is not necessarily true. We also find them convenient because they should not be very difficult to access, at least in a democracy. However, even when we have the best possible conditions for access to extensive quality data from legal materials, these sources have limitations. You used this type of data, but also other methods of data collection and investigation. In your view, which are the main challenges and risks associated with corruption research from the perspective of the sources to which we can have access?

Donatella DELLA PORTA: Of course, each source has its own bias. Indeed, I attempted to develop this sort of methodological pluralism in addressing empirical research on political corruption in order to try to reduce those biases. I have used various types of databases that have been used also by other scholars, such as the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index, as well as other different statistical data. But they were not so useful in addressing the main research questions that I was raising, which were primarily focusing on the *how* and not so much on the root causes. Of course, the *why* was always in the background. What I tried to do was to map and describe the way in which corrupt exchanges developed. In fact, in this first book, *Lo scambio occulto…*, for the three cases I used available judicial materials, but I also interviewed different actors, including the corrupt agents. And this was interesting because what I also wanted to analyse was the social construction of corruption. How does it happen that an entire system is corrupt? Since corrupt agents do not perceive themselves as criminals, how do they justify their actions? The issue of the moral costs of corruption is key to research on political corruption, but often in an abstract way. Instead, I wanted to investigate how the systems of exchange worked. This is how I started to look at corruption as a complex exchange, focusing not only on the transaction between those who bribed and those who were bribed, but also on how corrupt politicians and those who gave money to them were interconnected in a complex network of relations, including party defectors, party factions and so on. To address these research questions, I triangulated the judicial sources with interviews with different types of people. I interviewed trade unionists, party members, businesspeople, and other stakeholders. What was also important in this first attempt was to choose cases in which I knew I could rely upon a sort of network of trust. Just to give an example, one such case of corruption took place in Catania, Sicily, my hometown. This allowed me to start the fieldwork with some connections for expert interviews. Developing a relationship of trust with one's sources is extremely important. However, it takes time, and it may be challenging. Another case took place in Florence, where I live. There, I also started by relying first upon a network of

contacts. The judicial material is interesting, there are different types of documents and data, but of course they are biased in the sense that judges are only interested in legal liability, whereas I was more interested in reconstructing the political system in general and mapping and understanding the system of corruption within this broad set of exchanges.

Luís DE SOUSA: In fact, you showed in your analyses that corruption was not just a *quid pro quo* exchange. The unveiled cases were very complex. You also identified issues related to political protection. Even journalists or NGOs could be involved in those schemes, to camouflage or whiten some practices. You really had to go beyond what the judges investigated in court cases to understand the complexity of this phenomenon.

Donatella DELLA PORTA: Yes, definitely. Of course, the court cases are still very important because they aggregate facts and compile different materials, from different sources. It is also interesting to see how the capacity to conduct criminal investigations has changed over time, for instance, with the availability of new technologies and how these also changed the type of sources that we can access. In our last book (Della Porta & Vannucci 2021), we also made use of court cases, but the type of information changed a lot, because investigations now make increasing use of sophisticated methods of communications surveillance, such as mobile phone tapping, internet monitoring, and other intrusive technologies. In short, not just interrogations, but also recordings, telephone calls and so on. This offers quite a rich and more complex type of information than the interrogation or questioning of the people involved in the corrupt exchanges.

Another thing that is important to consider when reflecting upon the potential biases of the sources that one uses for research on corruption is the strategies used by different actors. For instance, in Italy, during the "Mani Pulite" investigations, one of the strategies used by judges was to obtain information from businesspeople. This led to classifying cases as crime of *extortion* (it. "concussione") rather than *corruption* (it. "corruzione"). This meant charging politicians, rather than

businesspeople, with the latter portrayed as victims. We (and I say "we", because I work on such matters with Alessandro Pizzorno, Alberto Vannucci and other colleagues) considered that this was a distortion of reality since businesspeople were highly involved in building cartels and so on. In fact, in the second wave of corruption investigations (i.e., post "Mani Pulite"), all these figures re-emerged as increasingly central because they had kept their own social capital. I used the term "negative social capital" to characterise those situations in which social capital (as trust and reciprocity) is used to maintain the system of corruption intact (Della Porta 2000). In this context, I think it is worth considering more carefully the strategies of each of the parties involved, including the strategies of judges and other state authorities. There is a lot of research done on the bias of police data, of legal databases and, of course, of media sources. Triangulating them is a way to reduce their specific biases.

Luciana Alexandra GHICA: You mentioned triangulation as a means that you used to tackle the risk of bias in your own research, but were there other risks that you faced or that were present in this field, maybe not necessarily targeting you directly, but often experienced by scholars who are investigating corruption? And are they really significant?

Donatella DELLA PORTA: Well, yes. One must be very careful because many of the corrupt people have good lawyers and money to invest. We also must consider that, as a profession, in such matters social scientists are much less protected than journalists, for instance, or judges. One of the things that we did was to be extremely careful when mentioning names. This was not only to protect ourselves against potential libel charges, but also because we wanted to reconstruct a sociological system of exchanges, without focusing the attention on specific people. Of course, for instance in my analysis of the three cases in *Lo scambio occulto…* (Della Porta 1992), I could not always keep the involved people anonymous. In fact, one of the persons named in the book threatened the publisher (Il Mulino). Eventually, that person could not do anything because all the information was related to solid evidence. Avoiding naming people is possible if the names are not necessary to describe and

analyse specific dynamics. It is also a good strategy, not only to protect yourself from this type of incidents, but also to avoid giving the impression that you are investigating a criminal case, especially since the police and the judiciary have more information than social scientists for investigating a specific case. What we want to do as scholars is to reconstruct the system of exchanges. In fact, in all my books and articles in which such situations may be represented, I always included a note clarifying that my intention was not to reconstruct the legal responsibility of specific individuals, but to sociologically analyse the net of corrupt exchanges.

Are there other challenges common for research on corruption and related topics? I would advise young scholars to try not to get lost in the details but rather to keep focused on the sociological concepts, the sociological processes and so on. Another specific concern is related to the fact that, whether we like it or not, our research may be used by others in a distorted way. For that reason, I think one must be careful when intervening as a sort of public intellectual so that the scholarly work is not misused. To give you an example, in the investigations against the former Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and his collaborators, a judge referred to the work that I and Alberto Vannucci did (Della Porta &Vannucci 2012). The judge then became part of the government of the current President Jair Bolsonaro, a rival of Lula da Silva, and was eventually charged of having produced fake evidence for political reasons. I consider such situations quite risky exactly because there was a political agenda behind. Of course, there was not much I could do except saying that I am not coming to present the book with these persons and trying to redress wrong interpretations in the press. I think this should be a general concern to keep in mind when working on politically sensitive issues such as corruption or terrorism, where different interests often interact in the public arena.

Felippe CLEMENTE: Inevitably, the case that you mentioned brings into the discussion the issue of populism, as this is the framework through which contemporary Brazilian politics has been often studied. But, in recent years, the issue of corruption has also been closely associated to that of populism in the public debate and, to an extent, in

academic works, in more cases than the Brazilian one. Do you feel this may drive young researchers away from the study of corruption? Is there a subject fatigue/exhaustion?

Donatella DELLA PORTA: Well, I do not think that this is a zero-sum game in which you can focus on populism without considering corruption. One of the core issues of the populist discourse is the instrumentalization of charges of corruption and the declining trust in the political institutional system. What I think needs to be considered is that corruption tends to adapt to different types of systems. For instance, Italy in the 1980s was considered the opposite of a populist system. It was a *partytocracy* (it. "partitocrazia"). In fact, I think this term was coined to describe the Italian context: strong parties with mass membership and strong control on political institutions, on public policies, allocation of state resources and so on. My research findings highlighted, even before the "Mani Pulite" investigations, that corruption tended to challenge the power of political parties, in their classical forms as ideological mass party. Some parties played, however, an important role as brokers of political corruption. In particular, in the late 1980s, there was an attempt of the main political parties, mainly the Italian Socialist Party and the Christian Democratic Party, to develop a sort of very structured system of illicit party and personal financing, in which bribes were collected by party financial officers and then distributed according to a predefined set of criteria. Eventually, this system collapsed because, as investigations on organized crime demonstrate, the use of hidden exchanges tends to produce centrifugal tendencies, unless one has very strong resources to impose the terms of exchange through coercion and violence. In the Craxi model[2] there was the aspiration to create a perfectly centralized system of corruption, but in fact the parties were transformed and weakened from within. When investigations on political corruption started, there was the impression that the system collapsed suddenly—like a house of cards. However, in reality, the

[2] Benedetto "Bettino" Craxi, a former Prime Minister of Italy (1983-1987), was one of the most high-profile politicians convicted for corruption and illicit party financing, following the "Mani Pulite" investigations.

parties had been already weakened from within, they were already fragmented, they were losing trust from the members that were not involved in the corrupt exchange and so on.

In short, I think that there are many ways to connect research on populism and political corruption. There are however also risks to avoid. Sometimes research on populism considers corruption only as a discursive frame. It is the framing of the struggle between those from below (the "people") and those from above (the "elites"), and corruption is seen as a sort of misleading or constructed concept that populist leaders use to attack the latter. This, of course, is part of the game. But corruption is not just talk; it is also something very real, and therefore framing it as a challenge for democracy is often not just populist rhetoric. Moreover, we must take into consideration that populism is quite a blurred concept used to describe different types of phenomena across different political systems. For instance, it has been used to refer to radical-right populism in countries where there was little reported corruption. So, corruption was understood in a broader way, as giving up on fundamental values. To wrap up, I think that one should be careful when looking at the link between populism and corruption, because corruption is not just a sort of frame used to attack the elites. But indeed, elites can be very corrupt, and this should also be investigated.

Luciana Alexandra GHICA: In contemporary political science, particularly in the studies that are of comparative nature or take into account international dimensions, we are increasingly becoming aware of the limitations of the conceptual tools that we have been using for decades for making sense of social and political phenomena. Most of our theoretical and conceptual frameworks were developed during the Cold War, in the so-called Global North, within the Cold War logic or in a very confrontational, "big powers", asymmetrical, sometimes also very dichotomic and ideologized way of thinking about the world. And the more we are studying at larger scales, not just larger sets of data, but looking at more cases across the globe, we realize that these theoretical and conceptual frameworks are unsatisfactory for the advancement of knowledge. Would you say that this applies also in the case of

corruption research? Do we need new concepts or new conceptual developments when we are framing or researching corruption?

Donatella DELLA PORTA: First of all, the political situation is changing very quickly. Therefore, ideological concerns are re-emerging. Just to refer to a recent piece of news, the US President Joe Biden said that the troops must be withdrawn from Afghanistan and then we should all focus on the new big battle against Russia and China. This is not a peaceful world. This is a world system in which new enemies are singled out. In this context, corruption can be used as a sort of instrument for various types of international interventions. The struggle against corruption has been actually used by different international actors to pursue aims that are not only or necessarily related to good governance but rather address other, less noble political goals. The fight against corruption appears often as part of international conditionality in fund-supported programmes directed at developing countries. Corruption is often presented as related to state powers, the public sector, and state interventions in the economy and so on. This has been used to justify the adoption of neoliberal types of policies, such as liberalization, privatization, and deregulation. In our last book with Alberto Vannucci (Della Porta & Vannucci 2021), we alerted to the fact that liberalization, privatization, and market deregulation policies, not only fail to reduce corruption, but can also transform its nature and scope by making it more rampant. Such policies tend to lead to more corruption because of two reasons. One has to do with the lack of state capacity to detect and sanction serious wrongdoing in the private sector. In a privatized, deregulated, liberalized market there are fewer instruments to prosecute private forms of corruption, which tend to be legalized and/or harder to detect. The other issue has more to do with the level of moral costs for the society. The more these types of anti-corruption interventions are framed by a simplistic moral discourse that tends to describe the public as "dirty" and the market as "clean", the more it contributes to diminishing the symbolic value of the commons, of public goods and so on. This is also an element that we believe may fuel corruption rather than limiting it.

About the ways in which we define our concepts to describe and analyse contemporary political and social processes, if we look at the legal definitions of corruption, they often seem unable to capture the varieties of this phenomenon that are more related with the creation of oligarchies and plutocracies, i.e., economic elites overlapping with institutional elites. Cases such as Silvio Berlusconi or Donald Trump or many others by now, as well as the Panama Papers are typical examples of this type of connections. They have been identified as quite relevant also in countries, such as Iceland, that have been considered for a long time to be corruption-free. That is why some legal experts are also trying nowadays to suggest broadening the definition of corruption beyond the exchange of bribes. There are also many areas that provide food for thought on such matters. For example, I am currently involved in a research project on the so-called super-rich. It often happens that the super-rich criticize politics, but they also use politics to forward their interests, they donate money to parties and candidates, and they intervene to protect their own capital – for instance, to protect their economic capital from taxes. They develop a specific type of ethos, which is not related to public ethics, but to the legitimacy of competition and to distorted perspectives on merit. One should investigate these cases in which corruption is not an exchange of bribes for favours, but it is the use of money in order to unduly influence public decisions. Of course, there are many ways in which private interests can influence public decisions. For instance, interest groups may attempt to advance their perspectives on certain policy matters in a legitimate manner, and contribute to a more informed policy-making. But the cases mentioned above are often at the limit of legality and transparency.

Luís DE SOUSA: There is an emerging literature that tries to address legal/institutional corruption, practices and policies that, as you said, are on the borderline of legality and transparency. In most instances, such cases would not qualify as criminal offences, but they are still ethically problematic. It is complicated but important to study these practices because, as you mentioned, the question touches upon issues of policy capture, collusion between political and business interests, and we are

witnessing more of this kind of corruption in recent years. Do you feel that this has reopened Pandora's box of the definition of corruption?

Donatella DELLA PORTA: Well, I think that Pandora's box was always open to a certain extent. Of course, we could rely on the legal definition. But we must also acknowledge that when we do comparative research, we must deal with very different legal systems. Something that is a crime in Italy may not be classified as a crime in other countries. That is why, in order to be able to understand how embedded this phenomenon is, we need to increasingly connect research on corruption with research on normal politics, normal market development and so on. This implies to go beyond bribes. Already in my definitions of hidden exchange, I tried to go beyond the act of bribing because I thought that corruption was also about the deviant ways in which democracy functioned. Keeping things hidden is an indicator of the corruption of democracy, of the way in which democracy normally works.

The current pandemic is particularly relevant for this matter. Something that we could do together as scholars in this field is to start looking at the link between (responses to) pandemics and corruption. We are already doing some work on the public bids related to the management of the pandemic, as part of a research project focusing on the Italian case. These public procurement processes have been extremely problematic in many countries, including in Germany, a country which is often considered as very rigorous in the way public money is spent and unproblematic when it comes to corruption. Very often, the ways in which corruption has developed in such cases was not through bribes, but through more complex types of exchanges, delayed exchanges involving relatives and friends of politicians in government, which show that certain governance mechanisms were already deeply corrupted. In some cases, these types of hidden exchanges, facilitated by the lack of transparency of the emergency measures, were used for personal enrichment. However, it is also important to connect these specific cases with the way in which state subsystems have developed. For instance, the privatisation of the public health system, has introduced a logic of profiteering that profoundly transformed the ways in which that system

works. The pandemic has made more visible such types of effects in our society. It will be an interesting, though sad, research theme.

Luís DE SOUSA: Indeed, a good ground for research within the context of the pandemic: the special measures, the weak controls, the clientelist networks that you just mentioned, which in a lot of ways are favoured by revolving door schemes at different levels – local, regional, and state level. But there is also a dimension related to the perceptions of how much of that pandemic-related corruption has impacted on people's expectations about political processes and institutions. In Portugal, we are currently carrying out some research on this impact, both at local and national levels.

Felippe CLEMENTE: Our research involves data from a mass survey where we specifically asked citizens to what extent they believed the opportunities for corruption had grown within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and whether they considered understandable to cut corners in public procurement processes in order to respond to the pandemic.

Luís DE SOUSA: The exceptional measures adopted and the way in which they were implemented, particularly public procurement in the health sector, accompanied by media revelations of cases of serious wrongdoing, had an impact on public opinion. To what extent this has pended negatively on their evaluations of the way the government has handled the crisis is something that we are currently still trying to understand.

We already touched upon several issues. But if we were to think also about the training of future generations of scholars in the field, more specifically if we were to build a political science curriculum for corruption and corruption control studies at the highest academic standard, what do you think we should include as subjects, as areas of interest? We have the pandemic now. That is certainly a hot issue. But what other issues would you consider to be relevant for future research in the field?

Luciana Alexandra GHICA: And if I can develop a little on that. Now we have the pandemic but, in the future, we might have other relevant phenomena. From a larger perspective, what piece of advice would you have liked to have received when you started doing research on corruption and that you would like to share with young researchers who are just embarking in this field?

Donatella DELLA PORTA: Well, a couple of considerations. One is that in political corruption studies, but also in social movements studies, avoiding becoming increasingly self-sufficient after achieving a certain amount of success may be quite challenging. When one starts to have specialized journals, specialized curricula, masters maybe, and so on, one of the risks is to close down external input and to focus on "defending the borders." I would be more for blurring the borders with research on other types of phenomena. What we are doing at the Scuola Normale Superiore in a research project financed by the Tuscan regional government is to investigate, for instance, the various types of crimes that relate to political corruption. In the Italian cases, for example, there are often connections to environmental crimes or to labour market transformations such as the exploitation of labour migrants, especially through forms of black labour market. I think it is important to understand such phenomena from larger perspectives if we want to capture the way in which corruption is corrupting the entire system by interacting with different forms of crime. Corruption is no longer just about corrupt politicians. Someone may be involved in different types of lawbreaking activities.

Additionally, we are trying to address anti-corruption not only in the traditional way (i.e., through analyses of institutional responses) but also to investigate anti-corruption "from below." Probably for me this was particularly relevant because it connected my interest in social movements with the interest in corruption. Yet, this is also especially relevant when reflecting about the current pandemic. Beyond the impact of the pandemic on the public opinion in general, what could be also interesting is to investigate the specific actors that are affected by specific instances of corruption. Within this context, we plan to study the way in which victims of the mismanagement of the health system have

organized. And for this purpose, I found very useful the reflection on health social movements or social movements that target the health system. To give you an example, in Italy, as you probably know, during the early stages of the pandemic and especially in Lombardy, we had the deadliest wave. Coincidently, Lombardy is the region in which the processes of privatization within the health system developed more. There are now organizations of the relatives of the victims, such as old folks in care homes, who are organizing themselves to bring legal charges. What we have done in the Italian case is also to look at the connections between mafia-type of organized crime and political corruption. We need to treat political corruption not only as white-collar crimes, but as embedded in an illegal system that is influencing the institutional system in general.

Thinking further about the effects of the pandemic on the root causes of corruption, what you observed about the increased perceived opportunities for corruption related to COVID-19 in Portugal also resonates with our preliminary results. When I supervise PhD work at the Scuola Normale Superiore, I see that, in a way or another, none of my students can avoid addressing the pandemic in their work because it has a significant and multifaceted impact in different countries and different political systems. In this respect, I would also reflect more in general on the emergency of critical junctures and its effects on the transformation of the political systems. It has been observed about past emergencies, about previous big crises such as wars, that such turbulent moments could generate transformations that force states to become more responsible and more involved in finding solutions to social problems. For instance, after the Spanish flu there was a massive investment in public health systems, in increasing the responsibility of the state and so on. But this is not automatic. We could have also different types of developments. For example, we could witness the delegitimization of the political class and of politics in general. Some of the reactions to the pandemic are also related with the mistrust in public institutions, mistrust in science and so on. I think that the effects of the pandemic are still emerging. We will have to continue investigating them.

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"RISK LITERACY" AND SOCIAL CLEAVAGES: VULNERABILITY IN THREE ACTS

TOM HASHIMOTO
ARAS ZIRGULIS

Abstract. Although recent studies show widening socio-economic divisions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many such divisions were already identified as social cleavages. Scholars and observers tend to view the world in a dichotomous manner, overgeneralising their analyses along known cleavages. Therefore, the relevance of our work as scholars is at risk and we, the scholars of the contemporary world, are "vulnerable" to the temptation of ignoring the details, nuances, and complexities. The uneven impact of and recovery from the pandemic is not necessarily binary – for example, a refusal to follow the medical consensus (e.g. social distancing, vaccination) can be observed on both sides of many cleavages. Against such a background, this paper first characterises the pandemic as a medical, socio-economic, and information crisis. With the former two "pillars" resembling the known cleavages, the third pillar goes beyond the physical access to information and deals with the people's perception of various risks. Such a behavioural angle to the vulnerability – labelled "risk literacy" – highlights the phenomenon of "digital divide" and shows a promising feature as an additional analytical tool. By familiarising ourselves with the people's varying risk perceptions, we increase our own literacy against the risk of overgeneralisation.

Keywords: risk literacy, social cleavages, information crisis, digital divide, risk perception, vulnerability, behavioural analysis, COVID-19, pandemic

Introduction

Pre-existing inequalities in the United States and most countries around the world made ordinary people vulnerable to the dual blows of the current public health and economic crisis," states the Institute for Policy Studies ([2021]), one of the leading progressive think tanks in the US, in its *Inequality.org* project. This sentiment of the socio-economic divisions being widened has been echoed by almost all international organisations (e.g. Ferreira 2021; United Nations Development Programme 2020). In general, they highlight the borderlessness of the pandemic, the unequal impact of and recovery from the pandemic, and a call for holistic and substantial approaches to policymaking. As such, governmental and non-governmental organisations alike host relevant public events with high social media presence (e.g. World Bank 2021) and many intellectuals share their opinions on major news outlets (e.g. Goldin 2021). It is a familiar process of social mobilisation, raising awareness of and building legitimacy for the socio-economic programmes which advocate a sustainable and inclusive growth.

At the same time, from the issue of demographic divide to the on-going financial crisis, our intuitional understanding of "vulnerability," the theme of most contributions in this issue, is typically binary and often dichotomous. For example, in the US, we expect female, old, rural, poorly educated, and non-White populations to be vulnerable, while male, young, urban, educated, and White populations to be resilient to external shocks. The divisions "North/South" and "Western/non-Western" are likely to be also relevant on the international level. While many of us recognise that categories such as gender, education and race are not necessarily binary, scholars highlight various confrontations between the binarized groups expressed in elections, strikes, riots etc. Thus, as new social, economic, and political environments continue to emerge, scholars and observers of contemporary world scramble to explain the ongoing phenomena in a dichotomous manner. From the theme of "trust" to ethics, they feature the fights put forward by a certain group against another group, institution, or state, as if various class struggles can explain the whole world.

In relation to the current pandemic, scholars investigate how the pre-existing socio-economic divides and systemic discrimination have remained or even been enhanced during the crisis (e.g. Marshburn et al. 2021). While the negative psychological effects of lockdown and general stresses have been widely reported (e.g. Smith et al. 2021), anti-lockdown protesters are often labelled as illogical and irrational, or even "indifferent to their own persistence" (Bratich 2021). Once again, this is a dichotomous understanding of the contemporary world, placing those "logical" and "rational" against those "illogical" and "irrational." What is emphasised here is not the claim of rationality, but the absence of variation, the lack of details, and the desire for simplicity. On the one hand, some people are vulnerable not only to economic shocks *per se*, but also to misinformation and their own (misunderstood) risk perception. On the other hand, we (scholars, observers, policymakers, intellectuals etc.) are vulnerable to the established theories and conceptual frameworks which have ubiquitously been illustrating vulnerabilities along the physically attributed (or seemingly externally "visible") characteristics such as (binary) gender, age, race, religion, education, geography, income, and so on. As one may read in the preamble of the 2021 edition of the *SCOPE: Science of Politics* conference (where a version of this article was presented), "we [scholars of politics] are also vulnerable in contemporary politics" since "the relevance of studying political phenomena" can easily be questioned and jeopardised by overgeneralisation ([SCOPE] 2021, emphases removed).

This paper, therefore, aims to address the limitations to such a dichotomous approach by illustrating the shifting social divide/cleavages throughout the so-called COVID-19 crisis. The crisis is thematised into three pillars. First, it is a medical crisis where the physiological vulnerability puts the governments on alert. Second, it is an economic crisis where the social vulnerability fuelled political unrests. Third, it is a communication crisis on the information vulnerability, where a certain group of people (often a young, urban population) quickly adapted to the new reality, excavating opportunities and swimming through various rules and regulations aided by IT (mobile) tools. Coincidentally, anti-lockdown protestors also organised their activities on IT platforms, thus, the physical accessibility to IT infrastructure alone cannot depict

the nuances of social cleavages. In other words, we shall focus on how people modify their behaviours according to the information they receive. The goal of this paper is to add such a behavioural angle to the discussion of vulnerabilities and to caution against our tendency to overuse the known social cleavages.

These pillars certainly overlap each other both in terms of timeline, as well as conceptual framework, but the focus is on the social cleavages shifting throughout the crisis from the demographic ones to the geographical and socio-economic ones. While these cleavages are all familiar to political scientists and alike, none of them alone can explain the entire crisis. That said, having experienced the whole cycle, those who have a higher information literacy can accommodate themselves and prepare for similar medical and social crises in the future. This paper proposes to focus on information vulnerability, based on the ability to access, validate, and transmit information, a concept that we refer to as "risk literacy." As the urban population tends to have a higher "risk literacy" than the rural areas, the uneven distribution of socio-economic resilience and recovery from the crisis makes information vulnerability more of a long-term phenomenon, which is a key characteristic to make it a viable analytical tool in the studies of the contemporary world and policymaking. The rest of the paper is divided into three sections. In the first one (*Pillars of the COVID-19 crisis*) we comment on the developments in the first two pillars (i.e. medical and socio-economic crisis) and highlights various social cleavages associated to them. While many of these cleavages are well-known to the scholars of the contemporary socio-economic dynamics, the section serves as a shared background for the following sections. The next section (*"Digital divide" and regional resilience*) investigates the relationship between "digital divide" (in relation to the third pillar of the crisis) and regional resilience. As a way of conclusion, the last section (*Risk literacy of scholars and the "vulnerability in three acts"*) comments how the conceptual framework of "risk literacy" is intended to increase our own risk literacy in the study of politics. Together, these three sections are dubbed as "vulnerability in three acts."

Pillars of the COVID-19 crisis

"What does it mean to be vulnerable?" – the editorial of the prominent medical journal *Lancet* asks (2020:1089). "The strategies most recommended to control the spread of COVID-19 – social distancing and frequent handwashing – are not easy for the millions of people who live in highly dense communities with precarious or insecure housing, and poor sanitation and access to clean water," it continues. Malnutrition and the spread of immunocompromised diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, are critical obstacles, while "the response to COVID-19 will come at the expense of treating other diseases" (Ibid.). Thus, the COVID-19 crisis is first and foremost a medical crisis which deeply intertwines with the general socio-economic environments.

The crisis highlighted the gaps in many layers/levels of socio-economic geographies, between the so-called Global North and Global South, between the developed and less developed regions, and between the urban and rural areas. The general hygiene and utility infrastructure is surely an indicator of vulnerability, and we do not need COVID-19 to restate the situation. Yet, for many countries that restricted the movement of people as a containment policy, obtaining vaccines became not only a medical remedy to slow down the spread of coronavirus, but also an economic remedy to sustain a certain level of trade flows, especially in the business sector where interpersonal communication carries weight as a source of tacit knowledge (Faulconbridge 2006; Gertler 2003). To untangle this complexity and inspired by more substantial recent analyses such as Gethin, Martínez-Toledano & Piketty (2021), this section lists several social cleavages linked to the COVID-19 crisis. It is by no means an exhaustive catalogue, but it aims to highlight uneven and ambivalent trends of the crisis.

The first on the list is age – the older the population is, the more vulnerable would be to a medical shock, and a combination of old age and pre-existing medical conditions is often fatal in the case of COVID-19 (Banerjee et al. 2020). The old population tends to live in rural areas with scattered access to medical facilities, making the geography of medical crisis uneven between rural and urban areas (even though congestion in cities tilts the risk towards urban areas). Then again,

according to the World Health Organisation, the top 10 countries in terms of life expectancy at birth (2019) are Japan, Switzerland, South Korea, Singapore, Spain, Cyprus, Australia, Italy, Israel, and Norway (World Health Organisation [2021]). The "wealthier" nations naturally have older populations, and while these countries are more exposed to medical risks, they may easily be more resilient to medical shocks. Furthermore, the Conservative Party in the UK and the Republican Party in the US, for example, tend to attract old voters, and these parties have been incumbent at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. These governments surely take demography such as age as a factor in policymaking. Therefore, age as a social cleavage has weak explanatory power in analysing the pandemic as a medical crisis.

Similarly, while the level of general hygiene and utility/medical infrastructure accessibility can illustrate the uneven impact of the pandemic, it was the capacity of hospitals which put the governments in the so-called developed countries on alert. The congestion of population made the urban areas vulnerable to the spread of the virus, while the travel ban, quarantine, lockdown, and other restrictive measures are viewed both as a necessary containment policy and a threat to freedom. In particular, the number of anti-government rallies seems to have increased in the recent years despite a commonly understood medical risk of large public gatherings during a pandemic of infectious disease. Here, we clearly observe a mixture of medical and socio-political crises, or even a shift from the former to the latter. From the US to Poland, COVID-19 was the focus of the coincidental elections. In the US, the frustration of losing the presidential election was expressed as the Capitol attack, while in Poland, the ruling party sought to change the electoral rules shortly before the election in the name of medical security. In Japan, the prolonged impact of the pandemic accompanied by the decision not to re-postpone the Tokyo Olympics has costed the prime minister Suga's tenure despite the ruling party holding on to the government. In other words, social cleavages, often visible in voting behaviours, were explored, or even "exploited," by various political actors, and physiological vulnerabilities in a medical crisis are coated with demographical cleavages for party support.

As touched in the introduction (e.g. Marshburn et al. 2021), the COVID-19 pandemic as a socio-economic crisis hit the population unevenly along the known social cleavages. As the economy slows down due to the pandemic, this unevenness in the impact of and recovery from the crisis is nothing new. The social distancing was often spelled out as some degree of lockdowns, with restaurants, bars, clubs, and hotels forced to close or operate with a limited capacity, and many jobs have been lost. We therefore assume that the urban, poorly educated, and non-White population disproportionally suffer from the pandemic. Curiously, the various case studies on the labour market configurations in the hospitality industry have not found a consensus (Manoharan & Singal 2017) – the evidence to support the labour diversity in the hospitality industry in terms of gender, age, race, ethnicity, and nationality is far from robust, but more than anecdotal. In other words, it is hasty to conclude that, for example, poorly educated, non-skilled populations were particularly vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic, because such a socio-economic vulnerability is nothing special under the pandemic, and university students – an example of educated, skilled population – also engage in the hospitality industry during their studies, challenging our binarized hypotheses. It is our (i.e. observers') understanding of social cleavages which shapes such a binary understanding of the world where the unevenness is polarised between two extremes when the reality might be more complex and ambiguous.

Perhaps one phenomenon that stood out in this crisis (and hence, epistemologically valuable) is vaccine diplomacy. The aforementioned editorial of *Lancet* (2020) mentions the trade-offs which many less developed countries are facing. One of them is the trade-off between the treatments of COVID-19 and of other diseases. Additionally, due to the increased demand and limited supply, the market rhetoric pushed the vaccine price upward (Mancini, Kuchler & Kahn. 2021). Oxfam (2021) reports that the COVID-19 vaccines are several times more expensive than other vaccines – while, in addition to the different production costs, the novelty of vaccines may explain the price difference, it is simply an extra burden for many countries, particularly when the medical crisis spilled over to economic crises. As the travel restriction to those who are unvaccinated remains imposed in the majority of countries, the size of

economy certainly influences the speed of recovery from the pandemic, medically, as well as on economic grounds. As of April 2021, 84 countries use a Pfizer vaccine while 130 countries opted for a cheaper AstraZeneca vaccine (which is considered as less "effective" compared to Pfizer); Sputnik is used by 28 countries and Sinopharm and Sinovac by 35 and 23 countries respectively (Gallagher 2021). Soon, we will know more about the "vaccine diplomacy" of Russia and China, but it seems to be clear that many countries may not have had a choice, and they paid a lower effectiveness and a rumoured risk of blood clot as a price of their slow economic development.

The message of this section is so far twofold. First, the unevenness observed in the impact of and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic (as a medical and socio-economic crisis) is less likely to be a "new" phenomenon in terms of the analysis of the contemporary world, as it simply reaffirms many existing theories and studies on social cleavages. Second, as the observed facts (e.g. infected or not, lost jobs or not) are highly binary, we tend to binarize their causal relationships as well, ignoring the nuances and ambiguities stemming from the geographically and demographically overlapping presence of multiple social cleavages. Vaccine diplomacy is one exception where the phenomenon seems to be unusual and binary: the developed countries have more choices, while the others have limited choices. That said, in investigating the epistemological value of "vulnerability" as a conceptual framework, the third "pillar" of the COVID-19 pandemic seems to emerge. That is *a communication crisis*. The next section deals with this aspect and links it with the concept of "risk literacy."

"Digital divide" and regional resilience

To briefly characterise, the communication crisis in reaction to the pandemic refers to a variety of behavioural patterns and their consequential conflicts observed – the patterns, however, may not differ along the known social cleavages, thus increasing the value of these observations as an additional analytical tool. To repeat the quote from *Lancet*, "[t]he strategies most recommended to control the spread of

COVID-19 – social distancing and frequent handwashing – are not easy for the millions of people" (2020:1089), and the infrastructure and public finance were covered in the first two pillars of the COVID-19 crisis. The third pillar is that despite the widespread and common understanding with respect to social distancing and frequent handwashing, many people intentionally do not follow and even disobey the public order. Such a diversity in (il)logical behaviours (cf. Bratich 2021) can be labelled as a behavioural social cleavage.

This section, therefore, first comments on the differences in the digital infrastructure and information accessibility on both regional and individual level. Then, it will highlight the phenomenon of "digital divide," where the usage of digital infrastructure (hence information processing) differs among the residents even when it is fairly and evenly accessible. Finally, it links the "digital divide" to the conceptual framework of "resilience" where risk management becomes a key decision-making tool. The ability to foresee and conceptualise risks is labelled as "risk literacy," and the following section discusses how the "risk literacy" framework also increases our own risk literacy as the observers of the contemporary world. As the pandemic is an on-going phenomenon and many empirical studies are yet to be conducted, the authors acknowledge the weakness in terms of the refinement of the conceptual setting (and references to the existing literature). That said, one of the main goals of this paper is to caution against the overutilisation of the known social cleavages as the general explanation. Thus, we hope that this section ignites further discussions to link various behavioural traits with regional resilience to external shocks.

Being digitalised, information spreads instantly and globally, and the contemporary world has been transformed by a great magnitude of information sharing (Castells 2020). Surely, the regions which lack utility infrastructures (e.g. electricity, water, sanitation, transportation) are likely to be behind in telecommunication infrastructure rollouts, but that can be analytically covered in the previous two pillars and the existing observations on socio-economic cleavages. What is astonishing here is the exponential access to information. The number of mobile devices reached 5 billion worldwide with a finding that "a median of 76% [of adults] across 18 advanced economies surveyed have smartphones" in

2018 (Silver 2019). While the survey also points out the difference in smartphone ownership along the usual suspects of social cleavages (i.e. age, education, and gender; also see Inkinen, Merisalo & Makkonen 2018), once again, they can be covered by the analyses of the first two pillars. As the world population is about to reach 8 billion, "5 billion" and "a median of 76%" indicate a widening base for the information accessibility globally. One barrier which is rapidly disappearing is the language. For example, since its launch in 2006 Google Translate reached 500 million users in 2016 (Turovsky 2016), and the app was downloaded by more than 1 billion times by March 2021 (Pitman 2021). Its linguistic accuracy aside, it is safe to assume that there exists a level playing field today as far as the information accessibility in the major cities is concerned.

That said, such an exponential growth in terms of access to information means a widening information gap due to a time lag of digital device adaptation. Taking social media as an example, any mobile devices send and receive information. Today, not only media elites and intellectuals post and share their socio-political observations with a wider public, but also any individuals and organisations can (pseudonymously) contribute to public debates. In other words, while the "level playing field" of information accessibility expands geographically, the inaccessibility to telecommunication devices is increasingly "penalised" in our daily life. For instance, from the COVID-19 "green" passes developed within EU to the digital passenger locator form (dPLF), the modern-day governance is becoming more digitalised on the mobile platforms, with apps, QR codes, and near-field communication (NFC) becoming the standard tools. Even when the regulations are communicated in, say, French, Google Translate can translate the texts in any format from website to photo. If you are not sure of anything (e.g. documents required to travel from Poland to Canada), you can google, post questions on various Facebook fora and Instagram stories, or ask the chatbots managed by airliners and ticket booking platforms. Thus, any competent users of mobile devices can access, interpret, and verify information with an astonishing speed anywhere in the world, as long as the mobile signal is strong enough. Those who are not familiar with these tools and "methods" to obtain information (e.g. Google

Translate, Facebook forum, chatbot) will be left behind, and the gap in the amount of information obtained between these two groups is continuously widening. Once not only social distancing, but also remote working become a widely applied standard, even the interpersonal communication may be dropped from the list of information tools.

Of course, what the users do with the accessibility is a different question. Below there is an indexed figure on the number of Google search for "COVID" and "COVID vaccine" including the variations such as "coronavirus," as well as minor alternations/mistakes such as "vaccine." As soon as the pandemic hit the US and EU, the number of searches skyrocketed, and it marked the historical peak in the week of 22 March 2020 shortly after many major economies implemented lockdowns and quarantines. The governments of advanced economies and the WHO were not optimistic about the vaccine rollout at that point, but still, we can see people already began to search online the expression "COVID vaccine." Since then, the number has fluctuated, presumably people obtaining the information on COVID-19 through other channels such as Facebook and Twitter. Pfizer-BioNTech submitted an emergency use authorisation request in the US in November 2020, followed shortly after by Oxford-AstraZeneca and Janssen. The number of searches for "COVID vaccine" increased each time major milestones such as clinical trial result and vaccine authorisations hit the news. However, the number of searches for "COVID vaccine" has been far smaller than for "COVID," and the former did not show such a rapid increase like the latter. Considering the persistent objections towards the vaccine mandates in certain parts of the world, one can assume that many anti-vaxxers made up their mind without even searching it on Google. Although a far more serious and rigorous empirical research needs to be conducted, this preliminary review reveals that the access to Google, for example, cannot describe the uneven usage of information – some users simply do not collect (seemingly) necessary information during their decision-making processes.

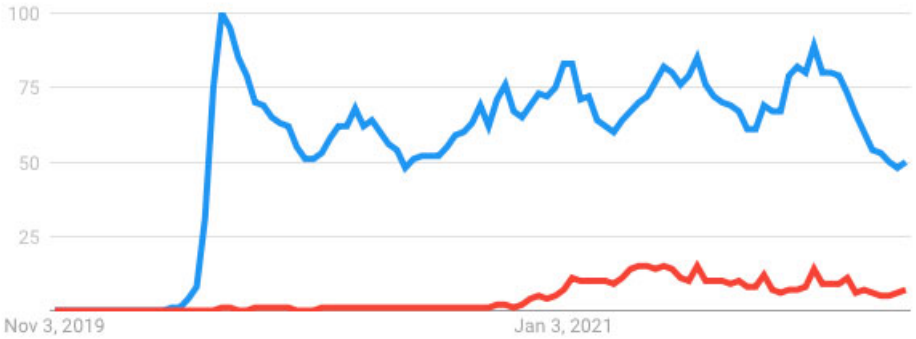

Figure 1. Number of Google searches globally (indexed as the peak = 100) with "COVID" (blue) and "COVID vaccine" (red)
Source: Google Trend (Accessed: 23 October 2021)

The Pew Research Center reported that "those who rely on social media for news are less likely to get the facts right about the coronavirus and politics and more likely to hear some unproven claims" (Mitchell et al. 2020; see also Serrano-Cinca, Muñoz-Soro & Brusca 2018). The oft-toxic relationship between social (as opposed to edited) media and politics has been a popular analytical framework since the 2016 US presidential election (e.g. Enli 2017; Wells et al. 2020), and the satirical response from comedic TV shows such as *The Daily Show* and *Saturday Night Live* was also scrutinised as sources of political influence (e.g. Blankenship 2020; Becker 2020). As far as COVID-19 is concerned, while the so-called "infodemic" – a rapid spread of information irrespective of its accuracy – is found deeply rooted in social media (e.g. Adekoya & Fasae 2021), the same social media is used to strengthen the narratives supporting the social distancing (e.g. Mohamad 2020). To put it simply, we still do not know if the rapid information sharing via largely unsupervised media channels is beneficial to the modern society where the freedom from oppression is a key political value. What is sure is that even when information is fairly and evenly accessible, the usage of information (where to collect information, what to do with the information) varies, and that this "digital divide" does not necessarily mirror the known social cleavages.

Calzada & Cobo (2015), as well as Hatuka & Zur (2020) note that the so-called "digital divide" is more than the differences in the physical

access to digital infrastructure and that the concept shall include the degree of digital participation and digital risk awareness (such as privacy). The building of "smart cities" and the digitalisation of governance are likely to be inefficient and ineffective without increasing the proportion of such "smart residents." Socio-economic exclusions, therefore, come not only extrinsically from social structures and hierarchy, but also intrinsically from various self-exclusions such as distancing from digital participation (e.g. Serrano-Cinca, Muñoz-Soro & Brusca 2018) and shunning from information validation with multiple sources. An interesting finding from Hatuka & Zur (2020) is that the digital participation is more linked to the potential participants' needs than their digital skills. Therefore, cultivating the "needs" to become competent information recipients to avoid being misinformed (i.e. becoming a risk literate) leads to softening the impact of information crisis. In short, having more "smart residents" or "risk literates" naturally reduces the spread of misinformation and increases resilience against external shocks, let alone a pandemic.

Unfortunately, at this stage of conceptual debate, it is difficult to highlight the direct connection between the concept and the existing theories of social cleavages. Things are not so easy for at least three reasons. First, by virtue of the participatory (i.e. inclusive) politics, those who have made up their mind to opt out from the information flow supervised by the experts and elites in the field (e.g. medicine) have equal footage in societal decision-making. When they get involved in harming actions such as the Capitol attack in the US, the existing socio-legal remedies may be effective. Otherwise, we are not yet ready to expel them from digital participation (even though Facebook is currently following this path). Such dichotomous confrontations simply deepen the digital divide (cf. Bratich 2021), and not necessarily strengthen the regional resilience. Second, the need to become a risk "literate" has a trade-off with other needs in terms of time. Somewhere in the e-universe, there may be a truth. It might be on the 8th page of your Google search or in the link to a news article posted on Twitter – but where are the search heuristics? What is the "rule of thumb" to comb through uncountable information pieces? It is not difficult to point out the information crisis and the illiteracy in terms of information

validation and risk perception. It is even possible to label and distinguish "illogical" behaviours from "logical" behaviours. Yet, it is whole another issue to convince and encourage those "illogical" digital participants to search for more information and to close the digital divide. Perhaps, this difficulty is the reason why we tend to stop our analyses by pointing out the binary conclusion of (il)logical behaviours along the known social cleavages. Third, even if the above problem is mitigated through comprehensive, systematic, and centralised information sharing from the side of the experts, elites, intellectuals, and policymakers, "trust" is the key to combat the spread of misinformation. Nam (2014), for example, highlights the trust in government as one of the major determinants of e-government use, and the study can easily be transposed to the trust in experts and major media outlets. In his political science classic *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam (1993) has already linked the trust in the government with the concepts of civic community and social capital, and his understanding of regional differences in terms of civic engagement connects the participatory trust-building with the socio-economic stability and growth. Therefore, it is not a huge leap in thought to combine, on the one hand, risk literacy and responsible behaviour, and, on the other hand, participatory information sharing (i.e. closing the digital divide) and regional resilience to external shocks, including the pandemic.

Risk literacy of scholars and the "vulnerability in three acts"

The overarching goal of this paper is to highlight the nuances and complexities observed in terms of the uneven impact of and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. On one hand, the socio-economic discrimination and inequalities continue to exist and are even widened during the crisis. While the pandemic as a medical and socio-economic crisis underlined many known demographic and socio-economic cleavages, "illogical" and "irrational" behaviours against the medically reasoned social orders such as social distancing and vaccine mandates can be observed on both sides of such cleavages. Scholars and other observers of the contemporary world are often tempted to seek guidance

in the established theories and may overgeneralise the analyses on the pandemic in a binary and dichotomous manner. We expect, for example, male, young, urban, educated, and White population to be more informed and more resilient against external medical and economic shocks, while female, old, rural, poorly educated, and non-White population to be misinformed or excluded from crucial information and thus less resilient. Referring to the conceptual framework of "digital divide," this paper cautioned against such a hasty conclusion and called for an investigation into the sources of self-exclusion from information, distrust in government and elites, and apathy towards participatory decision-making.

After all, the "risk literacy" is twofold. First, it is a concept to measure the awareness with respect to information and behaviour. The use of information infrastructure, the attentive attitude towards misinformation, and the responsible and informed behavioural choice are all related to the risks both the individuals and society face. Consequently, a higher risk literacy and a reduced digital divide would strengthen the regional (societal) resilience. Second, by acknowledging the ambiguity (i.e. non-binary observation) in terms of risk perception/literacy, we can explore the depth of complexity in the unevenness witnessed during the pandemic. The relevance of studying the anti-vaxxers' rhetoric, for example, is nothing but confrontational when we label them simply as "illogical." However, despite difficulties in fully grasping its causal mechanisms, risk illiteracy is a phenomenon which may be worth to explore as a constructive and inclusive way of thinking. The *science* of politics in this instance, therefore, shall depart from the known social cleavages, which tend to be binary and dichotomous, and focus on more nuanced and complex behavioural understandings of the contemporary world.

Certainly, this is an ongoing proposal partly because it deals with the present-day issues without sufficient empirical data and partly because it asks us to be social *scientists* and to put our personal frustrations against those "illiterates " aside. To take a metaphor from theatre, our Act I is a plot where an inciting incident – the pandemic in this case – is exposed. The hero/ine, the scholar, scrambled to the scene to engage in a meaningful dialogue with other actors – but, at this point,

the character is not yet developed, and there are many unknowns as to the motives of the other characters. Our Act II is a character arc, where the hero/ine faces challenges and complexities – digital divide corresponds here. Our Act III is a resolution, where an epistemological "step-forward" is communicated in a beautiful monologue. What the authors hope is that this reflection on risk literacy will act as a draft for such a monologue in the near future. Then, we will be able to check overgeneralisation in our analyses and strengthen our relevance as scientific communicators, contributing to strengthening our own resilience.

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GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE? COOPERATION AND CONFLICT IN THE POST-HEGEMONIC ERA: FACING THE PANDEMIC CRISIS

DAVID G. MIRANDA

Abstract. In recent decades, we have witnessed the consolidation of the knowledge society, based on a process of globalization, which promotes the consolidation of the knowledge economy as an emerging paradigm, as well as promoting new dynamics of scientific cooperation, especially from the European Union to the rest of the world. Agreements, summits, and a network of science diplomacy have been set up reflecting the impact of knowledge on new development models. From this process, conceived as a catalyst for value chains based on knowledge intensity, it is possible to glimpse new power conflicts related to other recent conflicts for economic and political hegemony on a global scale. This study aims to analyze countries' behavior vis-à-vis the global threat of the COVID 19 pandemic, based on the correlation between their ability to face it and their levels of knowledge-based development as a differentiating element in terms of vulnerability. The results show a process where scientific cooperation has given way to a field of geopolitical competition between the actors of the international system, affecting their levels of vulnerability to global threats.

Keywords: knowledge economy, scientific cooperation, globalization, interdependence, Global Knowledge Index, cluster analysis, COVID-19, pandemic

Resumen. En las últimas décadas, hemos asistido al afianzamiento de la sociedad del conocimiento, a partir de un proceso de globalización, que propicia la consolidación de la economía del conocimiento como paradigma emergente, impulsando nuevas dinámicas de cooperación científica, especialmente desde la Unión Europea, hacia el

resto del mundo. Se han configurado acuerdos, cumbres y un entramado de diplomacia científica que refleja el impacto del conocimiento en los nuevos modelos de desarrollo. A partir de dicho proceso, concebido como un catalizador para las cadenas de valor basadas en intensidad de conocimiento, es posible vislumbrar nuevos conflictos de poder relacionados con otros conflictos recientes por la hegemonía económica y política a escala global. Este estudio se propone analizar el comportamiento de los países ante la amenaza global de la pandemia de COVID 19, a partir de la correlación entre su capacidad de enfrentarla, y sus niveles de desarrollo basado en conocimiento, como elemento diferenciador en términos de vulnerabilidad. Los resultados evidencian un proceso donde la cooperación científica ha dado paso a un terreno de competencia geopolítica entre los actores del sistema internacional, impactando en sus niveles de vulnerabilidad ante amenazas globales.

Palabras clave: economía del conocimiento, cooperación científica, globalización, interdependencia, Índice Global de Conocimiento (Global Knowledge Index), análisis de conglomerados, COVID-19, pandemia

When analysing the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, irrespective of how they have unfolded across the world, it is possible to observe large differences of impact at state level. These are mainly expressed in terms of loss of human lives, testing capacity and vaccination, as well as in relation to the economic effects and estimated costs for recovery. The notable differences have been attributed mainly to factors such as the states' capacity to face the public health crisis and the levels of economic development and/or vulnerability of each country. Undoubtedly, these characteristics determine the access and production of technological resources, as well as the level of medical supplies, and specialized medical and scientific assistance, within the framework of a world system where interdependence and participation in global value chains are reflected in how much each country adheres to the process of economic globalization consolidated during the last decades. This process has been driven by the technological revolution, which has as main pillars the consolidation of the knowledge economy as a new productive paradigm (Vilaseca i Requena & Torrent i Sellens 2005), giving way to new analysis models of development issues, and vulnerability. In view of these considerations, and within the context of the debate in recent decades on the relationship between globalization and development as tools to face the challenges and threats of the

contemporary world, in this article I aim to analyse the behaviour of a large group of countries when faced with a global crisis of the magnitude brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. More specifically, when looking at the case of this particular pandemic, has national development from the perspective of the knowledge economy paradigm reduced vulnerability to global threats? To analyse these factors and their possible correlation, I will address first several debates on the effects of globalization, with a focus on the centrality of knowledge as a strategic factor for development, and on how this could have been configured as a relevant factor to face the dramatic effects of the pandemic.

Globalization and development vs vulnerability

Looking at human development indicators such as life expectancy and infant mortality, controlled by per capita GDP levels, democracy levels, and population, using a cross-sectional time-series (CSTS) analysis approach, Mukherjee & Krieckhaus (2011) find that globalization has been mainly beneficial for humanity in terms of quality of life. Similarly, Bhagwati (2004) and Bergh & Nilsson (2010) show that globalization has positively influenced life expectancy. Mukherjee & Krieckhaus (2011, 151) also observe that, while globalization has many negative effects, positive effects predominate, and that "human well-being is improved as countries become increasingly deeply incorporated into the global system." Despite his more critical position on globalization, Stiglitz (2002, 4) also recognizes that "due to globalization, many people in the world now live longer than before and their standard of living is much better."

Then again, some critics of globalization point towards its negative effects such as greater vulnerability to disasters that generate high-impact economic shocks (Benson & Clay 2003), a low capacity to react to global threats (Yopo 2021), diminished or shared sovereignty (Stallings 1992; Mahon 1996), unequal geographical development (Harvey 2003), greater income inequality (Milanovic 2005; Wade 2003; Williamson 1997), and aggravating the effects of international recessions (Stiglitz 2002; Stiglitz 2007). At the same time, Wallerstein (2007) interpreted globalization as a

phenomenon of capitalism restructuring under the idea of the so-called "world system" where development is not national but corresponds more to a large capitalist world economy of a polarizing and asymmetric nature based on centre-periphery relations, where states can differentiate themselves by their capacity for intervention in the market, and consequently in the "world system." He also anticipates that the eventual emergence of new poles of "semi-peripheral" industrial and economic activity would be conditioned by central countries' power balance mechanisms. Consequently, "peripheral" countries would be subordinated through several mechanisms, including the creation of new proletariats. Within this context, national educational systems play a leading role (Ibid.).

When analysing global risk vulnerability in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, one must acknowledge first that it is the worst global crisis of our time and that it has significant political and economic effects. This crisis has created a chaotic environment defined by a dissociated interaction of global system actors. This is a scenario with entropic features (Marcano 2021). Like all scenarios characterized by extreme uncertainty, it features forces that, in the classic pendulum between *security* and *freedom,* drive the evolution of political systems towards the former (Bauman & Dessal 2014). This also recalls the portrait that Beck (1998) makes to the contemporary world, as being one of difficulties generated by the centrality of states' role in emerging global crises, such as climate change, pandemics and large-scale displacements requiring humanitarian interventions. The current period is also sometimes described as a *hegemonic interregnum* (Puccio 2021b; Stahl 2019; Taggart 2020), characterized by the *emptiness* of power in global terms, with confrontation defined in relation to a transactional use of the international arena. In the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, this is visible particularly in the field of vaccine production, a critical element for bringing the crisis to an end. Furthermore, the generation of large flows of contradictory (or directly *false)* information is shaping a new *post-hegemonic* conflict. This may weaken those substantive initiatives for the compensation of asymmetries and inequities of the global accumulation system, such as international cooperation for development or the paradigm of multilateralism in international relations. Not least, these dynamics have also negative influences on

regional integration processes, such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) or even the European Union. Given its depth and degree of uncertainty, the fact that it hit the foundations of social protection and democratic systems, the legitimacy of social pacts with extreme inequality, and the relationship between states and entire regions, it will take a long time to overcome the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The world is left in a crisis scenario that we must analyse in its structural dimension to minimize future impacts on vulnerability levels of the population.

Knowledge: A new strategic dimension?

As an economic and political phenomenon, globalization has multiple effects on the creation and implementation of new internationalization policies through various scientific diplomacy initiatives, designed within the framework of the *knowledge economy* and *knowledge society* paradigms. The consolidation of a corporate dynamic has modernized the field of knowledge production in accordance with the technical and industrial requirements of the technological revolution, generating a strong impact on the institutional order in the scientific and academic field, with multiple implications related to its influence on public policy formulation and implementation. For instance, in the case of the European Union, Schleicher (2006) pointed out that education would be the key to EU's further success, acknowledging that this is a new field of competitiveness in relation to other major knowledge production centres such as the United States or Asia. Soon after, the *Treaty of Lisbon* included among its basis of operation the so-called *knowledge economy*, designed on three fundamental pillars: (1) education, (2) research, development and innovation (R & D + I), and (3) development of ICTs, generating a framework for its competitiveness policies, conceived as a strategic dimension of its integration project, and global positioning.

In this complex institutional political scenario, universities, as well as both public and private research institutions face the complex problem of redefining their global positioning strategy through competitiveness policies. This dynamic is typical of what some authors

call a *post-capitalist* order (Sassower 2013, 20) which promotes synergy between companies, research centres, and states under a paradigm of global interdependence, characterized largely by the use of new technologies and their application within an intensive process at several levels and in permanent reformulation to cope with an environment in accelerated change. This scenario has thus operated as a powerful catalyst for the dynamics of internationalization and academic cooperation, activating a process of unprecedented political dialogue with relevant examples in higher education. These include the so-called *Paris Process* (2000) with the aim to build a Common Area of Higher Education 2013), as well as the so-called Ibero-American Area of Knowledge, and the emergence within the region of the Latin American and Caribbean Meeting Space for Higher Education, sponsored by UNESCO-IESALC. These generate new challenges for regional integration, among other initiatives that could be convergent with "new regionalism" (Telò 2007). This is an alternative to the theories of hyper-globalization and neo-medievalism, that have a strong neoliberal basis, in which the nation-state is in gradual retreat due to its decreased incidence capacity, while the economy is dominated by non-governmental actors (transnational companies and financial institutions), leaving the state to a subordinate and reactive role, exposed to the continuous tension between the principles of territorial sovereignty and interdependence (Gamble 2007).

To a large extent, this seems to be a moment in which the actors of the international system could join forces to redirect the course of the world system, through the reinforcement of regional and interregional integration actions, as well as by appealing to its central feature of interdependence as a key factor for sustainability. In short, it could be the rebirth of a new global consciousness distant from populisms (Innenarity 2021, 96). In this context, the challenges of Europe, for instance, would be "the challenges facing democracy and globalization" (Puccio 2021a, 57). In this sense, there is a substantive role of the European model as an alternative to the resurgence of *realpolitik* at the dawn of new hegemonic disputes. This view has gained more relevance within the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, which, due to interdependence, has had global impacts. Already generating to millions of deaths despite

a wide range of efforts, this crisis has also placed states in a leading role in relation to the new security puzzles.

From cooperation to competitiveness

The emergence of new interregional initiatives associated with a competitive dynamic on a global scale (where the growth of collaborative networks becomes one of the unavoidable tools to improve competitiveness, and in turn, to reduce vulnerability to global threats) has had some precedents in Latin America (e.g. ENLACES) that aimed to reduce the existing asymmetries with respect to extra-regional actors such as the EU, USA or others such as Spain and Portugal (e.g. EIC, CYTED). In this context, it makes sense to consider knowledge as a strategic dimension (Miranda 2013). Among the features defining this dimension are: a) the emergence of a new conception of knowledge as a strategic resource and productive factor for new development models; b) the reorientation of middle-income countries' cooperation policy towards knowledge-intensive areas; c) a slight decrease in interregional asymmetries (e.g. EU-LAC) in terms of capacity of action (*actorness*); d) an expansion of knowledge exchange structures towards knowledge-intensive areas, a consolidation of regional and interregional structures of academic and scientific exchange; and e) the diversification of collaboration agreements towards a multipolar way (Miranda 2015). These characteristics are related to both the framework of interdependent models, and the emergence of the so-called *knowledge economy* as a new productive paradigm in the northern hemisphere. However, in Latin America, for instance, when analyzing the features of productive systems there are few countries whose economies have a relevant component of production of knowledge-intensive goods. In this complex scenario, the definition of *post-pandemic* public policies in Latin America may end up deepening competitiveness gaps in these areas (CEPAL 2020). Then again, it may also represent an important recovery path from the economic crisis derived from the pandemic, with the understanding that, based on a productive model, the new strategy of international insertion should provide conditions associated with

regional cognitive capital to improve its performance. This will take place in a world expected to reduce its levels of exchange, and therefore of interdependence, in a possible cycle of "deglobalization," added to imminent global threats such as climate change and its collateral effects of unsuspected magnitudes (Benson & Clay 2003).

In this context, it is also interesting to note that certain features observed in this process are consistent with the paradigm of the new regionalism (Aldecoa & Cornago 1998). This is a phenomenon arising in the post-hegemonic era, where the interests of states fundamentally mobilize in a multipolar way around the economic element and with the need to join forces to confront the systemic effects of the globalization process, conditioning its international activity on a logic of mutual benefit (Miranda 2015; Lagos Escobar 2021). This finding reinforces the idea of the prevalence of the liberal-institutional argument as the main impulse for the process of integration and / or cooperation for knowledge production (Miranda 2013), and consequently of knowledge-intensive goods, generating new modes of relationship between countries and later between regions or groups of countries. This gives way to a mode of academic and scientific cooperation at the interregional level that is convergent with the processes linked to the production and exchange of this new strategic capital that had the following features (with EU as a case in point): (1) establishing a foreign policy strategy carried out through academic and scientific cooperation programs; (2) promoting a dynamic of corporate-order institutional relations, in the manner of consortia, via a subsidy mechanism; (3) knowledge management as a productive resource, and as strategic capital, redefining economically relevant areas and their financing ranges; (4) prevalence in the actions of states with greater economic capacity and leadership in scientific and academic cooperation; (5) coinciding priorities of knowledge interaction levels between regions, and the amount of academic and scientific cooperation actions; (6) congruence between the actions carried out and the principles defined in the study of the so-called *knowledge economy*, which is based on the process of globalization, the technological revolution and new demand; (7) subordination of the objectives defined in the political dialogue process to a limited framework for action can be seen in institutional, coordination and resource deficits.

Among other aspects, the world economic system changes towards a new informational phase of capitalism that modifies the spatial and temporal experience: "Capitalism is moving into its third great phase of extension. The first was the national market; the second was the imperial system; and the current phase is the production and manipulation of signs, images and information" (Gamble 2007, 33). In this phase, the common element is its configuration around the relevance of knowledge management for the construction of societies and distribution of the common good. In view of that, a broad consensus emerges on the conception of knowledge production and exchange as a fundamental strategic *resource*. It is a productive factor of emerging development models, a conceptualization that has been further consolidated during the health emergency and the technological imperative to sustain production systems. In the case of Latin America, for instance, the emergence of certain middle-income countries within the region as a more relevant group in the global economy has reconfigured the dynamic between this region and the European Union, with dependency relations decreasing significantly. In this context, Sanahuja (2012, 103) pointed out that "the cycle of interregionalism as a strategy is already exhausted, largely because its main objectives have been achieved." These goals, also related to free trade (among other aspirations) are giving way to a new cycle in the relationship between both regions, where foreign policy regarding cooperation and knowledge production has been characterized by convergence with global economic dynamics, aimed at increasing capital and information flows, as well as homogenizing its regulatory framework, and regulating migrant population flows as a critical factor.

Then again, in relation to the global scientific innovation system, "[n]evertheless, previous sharing of medicine discoveries in the public commons has been eclipsed by the global race among private companies to dominate markets," in a competitive dynamic capable of generating a break in the global innovation system (Ibata-Arens 2021). This dynamic reached its epitome during the COVID-19 pandemic and the vertiginous (and competitive) emergence of vaccines in global scientific knowledge production centres. Paradoxically, this feature of the current patent system drives monopolies within the industry. These

in turn prevent the free circulation of common goods of innovation to face global vulnerability challenges, such as throughout the pandemic (Idem, 2), giving way to a kind of "social Darwinism" that puts the concept of common good in crisis (Yopo 2021; Sandell 2020). This feature contrasts sharply with the dynamics of prevailing scientific policy in critical scenarios during the 20th century, with the emergence of innovations aimed at saving human lives, such as insulin (1921), penicillin (1928), polio vaccine (1955), and monoclonal antibodies (1975), the last of which was a key discovery for cancer therapies, for instance (Ibata-Arens 2021, 2).

It would be expected that those countries (and regions) that accumulate greater scientific and technological capacities, as well as what could be called *knowledge capital* could better cope with the effects of the pandemic. On the one hand, this would be done through the intensive use of technology to improve levels of PCR testing, infection traceability, population mobility monitoring, detecting CO2 levels in closed areas, or simply, respect for the most basic health regulations, such as the proper use of a mask and social distancing. On the other hand, coping better with the crisis could be achieved through international cooperation for development, scientific cooperation, multilateralism, and integration agreements, all of which could generate a visible compensatory effect of interstate asymmetries in the face of a global crisis. In this complex scenario of the COVID-19 pandemic shock, these may constitute variables that allows us to analyse the states' capacity to confront global threats and reduce their vulnerability in terms of human lives costs.

Methodology

For this study, I designed a quantitative analysis that allowed an interpretation of qualitative aspects of the international system, within the framework of a globalization process that confronts the world with a pandemic. The pandemic effects are understood as a "control variable" to analyse the response by country, and its possible congruence with proxy variables, such as the knowledge development index, population,

average age by country, and testing capacity, among others. I conducted a correlation analysis, a cluster analysis, and ANOVA mean difference tests to observe the behaviour of the analysis units in the selected variables. The results were analysed first descriptively, and then in their degree of convergence with the theoretical and political aspects described above, ultimately aiming to answer the main research question: is it possible to affirm that national development, within the knowledge economy framework, has reduced vulnerability to global threats, analysing the case of the COVID 19 pandemic? Then, I analysed what kind of observations on the international system we can infer, considering the theoretical framework.

To address the research question, I prepared a diagnosis on the current effects on the population of the knowledge generation systems in pandemics, exploratorily analysing the correlations and differences between selected variables. Correlation analysis has been the technique selected as the most suitable for the available information, in view of the characteristics of the data, obtained from a non-probabilistic sampling both at the level of individuals and analysis units (a necessary condition to perform a linear or logistic regression analysis), and in which the relationships between variables are not linear. Since data have been obtained from various information sources, I performed a descriptive statistical analysis rather than an inferential type. In the light of the main demographic indicators considered relevant to understand the magnitude of the effects of the pandemic, I decided to consider as general factors the population and average age of each country, as well as deaths per million inhabitants, and population testing indicators. In relation to the development of knowledge economies, I considered the indicators of the 2020 Global Knowledge Index (GKI) and its sub-indicators of competitiveness in knowledge (included in the "economy" dimension of the general index). A joint initiative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Knowledge Foundation (MBRF), GKI aims to introduce a systematic and multidimensional understanding of knowledge and development by proposing a measurement of the multidimensional concept of knowledge, in connection with concepts such as *knowledge economy* and *knowledge society*. The 2020 edition

(UNDP 2020) used for this analysis includes 133 variables structed on the following dimensions: pre-university education (weight: 15%); technical and vocational education and training (weight: 15%); university higher education (weight: 15%); research, development and innovation (weight: 15%); information and communications technology (weight: 15%); economy (weight: 15%); general enabling environment (weight: 10%).

The specific variables incorporated in the analysis were: the *number of deaths caused by COVID-19 per million inhabitants* (data from: worldometers.info and national sources); the *number of tests carried out by each country per million inhabitants* (data from: worldometers.info and national sources); *population per country* (data from: worldometers.info and the United Nations Population Division); *average population age by country* (data from: worldometers.info and the United Nations Population Division); Global Knowledge Index (GKI); indicators of competitiveness in knowledge (GKI). I also placed the results and the discussion in the larger conceptual and policy framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The final sample of nations selected for this analysis consists of 138 countries, which correspond specifically to the resulting crossover between those that have been incorporated into the GKI measurements between 2017 and 2020 (142 countries), and the available indicators for the variables number of deaths per million inhabitants, and COVID-19 tests per million inhabitants (accumulated until the 7th of July 2021), reported on the open statistics portal worldometers.info, from a total of 225 countries, excluding lost cases.

Results

Figure 1 presents the GKI distribution by deciles in a sample of 138 countries, which differs in a perceptible range from the normal distribution. The mean is 46.8 and the mode is at 50.9, right in the middle of the scale (Table 1). In view of this, the Spearman correlation coefficient was used to measure the degree and direction of association between variables (Table 2).

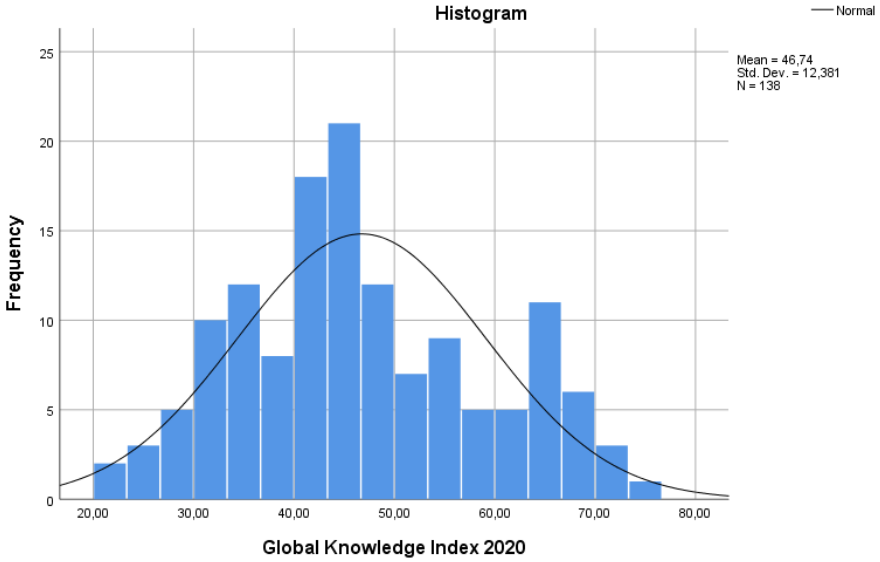

Figure 1. Global Knowledge Index 2020 (distribution)
Source: Author elaboration based on UNDP & MBRF (2020)

Table 1

Statistics

Global Knowledge Index 2020	
N – Valid	138
Missing	1
Mean	46.7377
Mode	50.90[a]
Std. deviation	12.38054
Variance	153.278
Skewness	0.286
Std. error of skewness	0.206
Kurtosis	-0.657
Std. error of kurtosis	0.41
Minimum	21.5
Maximum	73.6

[a] Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

The correlation analysis (Table 2) indicates several interesting findings. On the one hand, the population variable is significantly negative related (at a moderate level) with the Test index per million inhabitants (an expected result), although it is also negatively associated with the COVID-19 deaths per million inhabitants index (at a moderate level). In other words, a larger population does not necessarily imply a greater number of deaths. On the other hand, the GKI (2018 and 2020) shows a positive association at high levels for the Test item (0.821 and 0.813), an expected result (Table 2; Fig. 2), although it also shows a significant correlation in levels that could be considered moderate (0.417 and 0.398) regarding mortality levels per million inhabitants (Table 2). This result could be classified as counterintuitive, since considering the theoretical framework, as well as the theories of development, a negative correlation between both variables would be expected. That is, we would expect to observe that greater development and knowledge levels could imply lower mortality levels facing the pandemic. However, the data partially suggest an inverse reality, which can be seen more clearly in Figure 3, where the distribution, although not completely linear, generates a positive trend line that is confirmed in the correlation analysis.

Table 2

Correlations (Spearman's rho)

		GKI 2018	GKI 2020	Covid-19 Deaths per million	Test per million people	Population	Mid. Age
GKI 2018	Correlation Coefficient	1	.987**	.417**	.821**	-0.148	.875**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000	0.000	0.000	0.091	0.000
	N	134	133	131	129	131	133
GKI 2020	Correlation Coefficient	.987**	1	.398**	.813**	-0.120	.856**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.000	0.000	0.165	0.000
	N	133	138	135	133	135	137

Covid-19 Deaths per million	Correlation Coefficient	.417**	.398**	1	.444**	-.200*	.501**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000		0.000	0.019	0.000
	N	131	135	136	134	136	135
Test per million people	Correlation Coefficient	.821**	.813**	.444**	1	-.262**	.767**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000		0.002	0.000
	N	129	133	134	134	134	133
Population	Correlation Coefficient	-0.148	-0.120	-.200*	-.262**	1	-0.153
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.091	0.165	0.019	0.002		0.076
	N	131	135	136	134	136	135
Mid. Age	Correlation Coefficient	.875**	.856**	.501**	.767**	-0.153	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.076	
	N	133	137	135	133	135	138

Source: Author elaboration based on data from UNDP and worldometers.info. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

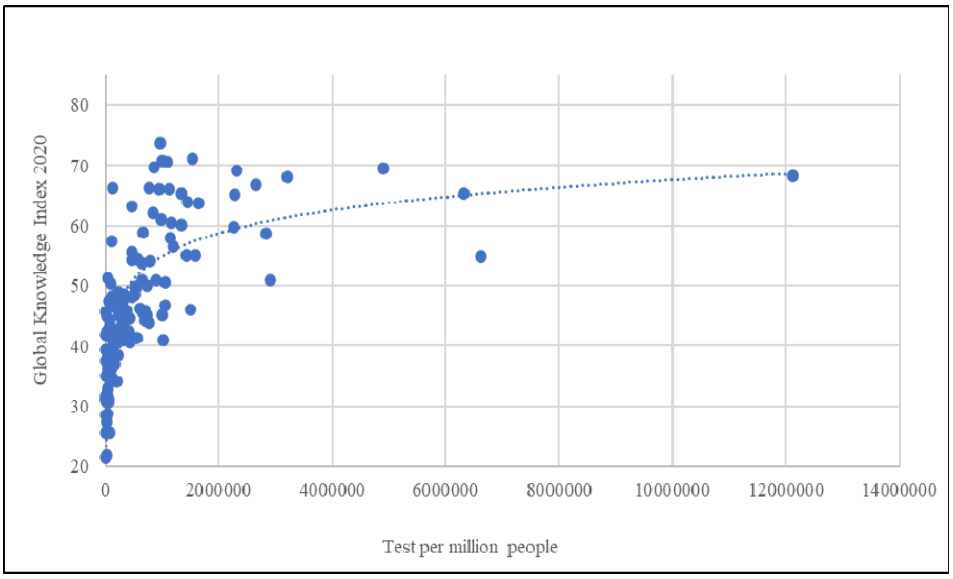

Figure 2. GKI 2020 per COVID-19 Test
Source: Author elaboration based on data from UNDP and worldometers.info

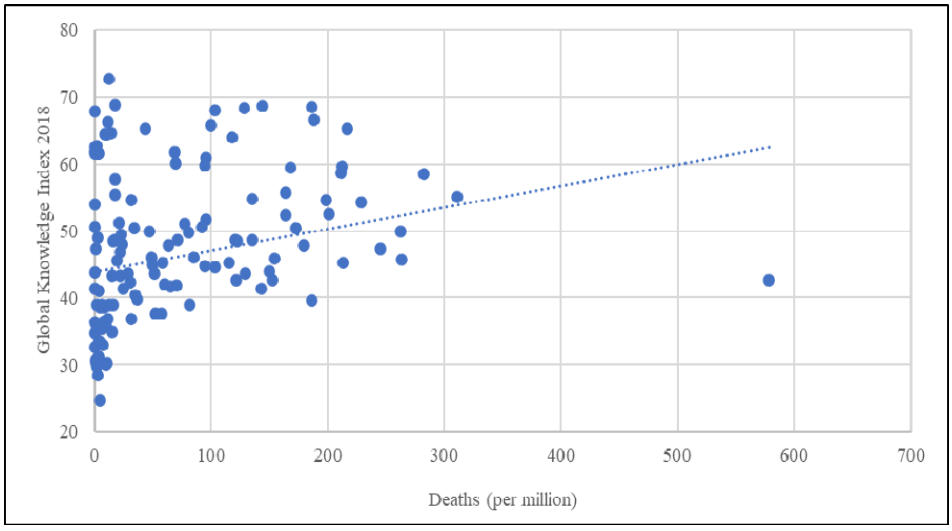

Figure 3. GKI 2018 per COVID-19 deaths (per million)
Source: Author elaboration based on data from UNDP and worldometers.info

Due to the results' complexity, which establish an unexpected significant degree of positive correlation between the variables of deaths per million inhabitants, and GKI indicators (0.417; 0.398) although with certain nuances when addressing indicators such as population (-0.2) and average age (0.5), I carried out a cluster analysis crossing both variables to group countries that were in similar profiles. I used the method of Euclidean distances to weigh possible similar behaviours between countries during the decision-making process regarding pandemic governance, and its most relevant indicator, the number of deaths per million inhabitants. After carrying out a procedure of variable standardization and analysing the clusters' result in a dendrogram, I decided to group 131 cases of countries in 4 main clusters that show a close relationship in the averages analysed for the GKI variables, and the number of deaths per million (Table 3). Group composition is detailed in Fig.4.

Table 3

Report

	Mid. Age	GKI 2020		Covid-19 Deaths per million		Test per million	
Cluster (N)	Mean	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1 (37)	34.2	47.6	4.4	729.6	573.6	686196	1124352
2 (51)	23.7	36.3	5.6	192.1	224.2	121668	192506
3 (21)	41.2	66.1	3.7	500.7	499.3	2201760	2705263
4 (20)	41.0	55.0	7.5	2119.3	452.8	1042928	836505
5 (1)	31.0	40.6		5784.0		430485	
Total (130)	32.2	47.2	11.9	719.7	884.8	764666	1461521

Source: Author elaboration based on data from UNDP and worldometers.info

Cluster 1, composed of 37 countries, presents a figure close to the world average of GKI (as in its average age), with an average of 729 deaths per million due to the pandemic (slightly above the average). This group covers a range of countries including Mexico, Romania, Oman, Qatar, Malaysia, Ukraine, and Greece. **Cluster 2** is well below the global GKI average (along with its mean age), although with low death values, which could be attributable to the low test rate, as well as lost information. This group covers a range of countries including Turkey, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, Uganda, Senegal, Cameroon, Indonesia, Venezuela, Honduras and El Salvador. **Cluster 3** accumulates the highest GKI (and has an average age over 41 years) and a number of deaths well below cluster 1 and 2, as well as the very high average of tests per million inhabitants (2.2 million). Northern European countries stand out in this group: Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Israel, Canada, Hong Kong, or Iceland. **Cluster 4** shows an average of GKI ten points below cluster 3, a high number of deaths per million (2120, three times the world average), and a high test indicator, although much lower than cluster 3. This group covers a range of countries including the USA, Spain, Chile, Brazil, Uruguay, Colombia, Slovenia, Portugal, Italy and Belgium, among others. **Cluster 5** is a

single case (Peru), with the highest indicators of deaths, which was chosen to keep separate.

Fig. 4. Cluster analysis
Source: Author elaboration based on data from UNDP and worldometers.info

Finally, ANOVA tests were carried out to compare means between clusters and their knowledge competitiveness indicators to detect possible significant differences between groups, as well as if there is a pattern of interrelation between groups of countries. The results were significant with 95% confidence. Since no equal variances are assumed, correction by Welch Test were operated for the variables *competitiveness in knowledge* and *infrastructure*, and equal variances for the *competitiveness drivers* variable were assumed (Table 4). In this analysis, it is noteworthy to consider the convergence of this comparison with the data reported for clusters 1 and 4, with non-significant differences between them, while clusters 2 and 3 present significant differences with all other

groups at the extremes of the scale. These results suggest that, at the level of knowledge competitiveness, the countries incorporated in clusters 1 and 4 are more similar to each other than to another countries.

Table 4

Homogeneous subsets in knowledge competitiveness (Tukey HSD a, b)

Average Linkage (Between Groups)	Cluster	N	Subset for alpha = 0.05		
			1	2	3
Knowledge Competitiveness	2	51	36.441		
	1	38		46.442	
	4	19		50.663	
	3	21			62.133
	Sig.		1	0.159	1
Economic Infrastructure and Competition	2	51	44.147		
	1	38		55.784	
	4	19		61.374	
	3	21			73.433
	Sig.		1	0.066	1
Competitiveness Drivers	2	51	28.741		
	1	38		37.111	
	4	19		39.932	
	3	21			50.838
	Sig.		1	0.679	1

Notes**:** Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed. a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 27.365. b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Source: Author elaboration based on data from UNDP and worldometers.info

Discussion

Traditionally, approaches to human development theories, and particularly the UNDP Human Development Index, have focused on how economic growth or scientific, educational and health development actions have a favourable impact on life expectancy, infant mortality or literacy, among other indicators. The ultimate objective of this approach is to support the design of public policies aimed to improve the well-being of the population so that the loss of human lives is avoided.

The results of this study seem to indicate that the large number of political, regional, and bi-regional agreements, scientific cooperation agreements and/or mobility agreements, cooperation actions, international programs in the field of research and higher education have not had sufficient impact at regional level in reducing vulnerability to global threats in the so-called Global South. However, if there are cases of convergence in emerging countries, or in what Wallerstein would possibly call *semi-peripheral* zones (as well as *new peripheries* emerging), there is a possibility of verifying its centre-periphery model, even within regions of the Global South. This raises serious questions about the conclusions expressed by Mukherjee & Krieckhaus (2011) concerning the benefits of globalization. The pandemic makes this more visible because it is a factor that acts as a contrast element in the analysis of how policies and knowledge accumulation can positively or negatively impact the ability of specific countries or regions to face global threats.

The data obtained strongly indicate that differences across countries, regions, or sets of countries do not necessarily respond to criteria that we could call *regional.* It could also be argued that so-called "science diplomacy" has not been entirely effective, given the high incidence of the pandemic and international fragmentation. However, one could argue that the reality would have been even worse without all these efforts. The analysed data does not support the hypotheses that countries with more knowledge have effectively avoided more deaths than those that accumulate less knowledge, apart from cluster 3, which contains very advanced countries, and that it gathers other factors in its favour, as discussed further. There is a positive correlation between advanced countries, or at least a certain group of advanced countries,

regarding the number of deaths caused by COVID-19 since the beginning of the pandemic. This means that there are other influencing factors, like political decision-making (e.g. populism, denialism, economism), the culture and idiosyncrasy of the country, and other events that may have an impact. For instance, if one considers Brazil, the United States, Russia, or Mexico (all large countries by population) or the United Kingdom, one can observe a dismal performance in the management of the pandemic, especially if we consider the amount of knowledge they have accumulated. This suggests that these countries have not been sufficiently able to take advantage of their "knowledge capital" to defend themselves against a global threat such as the pandemic, and therefore avoid the loss of human lives. It is worth asking about the causes of this behaviour. As a possible answer, one may consider the prevalence of a productivist perspective of public policies linked to the need for *competitiveness* (Table 4), trying to minimize losses (or maximize benefits, depending on the opportunity), and postponing the fundamental political objective of defending human lives as an axis of state action. A factorial analysis study could be considered for this purpose, considering the inherent contradiction in this type of decision, as well as in certain types of governance. This can be observed in the application of populist or denialist policies in an exacerbated interpretation of neoliberalism, leading to a necessary reflection on the concept of competitiveness inherent in the functioning of market economies. These economies have mostly adopted a character of interdependence as a distinctive feature of economic globalization, with a loss of national response capacity to major threats generating a new focus of vulnerability. To weigh this statement, I examined the indicators of economic openness in relation to the competitiveness variables analysed, which reveals a high degree of correlation between the level of economic openness and the indicators of competitiveness in knowledge (Table 5).****

Table 5

Correlations (Spearman's rho)

		Knowledge Competitiveness	Economic Infrastructure and Competition	Competitiveness Drivers
Economic Openess	Correlation Coefficient	.698**	.693**	.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	138	138	138

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis between economic openness and indicators of COVID-19 deaths per million inhabitants (Table 5; 0.389), in a convergent way with the previous results, is very similar to that of GKI 2020 vs deaths per million inhabitants (Table 2; 0.398), as well as to the high levels of correlation between economic openness and GKI (Table 6). This supports the perspective of interdependence as a condition of knowledge-based development within the framework of the globalization process.

Table 6

Correlations (Spearman's rho)

		Covid deaths per million	Global Knowledge Index 2018	Global Knowledge Index 2020	Test per million people
Economic Openess	Correlation Coefficient	.389**	.807**	.821**	.702**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
	N	135	133	138	133

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In light of these results, it would be possible to interpret that, even though countries that transfer more knowledge as a factor of development present more favourable conditions to reduce their vulnerability to

global threats such as COVID-19, their interdependence paradoxically conditions their ability to face them. This increases when the situation occurs comes from a health issue, given that their development model depends largely on their economic openness. This limitation is only mitigated in the case of highly advanced countries, as is the case with Nordic countries and some countries in Southeast Asia. In addition, the cluster analysis shows us that there are four theoretically interpretable groups, and one of them includes the most affected countries (i.e. countries in Central Africa and South Asia, as well as some Latin American countries such as Venezuela or Honduras). Then again, there is another group of countries (21) of high GKI development that have managed to transfer their knowledge capital to the pandemic governance sphere, maintaining average mortality levels considerably below the world average. It is the group that has achieved greater coherence between its level of knowledge-based development and the fight against the pandemic in terms of effective governance to reduce the loss of human life.

Finally, there are two other intermediate groups of poor performance, where the United States, Spain, England, Chile, and some countries in Central Europe and Central America stand out among other countries. These clusters, 1 and 4, have in turn been grouped into a homogeneous subset comparing means in variables associated with their knowledge systems' competitiveness, where despite lacking significant differences in these indicators, their results are very different when accounting for COVID-19 deaths. Interestingly, in this subset, cluster 4 (more advanced in GKI and competitiveness indicators) is the one with the highest results for the variable deaths per million inhabitants. This could indicate the existence of certain political biases associated with competitiveness development, which in the face of a pandemic scenario turn against the security of the population. However, this should be formulated with caution, given that there is a significant information bias present in the results for cluster 1 and 2. Paradoxically, the lack of accurate information is one of the factors presented as deficient in countries with lower GKI, which could affect an adequate reading of the data.

From a more theoretical perspective related to regional dynamics and international cooperation, the differences in scope between regional

and interregional scientific cooperation initiatives seem to currently operate as true *concentric circles* of power that generate instances of coordination, ways of cooperation, and political guidelines to promote specific areas of action in the field of knowledge (Miranda 2013). According to previous analyses, macro knowledge cooperation initiatives have a "gravitational effect" by virtue of their economic size and institutional strength (Miranda 2015). In this case, this characteristic is observable in a limited time period, and as a counterpart to its positive impact, it implies the emergence of "new peripheries," influencing thus the dynamics of variable geometry (Aldecoa & Cornago 1998) typical of the globalization process. A possible interpretation of the regional fragmentation observed in the clusters then arises, leaving a question about the levels of cohesion in knowledge creation in the regions covered regarding their performance in the face of the pandemic. Not least, vulnerability to global threats is also linked to knowledge-based development levels, as is the case in the economic field. This was already observed in previous studies, especially those discussing the negative effects of the globalizing process, such as greater vulnerability to economic shocks (Benson & Clay 2003), low response capacity to global threats (Yopo 2021), diminished sovereignty (Stallings 1992; Mahon 1996), geographical inequality (Harvey 2003), and income inequality (Milanovic 2005; Wade 2003; Williamson 1997). All these effects are observable in the current global crisis derived from COVID-19 and are consistent with the results presented in this study.

Conclusions

It is very likely that, as with the case of COVID-19, the current global context and dynamics will further stimulate a redefinition of international research and academic cooperation policies to make a coordinated front against new global threats. Precisely due to this context, it is important to update knowledge, analyse possible future effects and make public policy recommendations to states, provide alternatives to mitigate the effects of vulnerability generated by global

threats, and advance in a recovery cycle that can be (to say the least) traumatic, if adequate measures are not taken.

The study identified states' behaviour and correlated their global threat vulnerability level in relation to their knowledge-based economy levels, investigating the degree of convergence with certain previous assumptions such as the correlation with the number of deaths per million inhabitants. The analysis revealed four clusters of countries that are not homogeneous in terms of geographical, regional or continental location. This observation has implications for analysing the degree of convergence between the vulnerability level and political integration agreements, for example in the case of the European Union, as well as the levels of development across entire regions, as in the case of Latin America. If one considers, for instance, Wallerstein's view on the eventual emergence of new poles of *semi-peripheral* industrial and economic activity becoming subject to the balance of power mechanisms of countries in the centre (Wallerstein 2007), it is striking to observe the conformation of cluster 4, incorporating a previously hegemonic power such as the United States, with middle-income countries such as Spain, Chile or Colombia, in relation to a vulnerability to global threats. While not following the levels of accumulated economically active knowledge, this result might be explained by interdependence and by the new balances of power that are observed in the economic and knowledge fields, reflecting new forms of configuration of the international system.

Although there is a significant degree of correlation between the analysed variables, the results do not categorically support the hypothesis that national development within the knowledge economy framework has reduced vulnerability to the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather, they seem to support a centre-periphery dynamic more typical of the Wallerstein model, where only some actors have been able to reduce their vulnerability according to their development level. The remaining state actors have been subject to a contradictory dynamic reflecting other associated factors or hidden variables, ranging from the lack of timely information (which prevent, for example, a reliable analysis based on excess death rates), applying populist policies, denialism, pharmaceutical competition, and others.

In relation to other approaches to combating the pandemic, Green, Harmacek, & Krylova (2021) argue that countries with higher rates of social progress performed better and have shown a greater degree of resilience in the face of the enormous effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. Social Resilience to Infectious Diseases - SRID). They report having found a high correlation for eight indicators selected from the Social Progress Index: (1) nutrition and basic health care; (2) water and sanitation; (3) shelter; (4) health and well-being; (5) access to basic knowledge; (6) access to information and communications (7) personal freedom and choice; and (8) access to advanced education (Idem, 2). The present study found at least three knowledge-related indicators to be convergent with their research. The findings of both studies can be complementary if one observes that only under the focus of competitiveness and scientific-technological development it stops being possible to reduce vulnerability in countries that hold privileged seats in the global innovation system, or GDP per capita (especially the countries of cluster 4), as is the case of the United States; or in the case of countries that have strongly adhered to the paradigm of interdependence and competitiveness as a driving force for development. However, when comparing with the results reported by Green, Harmacek, & Krylova (2021, 4), one may observe that from the list of 20 countries with the highest index of resilience to infectious diseases (SRID), there are 15 that correspond to the present study's Cluster 3, and 5 to Cluster 4. This is the same group of countries that present the best indicators of social progress under the methodology proposed by Green, Harmacek, & Krylova (2021).

Corroborating these results suggests that when considering how to reduce vulnerability to global threats such as COVID-19, or others such as climate change or forced displacement, it will not only be necessary to have an advanced development model based on the intensive use of technology and knowledge, but also safeguarding mechanisms of redistribution and social inclusion that facilitate the access to health resources and social protection of the population, and that help reduce the centre-periphery dynamics of the development of global capitalism. For regions of the so-called Global South, a strategy needed for prioritizing productive, knowledge and technological integration, may include the following aspects: articulate and reinforce

current knowledge creation networks (R & D + I); intensify the participation of local knowledge generating entities in regional value chains; strengthen regional higher education systems' convergence; strengthen the process of political dialogue in research and higher education; strengthen convergence between joint initiatives with other regional research networks; promote subnational and/or sectoral integration processes in research; increase research funding on a regional and/or interstate basis; strengthen health and social protection network; and incorporate sustainable economy measures in the development model.

It is highly likely that multilevel governance systems will become increasingly complex, while the role of powerful states at regional level remains fundamental to the extent that these are willing to assume certain leadership, proposals and degrees of responsibility. The active role of countries such as the United States, Russia, China, Germany, France, Spain, Brazil, Mexico or Argentina will be decisive in demonstrating their ability to redirect subregional cooperation processes to strengthen responses to global threats, in accordance with their potential knowledge-based development. We are witnessing an unsuspected vertigo of liquid modernity (Bauman & Dessal 2014) that has been only accelerated by the pandemic. This is a distinctive feature of an era characterized by intense information flows and a scientific-technological transformation feeding the unpredictability of social transformations, in an ecosystem of high instability. Given these conditions, further research on this topic is needed for the evaluation and formulation of interregional cooperation policies for the development of science, technology and innovation, as well as for the productive transformation based on sustainability and innovation in the Global South. Future research can also analyse the need to strengthen integration infrastructure and the permanent incorporation of an environmental perspective in the debate, by generating a stable institutional base that appears indispensable to face the new foci of vulnerability derived from the current global crises, and those that are still to come. We must be prepared.

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BANGLADESH HEALTHCARE CORRUPTION AND WORKFORCE VULNERABILITY AMIDST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ROLIN G. MAINUDDIN

Abstract. Amidst the pandemic resulting in a global health crisis, Bangladesh was unnerved by the fake COVID-19 test result certificates issued by the private Regent Hospital in Dhaka. The healthcare corruption was exposed when *Il Messaggero* (The Messenger) daily newspaper in Rome reported that infected Bangladeshi migrants were moving about in the city undetected and posed a health risk. What is the impact of healthcare corruption during a pandemic for the vulnerable people of a developing country in a globalized economy? This article will assess the plight of the Bangladeshi migrant labour force and ready-make garment sector domestic work force within the framework of vulnerability interdependence. The authoritarian interlude will be contextualized for disrupting democratic consolidation in the country, which sustained the environment that led to the issuance of fake healthcare certificates. In ascertaining the endemic corruption in Bangladesh, this study will posit leadership integrity in taking a public goods approach to trammelling corruption.

Keywords: Bangladesh, corruption, COVID-19, democratization, garment export, healthcare, migrant labour force

Introduction

The US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once famously labelled Bangladesh as the "bottomless basket" for being heavily dependent on foreign aid to navigate its economic and financial woes. However, during the last decades the country has achieved laudable economic success, especially in connection to garment exports, remittances, and agricultural production, achievements reflected also in the Millennium Development Goals. Currently, Bangladesh is the second largest apparel exporter in the world and the fifth largest recipient of remittances. With women accounting for 75% of the employees, the garment sector is the biggest economic contributor for the country (Masud 2018). In fact, the ready-made garment (RMG) sector accounts for 80% of Bangladesh's merchandise exports, as well as for 13% of the country's GDP. The major export destinations are the US, the UK, Germany, France, and Italy (Mohiuddin 2020, 5; World Bank 2021, 26). In short, complementing manpower export to the oil-rich GCC countries, the garment industry in Bangladesh has done well in the globalized market under the neoliberal framework. However, both garment and manpower sectors in Bangladesh have fallen victim to the COVID-19 pandemic, which was aggravated by the endemic corruption in the society.

COVID-19 was first reported in Bangladesh on the 8th of March 2020. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a pandemic three days later (Islam et al. 2021, 116; Maswood 2021; Al-Zaman 2020, 1). The COVID-19 epidemic in Bangladesh reached a peak in July 2020. However, the national coronavirus vaccination campaign began only in February 2021, after receiving an initial shipment of 30 million doses from India (World Bank 2021, 1). During the summer, China sent seven million vaccine doses of its own production ([*The Daily Star*] 2021a) and, under the COVAX arrangement, Bangladesh received also from Japan a total of three million AstraZeneca vaccine doses ([*The Daily Star*] 2021b).

The unprecedented global health crisis exposed the vulnerability of the Bangladesh workforce in a globalized economy. The pandemic had devasting impact for both the migrant labour force abroad and garment workers at home. It was within this context that Bangladesh faced the exposure of a case of corruption involving a considerable number of fake

healthcare certificates issued by the private Regent Hospital in Dhaka. Charging $59 per report, and $100 for expatriates, the hospital issued over 10,000 certificates. However, significant numbers were fake and did not relate to any actual coronavirus test (Gettleman & Yasir 2020; Anik 2020; Sullivan 2020). The issue gained traction when *Il Messaggero* (The Messenger) daily newspaper in Rome reported that at least 600 Bangladeshis infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus were moving about undetected in Rome and elsewhere in Italy (Gettleman & Yasir 2020; Anik 2020).

This article explores the impact of healthcare corruption on the vulnerable people of a developing country during a pandemic, using the particular case of Bangladesh, with a focus on the Bangladeshi labour and garment exports within a globalized market. For this purpose, it also asks what socio-political context may explain the unconscionable fake certificates issued by the Regent Hospital. Not least, it introduces the puzzle of whether leadership weakness may aggravate an already challenging situation.

Theoretical Framework

Given the fact that Bangladesh reached the status of lower-middle-income country in 2015 (World Bank 2021, 25), PM Sheikh Hasina counts the *Vision 2021* governmental strategy as a success (Kamal 2020). However, Bangladesh continues to be one of the eight least developed countries (LDCs) in Asia (UNCTAD 2020, ix). With 21.8% of the population living under the poverty line and a deep urban-rural divide, its healthcare system is significantly deficient in "reliability, responsiveness, and empathy" (Al-Zaman 2020, 1). What the COVID-19 pandemic put in the spotlight are three structural fissures in the country: poor governance and high level of corruption, inadequate facilities, and weak public health communication (Ibid.). Within this context, this study is placed within a framework at the intersection of three theoretical and conceptual insights: vulnerability interdependence, democratization trajectory (or lack thereof), and public goods.

In the era of interdependence there is an associated cost for exercising power (Young 1982, 73). In transaction costs this is reflected in the two dimensions of interdependence: sensitivity and vulnerability. Sensitivity interdependence refers to a situation in which policy adjustments to changes in external environment are easy to accomplish. In contrast, vulnerability interdependence relates to a context where policy adjustments to changes in external circumstances are difficult to accomplish. Given the higher costs of change for the relatively more dependent party, vulnerability interdependence is crucial in revealing the structure of that asymmetrical relationship. As noted above, this vulnerability arises for the weaker party in policy adjustment difficulties from changes in external relationships (Keohane & Nye 2001, 10-15). In this article, the plight of the Bangladeshi workforce (both the migrant international labour force and the domestic garment workers) is assessed within the liberal school framework of vulnerability interdependence. Without alternative markets for labour and garment exports, a developing country like Bangladesh is vulnerable to the volatility of the global market. On the one hand, the Bangladeshi labour force abroad has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the fake negative test certificates scandal. On the other hand, facing their own liquidity challenges from sales disruption, cancellation of purchasing contracts by Western retailers negatively affected the factory owners and workers of the Bangladeshi garment industry.

At the same time, one must consider the challenging democratic consolidation process in Bangladesh, which sustained the environment that led to the issuance of fake healthcare certificates. For this purpose, one may take an institutional approach to democratization (actually, the lack thereof) for fathoming corruption. This approach usually emphasizes the lack of robust political parties during a period of rapid increase in political participation (Huntington 1970, 495, 499-500), but in matters regarding corruption there is also a broader debate between ineffective institutions versus democratization itself (Robinson 1998, 2). Democratization can proceed at one of three levels: transition, consolidation, and perfection (Denk & Silander 2012, 26). Democratic transition from an authoritarian regime - or upon independence - can happen through one of three processes: collapse (breakdown), extrication (weakening), and transaction (negotiation) (Share & Mainwaring 1986, 178-179; Baaklini et al. 1999, 29; Baloyra 1986, 9-12;

Monclaire 2006, 64). In hop-skipping a strongly grounded democratic transition, Bangladesh has fallen short in democratic consolidation (Johnston 2004, 139, 144; Monclaire 2006, 63, 69; De Oliveira 2006, 127-128, 142-143) despite several national elections since the country's independence in 1971 (Akhter 2001, 25, 178). Most significantly, democracy in Bangladesh did not go through the expected transition process involving a political pact, national dialogue, and legislative autonomy (Baaklini et al. 1999, 33-43) and this had significant implications for governance as manifested in the endemic institutional and societal corruption.

In a 2013 speech, the then World Bank President Jim Yong Kim famously declared corruption "public enemy no. 1" in the developing world. Bribery, profit maximization, and favouritism are the three main instruments of corruption (Heidenheimer 1970, 4-6; Rothstein & Varraich 2017, 12). This ensues when policymakers abandon public interest for private interest. Transforming public goods into private greed degenerates the political system itself (Rothstein & Varraich 2017, 13-15; Rothstein 2011, 12). There are three ways of dealing with corruption: repression (penalty), integrity (trustee), and prevention (Lambsdorff 2007, 225-227; Mungiu-Pippidi 2015, 80-82). Inept political leadership does not help the control of corruption. Whereas the Roman (Cicero) legacy focuses on the individual or private goods and equality of citizens, the Greek (Aristotle) tradition stresses the collective or public goods and morality of citizens (Rothstein & Varraich 2017, 35-36, 40-41; Rothstein 2005, 203-204; Mungiu-Pippidi 2015, 58). When corruption becomes a way of life, as is the case in Bangladesh, procedural "impartiality" (Rothstein 2021, 3-6, 14-15, 114, 151; Rothstein 2011, 14; Rothstein & Varraich 2017, 97) does not overcome the substantive lack of principled principals. Leadership matters for social capital (Putnam & Goss 2002, 17; Rothstein 2021, 4), and so does integrity for effective leadership. Singapore and Hong Kong are exemplary for corruption control (Uslaner 2008, 204). In Bangladesh corruption has degenerated from the limited elite stage to a pervasive rampant reality (Alatas 1999, 17-20; Rothstein & Varraich 2017, 26-27). At the same time, when it comes to both garment and manpower exports, Bangladesh is in a relationship of vulnerability interdependence with the more developed economies.

Vulnerability interdependence

Accounting for 80% of total export earnings (World Bank 2021, 26) and an annual price tag of US$7 billion, the RMG sector holds the highest share of exports for Bangladesh. The European Union imports 75% of its textile from Bangladesh. In the United States, the Walmart Corporation is also a major importer of RMG from Bangladesh (Singh 2007, 10, 13, 15). International orders are generally placed three months ahead of delivery and finished products are paid for only after receiving them. Job loss for the workers during the pandemic not only denied future income, but also unpaid back wages. During the COVID-19 pandemic Western retailers exercised their contractual rights to cancel existing orders that were *"already completed"* (emphasis in original) or "already shipped." Furthermore, 91.3% of the name brand giant retailers that cancelled their orders with Bangladeshi factories disavowed to pay the suppliers. Consequently, about 58% of the factories in Bangladesh were partially or completely forced to close, which resulted in unemployment for more than a million garment workers. In violation of a Bangladeshi law that requires payment of partial wages for furloughed employees, 98% of the international buyers refused to contribute. That resulted in 72% of the workers being sent home without pay (Pham 2020, 317-319).

After losing about US$3 billion because of the pandemic, the RMG sector anticipated a total loss of US$6 billion. As it is, 47% of the RMG laborers were already not getting their wages. Within this context, it should be emphasized that the RMG sector sustains also a US$6 billion backward-linkage industry. This includes yarn fabrication, texture creation, and colouring-printing. In employing 7.8 million people, the RMG sector provides livelihood for 31.2 million people (Islam et al. 2021, 120-122). In the 2020 fiscal year, apparel production dropped by 16.8% because of supply-chain disruptions and suspension of international orders. Although there have been significant job losses in the RMG sector, they were partially overcome by reinstated international orders and resiliency in remittance inflows (World Bank 2021, 3-4, 26-27).

Given the unemployment challenge and the importance of remittances for the state treasury, manpower exports are crucial for the economic viability (and political stability) of Bangladesh. Adding to the

earlier market presence in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, Bangladeshi labour migration to Southeast Asia and to Europe developed significantly during the last decade. Currently, most of the Bangladeshi migrant workers are in the Middle East (GCC) and Southeast Asia (Malaysia). Many others are also in the United States and the United Kingdom (Mohiuddin 2020). According to the Central Bank of Bangladesh, the estimated 12 million Bangladeshi migrant workers sent back about $19 billion in remittances ([*Deutsche Welle*] 2020; Sullivan 2020), with expatriates from Saudi Arabia sending the most, i.e. over US$3 billion in the 2020 fiscal year (World Bank 2021, 11). Around the same time, about 35,000 Bangladeshi expatriates were diagnosed with COVID-19, with almost half of them (i.e. 16,000) being located in Singapore, and more than 800 deaths from SARS-CoV-2 infection being reported within the Bangladeshi expatriate community (Mohiuddin 2020).

In Italy, there are over 100,000 Bangladeshis legally residing in the country, and about 30,000 of them live in Rome. There are also about 45,000 Bangladeshi illegal immigrants in the country. The migrants work in tourism, catering, and the agriculture sector. Others are enrolled in educational institutions ([*Deutsche Welle*] 2020). The continuous reporting of Italian newspapers about a surge of COVID-19 cases among the Bangladeshi community in that country brought the Regent Hospital case and the Bangladeshi healthcare corruption to both local and international attention. For instance, Giuseppe Mazzara, a spokesman from the Lazio region (which includes Rome), stated that among the more than 6,000 coronavirus tests in June 2020 for travellers from Bangladesh, 191 tested positive (Anik 2020; Gettleman & Yasir 2020). And when Alessio D'Amato, an Italian health official in Lazio, called the July 6 flight from Dhaka a "veritable viral 'bomb' that we've defused," the Bangladeshi community in Rome became stigmatized as "viral bombs" ([*Deutsche Welle*] 2020).

Most significantly, after 37 passengers in Rome tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, Roberto Speranza, the Italian Health Minister, ordered the suspension of all flights from Bangladesh. Pierpaolo Sileri, the Italian Deputy Health Minister, estimated that at least 600 Bangladeshis living in Italy were infected with SARS-CoV-2 (Anik 2020). In early July 2020 Italian authorities sent back 168 Bangladeshis arriving at Rome and Milan airports. Another 377 passengers were refused entry upon arrival in Rome. While

noting that some 1,600 Bangladeshis travelled to Italy without the COVID-19 fake certificates, the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry regretted that some compatriots failed to practice mandatory quarantine upon reaching their destination. At the same time, a number of Bangladeshis returning to Japan and South Korea, and carrying false negative test certificates for COVID-19, tested positive. Consequently, these two East Asian countries also suspended flights from Bangladesh (Anik 2020; Gettleman & Yasir 2020; Bin Habib & Adhikary 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic had already disrupted both the garment exports and labour migration, the two major foreign currency earning sectors of the Bangladeshi economy. Within this context, a healthcare scandal involving fake certificates for COVID-19 tests had a devastating effect. Former Bangladeshi Ambassador Humayun Kabir remarked that the Regent Hospital COVID-19 corruption hurt Bangladeshi expatriates abroad, tarnishing the image of the country of their origin. Furthermore, this case of corruption would increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission, cautioned at that time Muzaherul Huq, former Southeast Asia regional advisor for WHO (Bin Habib & Adhikary 2020). This socio-political environment in Bangladesh is the result of half a century of failures in democratic consolidation.

Democratic consolidation deficit

In Bangladesh, the democratization process left unsolved the foundational national identity puzzle. The country has yet to resolve the contestation between co-ethnic (cross-border) linguistic, secular *Bangali* nationalism, and geographical (transnational) territorial, religious *Bangladeshi* nationalism (Akhter 2001, 57). Uncivil recriminations have become poor substitutes for a national dialogue among the three major political parties - Awami League (AL), the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and the Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad). Despite multiparty elections and parliamentary seats, majoritarian domination of the prevailing ruling majority political party - notwithstanding the party in power - has jettisoned any thought of legislative autonomy vis-à-vis the executive branch. In practical terms, what all these mean for Bangladesh, especially when compared for instance with

the similar long and convoluted democratization in post-independence Brazil (Share & Mainwaring 1986, 177; Balorya 1986, 50), is that after half a century of independence the political landscape in the country is on a never-ending path of democratic transition process.

This process includes a substantial authoritarian interlude. The first phase of the democratization was a parliamentary democracy under the AL rule. This was followed by military dictatorship disguised as presidential democracy, then parliamentary democracy was reinstated in the third and current phase of this meandering road of Bangladeshi democratization. More specifically, shortly after the 1971 independence, Bangladesh started to slide from a parliamentary democracy to a one-party political system – *Baksal* (Bangladesh Krishok Sromik Awami League; *krishok* = agricultural worker, *sromik* = labourer or factory worker). That came to a halt following the 1975 assassination in a military coup of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the founding figure of the new state. The consequent civil-military relations resulted in two successive military regimes (i.e. of Ziaur Rahman, assassinated in 1981, and of Hussain Muhammad Ershad) disguised under a presidential system (Akhter 2001, 118, 137-138, 178). Thereafter, since 1991, in providing party leadership by virtue of family association – "politics of kinship" (Idem, 221) – Khaleda Zia (widow of Ziaur Rahman) and Sheikh Hasina Wazed (daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman) served as prime ministers in a reverted parliamentary system under the Twelfth Amendment (Hossain 2015, 7).

In Bangladesh, political corruption is significantly manifested in electoral corruption. This leads to the breach of constitutional principles and unscrupulous practices, including election rigging. For instance, 13 of the 22 elections in the first three decades since the 1971 independence were under authoritarian rule. In fact, the country experienced electoral corruption for 16 years under military or military in civilian clothes from August 1975 to December 1990. Party politics has thereafter continued to be contested over election integrity in an atmosphere of distrust and incivility (Akhter 2001, 14, 17, 19, 25, 29, 224-228). Incorporated into the constitution of Bangladesh under the 1996 Thirteenth Amendment (Hossain 2015, 7-8), the institution of the non-party caretaker government (NCG) had to be invoked to be part of the political process for the transfer of electoral power (Akhter 2001, 178-179, 224, 227-228). A 2003 amendment by the then ruling

party BNP to increase the retirement age from 65 to 67 years for Supreme Court judges (who can be part of NCG) did not go well. In installing himself as the chief advisor and ignoring the council of advisors, the president further muddled the waters. After BNP holding off any offer of negotiation for more than a year, the proposed dialogue between AL and BNP proved to be futile. This was followed by a dispute over the voter list for the 2007 general elections, for which the Supreme Court eventually intervened. This made Kanti Bajpai, an Indian academic, to observe that both AL and BNP have devalued democracy (Singh 2007, 1-3, 15). The NCG was once again brought into the spotlight in 2021 in connection with the upcoming elections in the country ([*DBC News*] 2021). Not least, in addition to illiteracy and poverty, which favour vote buying, patron-client relationship is also a significant factor for electoral corruption. Political instability, socio-economic pitfalls, and weak democratic values have entrapped the society into a highly problematic electoral culture that has hindered democratic consolidation (Akhter 2001, 224-228).

Endemic corruption and leadership integrity

In May 2020, the Bangladeshi government proactively announced a US$14.6 billion COVID-19 response program, which represented 4.5% of the country's estimated GDP for the 2020 fiscal year. The program included a 100% reimbursement for workers in export industries. US$11 billion was allocated for the social security sector; US$2.4 billion loans went to the Cottage, Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (World Bank 2021, ii, 15; Lata 2020). However, lower prices and lockdown created a crisis in rural areas, especially for dairy farmers, vegetable producers, and poultry farmers. Furthermore, since social programs had been directed at reducing rural poverty, the urban poor found themselves in dire circumstances without the benefit of savings and social safety nets (Lata 2020; Sarwar et al. 2020, 19). Nevertheless, in late April and mid-May 2020 the government provided food relief and cash payments to the country's floating population, including street vendors and those engaged in manual labours. Local administrators and elected representatives were solicited to identify these beneficiaries. The process lacked transparency, accountability, and

integrity. Reflecting the prevailing corruption practices of political favouritism and nepotism, some middle-class people affiliated with the ruling AL also usurped that government largesse (Lata 2020).

In the corruption scandal of fake COVID-19 certificates, along with the Regent Group Chairman Mohammad Shahed and Managing Director Masud Parvez, fifteen other staff members were accused (Rabbi 2020). Ariful Chowdhury, Chief Executive Officer of JKG Health Care, and his wife Dr. Sabrina Sharmin Hussain, JKG Health Care Chairperson (although she denied being the chairperson and claimed she only did consultancy work) were also arrested, and the latter, a medical doctor at the public National Heart Institute and Hospital, was suspended by the Health Ministry from her position at the hospital (Bin Habib & Adhikary 2020; Tipu 2020; [*The Daily Star*] 2020). The COVID-19 corruption syndicate included medical doctors, hospital staff, pathology technicians, graphic designers, and information technology specialists. After unscrupulously obtaining a few original certificates, these were then scanned to prepare fake documents. On the 6th of July 2020, the police seized about 10,500 COVID-19 samples from the private Regent Hospital at its Uttara and Mirpur branches. Among these samples about 60% proved not to have been tested. The police also recovered 40 forged COVID-19 certificates with fake logos. Those who demanded COVID-19 negative certificates included workers returning to garment factories. Ironically, public servants were acquiring COVID-19 positive certificates for accessing special facilities offered to such patients, as well as taking leave from office (Anik 2020; Sullivan 2020).

Mohammad Shahed, the owner of the private Regent Hospital in Dhaka, had his employees print fake COVID-19 results, while billing the government for treatment and care of coronavirus patients. It is noteworthy that the Director General of the Health Services (DGHS) signed a contract with the Regent Hospital, which had not renewed its license for the past six years, allowing it to operate as a designated facility to handle COVID-19 cases (Rabbi 2020). In the context of the scandal, the DGHS issued a statement that the agreement with the Regent Hospital for treating COVID-19 patients was signed upon orders from "higher-ups" in the Health Ministry (Hasan 2020). The media reported that traders of garments, auto parts, and electronics secured lucrative deals from DGHS for delivering

medical supplies. Along with irregularities regarding N95 masks, money was siphoned off in shady deals among medical and business elites. The failure to develop testing capacity and infrastructures for isolating infected individuals resulted in patients being denied admission to designated COVID-19 treatment hospitals. Administrative mismanagement and the apathy of the medical staff have led patients to die at home rather than go to the hospital (Maswood 2021). In short, the case illustrates how mismanagement and corruption spreads throughout all sectors and every level of the society in Bangladesh. These are reflective of the administrative practices and political leadership in the country.

A World Bank (2021, 29) update on Bangladesh observed that "fragmented governance" undermined coordination and efficiency, fostering siloed development. In neglecting services for the people, patchwork regulations and administrative dysfunction fail to deliver public goods. Multiple ministries and numerous government agencies create bureaucratic redundancies, confusion, and red tape. With corrupt businessmen stockpiling coronavirus testing kits, private medical facilities have been charging inflated prices per test (i.e. US$50-60), prohibitive for most of the population. At the same time, on the 5th of August 2020 a government edict restricted law enforcement investigations into hospital malpractices. The healthcare sector in Bangladesh was so disorganized that in June 2020 a team of visiting Chinese physicians expressed concern about incompetence in the healthcare administration (Al-Zaman 2020, 1-2).

For the very crucial garment industry, better wages and improved working conditions are likely to avoid periodic unrests from protests by the work force (Singh 2007, 13). In this context, professional law enforcement measures in stopping fake medical documents are also essential for saving the migrant labour force and domestic garment workers from job insecurity and wage loss. Yet, unless enforcement mechanisms are adhered to against corruption, and not just limited to lateral transfer to another post, resource allocation and utilization will suffer. More tests need to be administered to identify, quarantine, and treat infected people. Hospitals should have the necessary equipment and medical supplies. Medical professionals and staff must be protected from infection. Educational information about proper hygiene and social distancing needs to be periodically disseminated using multiple channels (Al-Zaman 2020, 2). Given the importance of foreign

direct investment for the economy, expedited government decisions and better services in the transportation sector are expected to make the investment climate more attractive (World Bank 2021, 27-28, 31; Singh 2007, 11).

However, as both internal and outside observers have acknowledged to different degrees, endemic corruption remains a particularly difficult challenge. For instance, Ambassador Humayun Kabir regretted that the Regent Hospital healthcare corruption reflected "domestic governance problems" (Bin Habib & Adhikary 2020). Muzaherul Huq, former regional advisor for WHO, scathingly remarked that COVID-19 exposed the "muddled, weak and corrupt" healthcare system in the country, while Iftekhar Zaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh, found it resentful that some people engaged in illegal and quick money-making ventures during the COVID-19 pandemic (Maswood 2021). In the middle of all these, the May 2020 arrest of Rozina Islam, a female journalist for the *Prothom Alo* (First Light) Bangla language daily newspaper, for investigating COVID-19 related government corruption further embarrassed the Bangladesh Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen (Zaman 2021).

Conclusion

Bangladesh has achieved economic success with earnings from apparel exports and remittances from manpower supplies. The RMG sector has secured lucrative contracts from retailers in the United States and the European Union. Migrant work force has found substantive salaries from employment in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Western Europe. Despite accomplishing notable achievements within the Millennium Development Goals framework and being considered by some accounts a middle-income country, UNCTAD still lists Bangladesh among the least developed countries in the world. The common thread for Bangladesh in these two export sectors is the cheap labour resulting from an exponential population explosion. Very closely tied to fluctuations in global markets, the ripple effects of COVID-19 pandemic have shown the vulnerability interdependence of Bangladesh with the industrialized economies of the

West and the rentier economies of the oil-exporting sheikhdoms of the Middle East.

Three days before the WHO declared the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus a pandemic, Bangladesh reported its first COVID-19 case. The vulnerability of the health sector was quickly visible, within the context of a profound lack of resources and funding. The government had to wait for external donations to start the coronavirus vaccination campaign, months after richer countries initiated their vaccination programs and about a year from the first case of infection confirmed in the country. The vulnerability of Bangladesh was further revealed with the devastating revelation of the fake COVID-19 certificates issued by the Regent Hospital in Dhaka. The Bangladeshi migrant community in Italy was stigmatized and the migrant work force faced financial jeopardy in being barred re-entry. Flights between Bangladesh and Italy, and then those connecting Bangladesh with Japan and South Korea were cancelled for fear of spreading the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Though shocking due to its size and impact, the COVID-19 fake certificate scandal was not surprising in a country where corruption is rampant and pervasive.

The socio-political context that sustains this degree of corruption has roots in the authoritarian back sliding of the first civilian government and the subsequently transformed civil-military relations. With the multiparty political system jettisoned for a single-party rule, two successive military regimes usurped power and further derailed the democratic experiment. The cosmetic democratic trajectory has been on a never-ending transition. The process did not promote national dialogue and negotiations for a political pact. Legislative autonomy has not been a reality throughout the meandering democracy of parliamentary and presidential electoral systems. While Bangladesh is a democracy by virtue of holding periodic elections, there have been recriminations of voter list manipulation and vote rigging. The atmosphere of distrust and incivility surrounding election integrity has forced the two major political parties to seek impartiality in the institution of the non-party caretaker government. Entrapped into a highly problematic electoral culture, the corruption of the political parties has left its mark on other institutions in the country.

The COVID-19 fake certificates syndicate case revealed a more complex corruption puzzle that includes multifarious players. The Health

Services concocted lucrative shady deals with various stakeholders in the business sector. The state of health administration is even more troubling when one considers that the Regent Hospital operated without renewing its license for six years prior to the scandal but, at the same time, it was issued a contract by the Health Services as a designated COVID-19 treatment facility. Fragmented governance facilitated corrupt practices by those shrewdly cultivating social connections with the power elite. Within this context, leadership integrity is paramount for good governance and generating public goods.

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POST-INDUSTRIAL SITES AND THE CLASH OF NARRATIVES: THE CASE OF THE GDAŃSK SHIPYARD

KAROLINA GOLINOWSKA

Abstract. This article explores the clash of various narratives around the Gdańsk shipyard, one of the famous examples of a post-industrial heritage site with a significant political past, located in Poland. The analysis is placed within the larger context of contemporary debates on heritage and the specificity of post-industrial sites, showing how vulnerable and fragile foundations such sites may have, as well as how they are susceptible to various manipulations. This study explores the process of construction of heritage sites and their contradictory narratives by referring to one particular aspect of the Polish past and its institutional representation in the form of post-industrial heritage. First, it refers to the contemporary idea of heritage and briefly explains the relation between heritage and memory. It also describes the role of heritage in the tourism industry emphasizing various expectations and demands that are made for memory sites. Then it analyses the idea and specificity of post-industrial heritage as well as the paradox of its universality. Finally, it refers to the Gdańsk shipyard as an example of post-industrial heritage space which serves various demands and visions that reflect a multiplicity of narratives.

Keywords: heritage sites, post-industrial, narrative, Poland, Gdańsk shipyard

Contemporary collective memory is shaped by various kinds of institutions, historical re-enactments and reconstructions, which aim to serve particular political purposes. According to Assmann (2006),

memorial signs such as ceremonies, places and monuments are the key elements responsible for shaping political memory. As narratives of political memory are non-fragmentary, they help to establish national myths and beliefs that may be regarded as explanatory tools for fundamental questions concerning the issue of identity. At the same time, the inherent selectiveness of memory, implied by the dynamics of remembering and forgetting, may be used as an instrument for political manipulation (Connerton 2008). Heritage perceived as a material representation of the memory narratives is thus a matter of social consensus, orchestrated also by the state. As it plays a vital role in the construction of identity, it sometimes may find itself in contradiction with history as an independent research field (Ricoeur 2006, 182-184). In terms of post-industrial sites, the role of memory becomes even more significant as there are no aesthetic criteria that would serve as an explanatory tool of its value. This article aims to analyse the process of construction of heritage sites and their contradictory narratives by referring to one particular aspect of the Polish past and its institutional representation in the form of post-industrial heritage. First, it refers to the contemporary idea of heritage and briefly explains the relation between heritage and memory. It also describes the role of heritage in the tourism industry emphasizing various expectations and demands that are made for memory sites. Then it analyses the idea and specificity of post-industrial heritage as well as the paradox of its universality. Finally, it refers to the Gdańsk shipyard as an example of post-industrial heritage space which serves various demands and visions that reflect a multiplicity of narratives.

The contemporary idea of heritage and its industries

Heritage is a phenomenon exploited by a multitude of institutions, communities, or individuals. Widely described and analysed, it still fails in terms of precise definition as a cultural representation of the past in general. Therefore, its elusive and vague character seems to be a natural response to contemporaneity and its social expectations. Its processual and discursive character makes it capable of mingling various narratives,

needs, and ideas in such a way that they create the most desirable and socially useful image of the past (Harrison 2013, 14-18). As an undefined and elusive category, heritage is susceptible to political and cultural transitions. Sometimes, it is also contested as an unwanted burden of the past (Silverman 2011) or abandoned as if its heirs were non-existent (Sandri 2013; Kocój 2015). In other words, heritage is a reproduction of culturally defined desires and expectations about the past that accompany contemporary societies and communities (Smith 2006, 29-32). Its discursive adversity, which is a monument, refers to objective criteria of evaluation and demands the methodology taken from historical research.

For Polish scholars, the distinction between heritage, monument, and cultural properties is significant. For instance, historian and conservationist Andrzej Tomaszewski considers the monument to be an objectified idea characteristic for historical research, and cultural property an apolitical category which includes everything with historical and artistic value. Then again, cultural heritage is a matter of decision and acceptance. It is a so-called world heritage with methods of aesthetic evaluation that would change in time. Its resources are just part of an inheritance from past generations that contemporary society wants to regard as its own and take responsibility for (Tomaszewski 2012, 58). The view is shared also by Kobyliński (2011, 22-23) that portrays cultural property as remnants of human creation – both intangible (texts, melodies, stories, rituals, gestures, customs) or tangible (objects). Heritage is thus part of cultural property viewed as valuable for future generations. A monument is a movable or immovable property, the survival of which is a matter of social interest because of its historical, artistic, or scientific value. Such definitions and distinction also reflect the provisions of the 2003 Polish law on the protection of monuments.

Contemporary heritage has changed its meaning and developed in such a way as to assimilate architecture of the last two centuries, as well as intangible heritage or categories connected with everyday life (Nora 1989). These transitions are so far-reaching that the contemporary vision of what establishes heritage becomes the negation of what constituted heritage in the past. For contemporary generations, heritage has changed: it is now just an ordinary trace of the past, and no longer an

outstanding trace of the past (Nora 2010, XIII). The evolution of these ideas can be easily monitored in various declaration or conventions ordained by UNESCO, for example in the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (UNESCO 2003). New technologies that enable the unlimited capability to index and archive are sufficient to satisfy human obsession with preserving the past in its totality (Nora 1989, 13). In short, heritage has ended the era of history, nation, monuments and introduced the times of memory, communities, identity. Narratives about the past (shared memory) and material explication of the past (heritage) displace the idea of monuments, historical discourse and its discipline. But human memory is itself selective (Pomian 2019, 12-13). For instance, the memory of conquerors becomes an official part of public discourse and thus is given the name and authority of official history (Pomian 2006, 192-194.). This layer of memory with accompanying narratives is then present in museum exhibitions and celebrated during official commemorations. In the form of the memory of those who are conquered, its opposite is doomed to extinction, pushed into the underground or censored. Nevertheless, this apparent distinction implicates the *de facto* existence of two conflictual memories, with the memory of the conquerors claiming the role of official history. Within this context, forgetting becomes an act performed by individuals, communities and, above all, social institutions (Connerton 2008). However, this socially accepted view of the past lacks the discipline of scientific research. That is why the memory of conquerors can be easily transformed into a political statement bringing slogans and emblems to the sites of various social conflicts.

One of the most significant instances of managing the dynamics of forgetting and remembering is the State, with its administrative structures, the decisions of which affect policies, education, and strategies for development. It is usually the State that decides whether a particular national institution will be established. In matters related to cultural policies, it is also the State that creates the need for institutions designed to help commemorate or recreate the common experience of the past and conceptualizes their ideas (Nora 1998, 616). In other words, decisions taken by the administrative organs which are responsible for cultural politics in general, have a considerable impact on cultural

institutions, museums, the art and the historical canon assimilated by youngsters, as well as on how the cultural heritage of the nation and the rest of the world is presented. With time, this institutional framework and state-sanction becomes the "natural" and obvious point of reference about the past, less prone to critical examination.

Beyond all the claims to the inheritance of the past, there is also a tourist industry that gives rise to discussions about its economic context. The development of heritage-oriented tourism has been largely perceived as a matter of tourism industry reaching global level after the Second World War. However, it is still a phenomenon directly linked to the specificity of each state and its socio-economic order (Light 2015, 145-146). Dilemmas referring to the relationship between heritage and its subsequent industry are nothing new. For instance, in the 1980s, Closson (1989, 192-194) criticized the British tourist industry, pointing out that it should concentrate more on qualitative criteria instead of quantitative calculations to show that, in the so-called concern about the heritage, there was something more than just financial profit. Nowadays, offers of the heritage industry often invoke the local specificity of cultures and employ global tools of their evaluation. What is described as the universal human value of heritage that is the subject of UNESCO declarations actually supports the development of tourism. The acknowledgement of some tangible objects or intangible resources as worldwide heritage usually makes the regional or national offer more attractive. Distinctions, lists, titles that place an object or a cultural area in the centre of the world heritage discourse play the role of surrogate authority. Trusting this system of evaluation, the tourist does not need to search for the most precious relics of the past on his/her own. Legitimated verdict given by scholars and experts resonates on the offers of the tourist industry.

The functioning of the tourism industry, which eagerly explores various and heterogeneous resources that constitute local specificity of culture, is subject to some inconsistency. On the one hand, it creates institutional practices that follow market expectations and consider primarily the needs of the visitor. On the other hand, this kind of touristic exploration is accompanied by the belief that, somehow, it is a way of paying tribute to the culture of the past. The desire to protect

cultural "authenticity" (Basu & Modest 2015, 4-8) is accompanied by the desire to make it a visitable experience (Dicks 2004, 119). The factual presence in a historical place and the possibility to immerse oneself in it become more relevant than the meaning the heritage embodies (Silberman 2016, 34). The offers proposed by the tourism industry are a conglomerate of various stimulating factors which create an apparent sense of deep understanding of local culture. However, this created vision of culture, with which tourists are confronted, usually reflects its past time rather than the present (Dicks 2004, 42). Consequently, the cultural imagery that the traveller encounters is a form of illusion that randomly mixes various time planes. This way of creating experience encapsulated in an institutional framework resembles the strategies of entertainment centres, eliminating the possibility of interpreting the relics of the past. The emphasis is on quantitative criteria, such as the number of visitors, which then translate into the language of financial profit, into trivialization of content and ubiquitous standardization. In this way, the memory of the original heirs of heritage becomes part of a global strategy for marketing cultural uniqueness. The local specificity that creates the interpreting frames for a culture is exploited mostly by the state and involved in the construction of authorized heritage discourse (Smith 2006, 29-30). This kind of officially and politically acclaimed discourse parasitises on the memory of communities, making them the starting point for creating a global product that will meet the expectations of the market. These mechanisms are especially apparent in the case of postindustrial heritage, which uses different value assessment tools.

Post-industrial explanations

What constitutes the heritage of a post-industrial society? I use the term "post-industrial" to emphasize that these objects constitute the heritage of post-industrial society (Bell 1997) and are excluded from their original functionality. The issue of functionality plays a crucial role for the tourism industry that tends to widely exploit it. There is a growing tourism branch devoted to the industrial past (Ćopić et al. 2014; Ling,

Handley & Rodwell 2007; Vargas-Sánchez 2015). Otgaar, Van Den Berg & Feng (2010, 2-4) divide this type of tourism into two subtypes. The first one is associated with visiting industrial plants that are still operating, while the second focused on exploring postindustrial heritage. In other words, industrial tourism would refer to fully operational industrial facilities that could follow a long tradition, while its postindustrial version would involve facilities excluded from exploitation. Therefore, it can be assumed that the industrial heritage is associated with still active plants, factories, or mines, the transformations of which should be considered the testimony of technological, social, or scientific development. Postindustrial heritage is constituted by objects whose functioning as a production site has been suspended

Unlike the elements constituting a cultural canon, objective artistic criteria would not be used to assess its value. Its significance is attributed to the fact that it provides testimony of the industrialization process that has changed modern society (Edwards & Llurdés i Coit 1996). However, such attribution did not come about without controversies. For instance, Lowenthal (2015, 420) criticized contemporary efforts to save ordinary and everyday places, including factories and residential houses, which in his opinion were neither interesting nor pleasant. According to him, in post-war America there was a clear tendency, expressed also in the public opinion, to legitimize the heritage of the working class, shaped by successive generations of immigrant population. Similarly, in Australia, which had been excluded from the Eurocentric art narratives for centuries, this idea gained ground because of the need to institutionalize traces of the past of the former colonizers (Lowenthal 1998, 15-16). With its artistic canon constituted over the centuries and accompanied by cultural history, as well as with a long tradition of its material heritage being considered an outstanding trace of the past, only Europe provided an exception. Finally, the consequences of global social transformations, leading to the democratization of culture and abandoning monolithic canons, have changed the idea of heritage on all three continents. The trend of popularizing post-industrial heritage spread from the United Kingdom to continental Europe, finding favour especially in Germany. It was in the Ruhr area in 1999 that, after a series of restructuration attempts, the Route der Industriekultur was opened. With the Zollverein

complex in its centre, it was regarded worldwide as a successful regional example of deindustrialization (Höber & Ganser 1999; Barndt 2010). In the Polish context, post-industrial heritage is also growing in popularity, and it is defined as material documentation of the development of civilization that concentrates on technical and technological processes, and is illustrated by buildings, machines, spatial structures, or landscape (Jędrysiak 2011, 17).

If we consider post-industrial heritage as constituted by objects excluded from its original functionality, it is necessary to specify its concrete forms. This heritage is created by architectural remains of factories, mills, both upper ground such as shipyards and under-ground such as mines (Hospers 2002, 399). The second category of places of the post-industrial legacy relates to the land and water modes of transportation, offering nostalgic travel in both space and time. Restored cars, railways, carriages, trams, passenger liners are used again for the need for transporting tourists. Their elements also become a fragment of various exhibitions in museum institutions dedicated to the everyday past. The third kind of post-industrial legacy is constituted by socio-cultural attractions resulting from the specificity of the industrial region that arises because of its past. The surroundings of ex-industrial objects, such as workers' houses or the regional landscape, may serve as examples. The new functionality of ex-industrial objects has a wide spectrum. Some of these places are renovated and transformed into a museum space that demonstrates the transfigurations of industry-related professions. Others are used for entertainment or artistic purposes and become the space for concerts, theatrical performances of exhibitions. Some are just left derelict and, filled with postindustrial aesthetics, they attract the attention of dark tourism explorers. The rest is transformed into lofts or objects dedicated to the promotion of entrepreneurship, high schools, shopping malls, or offices

These strategies are common also in Poland (Wojtoń 2010,159). Referring to the example of the city of Katowice in Silesia, in the south of Poland, Lamparska (2013) identifies six possible variants of the use and functioning of post-industrial heritage related to the extraction of raw materials, mainly hard coal: (1) historical post-mining landscapes; (2) places adapted for recreation; (3) places documenting changes in the

groundwater environment; (4) specific features of the Silesian landscape, places commemorating stages of mining development; (5) post-mining facilities adapted for service, commercial, and residential purposes; and (6) museums and open-air mining museums. This classification also shows how variable and, at the same time, important the local context of post-industrial heritage is (Ibid.).

If post-industrial heritage is constituted by objects stripped of their original functionality and accorded testimonial and scientific value instead, it is crucial to analyse the monument-heritage dilemma discussed in the previous section. What would constitute the substantial difference between post-industrial heritage and monuments of technical achievement? As already mentioned, the idea of monument, especially in Poland, is common in history as a discipline, whereas heritage is rather associated with memory studies. These two separate discourses about the past do not combine into a coherent homogeneous narrative and they fulfil different culturally defined functions. In other words, not all monuments become the heritage of the community, and not all heritage content should be considered as a historic monument. Monuments are likely to be subjected to objective criteria of evaluation. This need for objectivity is also the decisive element in claiming the status of a historic monument. As a competitive narrative about the past, heritage creates a sequence of imaginary ideas that replace non-personal academic history. All this means that in some cases post-industrial heritage will act as a part of a globally recognized monument of technology.

The universal presence of post-industrial heritage does not mean that it gains the quality of universal value. On the contrary, the assumption about universal value, emphasized in UNESCO conventions, becomes even more troublesome in the case of a post-industrial object because of the lack of consistent evaluation instruments. The doubtful quality of universal value (Ashworth 2007) which is ascribed to it without hesitation, homogenizes collective memories and transforms them into authorized heritage discourse. The problem of universal values was raised especially by the post-colonial researchers who suggested that the globally perceived idea of heritage is *de facto* a Europocentric concept, supported by such methodology and criteria of evaluation that it will always favour Western culture (Coombes 1998,

488-489; Byrne 2014; Smith 2006, 30; Lowenthal 1998, 5; Labaldi 2013, 15-17). It is however necessary to mention that UNESCO itself has been aware of such controversies (UNESCO 1999). This raises another question as to whether the heritage bonded with the memory of a specific community may be given a universal meaning. In terms of post-industrial heritage, the problem of universal value is even greater. The post-industrial legacy is constituted by objects from the 19th and 20th centuries. Most of them are not ascribed aesthetic value, or the aesthetic value is the additional argument for claiming the status of a heritage (such as Zollverein in Essen, Germany).

In other words, universality cannot be combined with the memory of a specific community deprived of its scenarios of the past. Discussing this problem in the context of heritage connected with coal mines, Dicks (2008) finds that the material presence of this legacy may improve relations and act as an integrational factor for the people and their families working in the mine site. At the same time, such heritage described in a language that avoids class distinctions has its consequences in the de-politicization of the past (Ibid.). However, this may be a dangerous mechanism of neutralization used upon memory that creates an image of the past according to the need for receptive conformism. Defining objects and places in the category of post-industrial heritage does indeed help to create a narrative about development, the industrial revolution, and pioneers. This narrative eliminates class distinctions and unifies under a common goal factory owners and workers, although their experiences of their industry are radically different. There is a considerable number of discursive practices that manage to avoid mentioning about work in disastrous conditions and beyond physical abilities, or about social injustice and exploitation. The memory of conquerors always has an impact on narratives about a past represented in a public space (Pomian 2006, 192-194). By that, I mean that the heirs post-industrial heritage defined in this way cannot come from the working class. Reducing the memory of industrial workers to a general narrative about technological development and the industrial revolution is just an act of ignorance.

That is why the post-industrial heritage raises doubts as to the whether it explores the memories of former working-class communities.

In other words, it provokes the question of whose actual memory narratives correspond to a given representation of the past. If heritage became the foundation of creating a network of power relations between the Western and non-Western world (Smith 2006, 29-30), then the legitimacy of establishing their universal value was handed over to the experts. Their professionalism was defined through the prism of Eurocentric and classist criteria and contributed to the creation of an authorized heritage discourse. The transformation of a derelict area into a heritage exposition allows tourists to sentimentalize about the past (Frisch 1998). It also eliminates any references to the economic impact and financial problems of those who experienced this deindustrialization. The celebration and interpretation of memorial sites as a particular embodiment of the workers' past, under the auspices of government administration structures, can indeed produce an authorized heritage discourse available for public interpretation (Shackel & Palus 2006). At the same time, the past of the workers becomes a marginal element in this narrative that concentrates on various aspects of the production technology of manufactures, factories, and mines. The authorized heritage discourse tends to ignore unpleasant memories and creates a narrative that emphasizes the significant role of regional progress both in the economic and social sphere. At the same time, these erstwhile workers, suffering from the effects of deindustrialization, are put to the test a second time. This is another problematic issue that relates to the possible development and career opportunities of the residents themselves if they wish to stay close to the facility transformed into post-industrial heritage (Jones & Munday 2001). In larger cities, the consequences of interest in the industrial past take on a slightly different turn, becoming a touchstone of the gentrification processes. The previous inhabitants, whose memories are intertwined with the presumed character of the transformed place, are trapped in luxurious life, the cost of which exceeds their financial capabilities. Interestingly, and paradoxically, this process of a specific aestheticization of the past (followed by the offer of luxury apartments and lofts for sale), which emphasizes the unique character of the place, is constantly and universally replicated (Sattler 2013). This way of constructing heritage and historical places becomes a general solution to the problem of

enhancing the image of the region, reproduced in various cities around the world. At the same time, this strategy, which parasitizes on the memory of residents (ex-workers) of post-industrial areas, turns them into undesirable and inadequately wealthy tenants.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that several decades ago post-industrial heritage was intended to become a manifestation of the memory of the unprivileged, demanding recognition of their vision of the past, devoid of the spectacular. These expectations then permeated the political sphere, leading to the creation of apparently egalitarian-oriented memorial sites, the existence of which was regulated by the official authorized heritage discourse and financial expectations. In this way, despite having many critics, such as Pierre Nora, the heritage of everyday life has become one of the forms of presenting the past. Nowadays, the idea of exhibiting post-industrial heritage grows in popularity, evolving into various interpretations depending on the cultural context. Everyday life from the time of dynamic industrialization also becomes a fragment of representations of the past in Poland. At the same time, such heritage, which is subject to institutional control, becomes its own contradiction, and this authorized discourse - the most effective tool of the policy of memory.

A discursive clash around one shipyard

The shipyard in Gdańsk may be considered as an example illustrating all the dilemmas mentioned above. Its contemporary status may be described as a conglomerate of historical facts, difficult memories, the vulnerability of the contemporary idea of post-industrial heritage, and changing functions. It is also a place transformed to address the needs of the tourist industry that offers an experience of the past in a radically consumerist way. The restoration of the shipyard comes along with the gentrification process, following the usual course already described above. Finally, it is also a post-industrial complex already prepared to lay claim to the status of world heritage, even though currently it seems to be limited to a derelict industrial space transformed into a food court.

The shipyard in Gdańsk is a kind of place that has special significance for the city's residents, as well as the whole of Poland (Krzemiński 2010; Krzemiński et al. 2016). However, its status reflects the division between objectifying history and politically oriented collective memory, and this has an impact on the ongoing transformations. This study reflects on the status of the shipyard in Gdańsk as of the autumn of 2020. At that time, the whole complex was rather empty and ruined with several examples of buildings transformed into industrially designed food courts and one hall with an exhibition site prepared by the Institute of National Remembrance. To help visitors navigate throughout the area, the place displays several maps presenting basic information about previous functions of each building in the industrial complex. The description of the Gdańsk shipyard is based on the author's own observations and it concentrates on the overall look of the whole complex.

In September 2019, The National Heritage Board of Poland, an institutional representation of the memory of conquerors, introduced a campaign *Stocznia Gdańska warta UNESCO* (Przylipiak 2019). The campaign aimed to popularize the idea of the ex-industrial site appearing on the register of globally recognized UNESCO world heritage, which, if accomplished, would be a culminating moment for the joint actions of regional authorities and the government. For this purpose, the campaign expectedly emphasized the role of the Solidarność (Solidarity) movement in the eventual fall of the Polish communist regime and "reunification of Europe," but also described the Gdańsk Shipyard as "an example of a large-scale state-owned production plant and over a hundred-year tradition of shipbuilding." In 2015 the Shipyard had already obtained The European Heritage Label ([Knoch et al.] 2018, 11), a recognition awarded to objects of cultural heritage that played a significant role in the development of European history and culture, or which contributed to the development of values considered as the fundamentals of European integration ([Polish Ministry of Culture] 2017). Such an award may be also perceived as a symptom of the Europeanization of the national places of memory that reach somewhat universal level and are deprived of local/national

interpretation frame (Kowalski 2015, 70). In 2017, the shipyard area was also included in the Registry of Objects of Cultural Heritage.

At the same time, the post-industrial complex was bought by two Belgian developers to pursue a restoration project that would reflect the shipyard's surroundings of valuable historical buildings. As it is described on its website, the project

> "covers 16 hectares located in the heart of the Young Town in Gdańsk, on the banks of the Martwa Wisła, within walking distance of the Old Town and the Main Railway Station. This monumental area is known worldwide as the main stage of historical events that shaped Eastern Europe as we know it today. This is where Solidarity was born, and the united efforts of many people made Poland what it is today. We respect the strong sense of community that has always been part of this place. Not only jobs but also places where people could make a significant contribution to the development and building a better future" (Stocznia Cesarska [2021]).

The undertaken restoration of the historical complex is accompanied by diverse expectations. The area that is intensively revitalized and turned into recreational infrastructure functions under the name of *Stocznia Cesarska* (Imperial Shipyard). It is a Polish translation of *Kaiserliche Werft Danzig*, a name of a German plant established in 1871. Referring to the past and using a Polish translation of the original name seems to be motivated by the belief that its Prussian origin can be eliminated from the authorized heritage discourse. What is more, the Polish authorities tend to concentrate on the commemoration of *Stocznia Gdańska* (Gdańsk Shipyard) (1947-1988) as such, and the role of its workers in overthrowing the communist regime. As the place functions under different denominations, it could be said that they reflect diversely constructed narratives about this widely disputed fragment of urban space.

The actual status of the shipyard is a result of negotiations and transformations compliant with directives of authorities on a variety of levels and it can be considered as a practical realization of the material memory of the conquerors that meets the demands of contemporaneity. Authorized heritage discourse concentrates on the post-war period and emphasizes the role of shipyard workers in rejecting the communist regime. The interwar period is presented in marginal way, and this is a deliberate decision motivated by the need to eliminate the problem of Gdańsk as a city that has a significant non-Polish history. After the

second and third partitions of Poland (1793 and 1795) that ended the existence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Gdańsk was annexed by Prussia and became Danzig, a Prussian city. After the First World War, it was transformed into the Free City of Danzig, an independent quasi-state under the auspices of the League of Nations. During the Second World War, the shipyard produced U-Boats for the Third Reich (Westphal 2018). At that time, some of its areas were also transformed into a concentration camp and the prisoners from the Stutthof concentration camp were forced to work there for the military industry (Owsiński 2018).

Similarly marginal is the presence of Lech Wałęsa, the 1983 laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded for the "non-violent struggle for free trade unions and human rights in Poland" (Nobel Peace Prize 1983). As an iconic representative of the 1980s protests, he seems to be excluded from the contemporary narrative because of allegations about cooperating with the secret police, the Ministry of Public Security (Skórzyński 2016). One might say that these discrepancies could be solved by paying a visit to the Europejskie Centrum Solidarności, an institution located in the building of the shipyard management and dedicated to the development of the Solidarity movement. However, despite the distinctive architectural form that transforms it into a popular Gdańsk landmark, this single institution cannot be fully responsible for the creation of the discourse about the urban space and its past.

With its claim to the status of universal heritage, the Gdańsk shipyard becomes a manifestation of the phenomenon identified by Pierre Nora. There is nothing visually spectacular in the ruined industrial complex, its abandoned assembly halls, and other shipyard buildings. In other words, a post-industrial heritage shipyard is not attracting attention because of aesthetic or artistic criteria. It is neither representing a prominent technological innovation, outstanding type of building. Nor does it exhibit developments in architecture or represent human genius. Its value assessment is based on its role as living testimony, the arena for exhibiting the contribution of the workers to bringing down communism. None of that excludes the presence of the global tourist industry that seems to be part of the formulaic strategies of revitalization. As a UNESCO world heritage candidate, the shipyard

had to be transformed into a visitable experience. As a result, the empty and devastated ex-shipyard buildings are full of bars, food courts, food trucks, and clubs. Visitors may also glance at the separate exhibition about the 1980s protests located in one of the halls. In 2020, this was an exhibition concentrated on the person of Anna Walentynowicz, prepared by the Gdańsk delegature of Instytut Pamięci Narodowej (Institute of National Remembrance), an institution closely linked to the central authorities. Visitors can also climb the famous M3 crane that is symbolic for the city's industrial past. At the same time, new housing estates and office buildings are being built around the former shipyard, with some of the representatives of the companies investing in the buildings of the shipyard also declaring their support for the UNESCO campaign (Przylipiak 2019). Therefore, the unique character of the place attracts the real estate market and consequently increases the attractiveness of the post-industrial urban area, a process that eventually triggers gentrification.

Not least, there are also issues related to the further operation of the plants that are still working, expanded outside the historical area of Stocznia Gdańska, and those closed in 1996 due to financial inefficiency (Szczypiński 2018, 308). The local company operating the shipyard is struggling with financial inefficiency and the need for thorough modernization ([*Tygodnik Solidarność*] 2018). Freshly implemented projects for the shipyard's operation (Portal Stoczniowy [2019-2021]) show how dramatic and at the same time dynamic these changes are. Ironically, the whole situation may be seen as a continuation of the shipyard workers' struggle for decent living conditions (Socha 2001), one of the many reasons for the protests in the 1980s (Paczkowski 2015, 11-20). The image of the shipyard workers as perpetrators of violent and incomprehensible protests has dominated media narratives (Filipkowski & Wegenschimmel 2018, 553). The description of the shipbuilding industry is now governed by neo-liberal imperatives, presenting shipyards in terms of their unprofitability, losses or negative balance sheets. From this perspective, the transformation of the former shipyard area into a recreational space may seem like a mockery.

In short, in the debate on the shipyard's future, several sides of this discursive dispute emerge, with completely different visions and

perceptions of the role of the post-industrial complex itself. For foreign investors, there is a need for the area to represent a glorious industrial past which, in combination with the recreational function, will make the project profitable. For the Polish authorities, the narrative focuses on the 1970s and 1980s, and emphasizes the place's political connotations. They also regard the shipyard as a symbol of the struggle against communism. In the context of the former and current shipyard workers, the most common is the issue of jobs and livelihood. This contradicts the vision of the closure of the plant and its transformation into a museum-park. Finally, there is also the community of Gdańsk residents and their memories of the shipyard, which form yet another narrative about the past. However, it is hardly known how their forms of commemoration compare to the authorized heritage discourse, and what form of representation they would desire.

Conclusions

Heritage is a reproduction of culturally defined desires and expectations about the past that accompany societies, their authorities, and institutions. Its sometimes ambiguous character derives from the fact that not all heritage content should be considered as a historic monument and not all monuments become the heritage of the community. Whether an object would constitute heritage is a matter of social consensus. Monuments are likely to be subjected to objective criteria of evaluation supported by the methodology of historical research. This need for objectivity is decisive in claiming the status of a historic monument. In terms of heritage, valuation always comes with the social usefulness of represented images of the past.

Decisions taken by the governmental administrative organs which are responsible for cultural politics in general have a considerable impact on what and how the cultural heritage of the nation is presented to the public. Created discourse of authorized heritage enables pursuing a particular image of the past that reflects also the political interests of the state. In the case of the Gdańsk shipyard, this interest concentrates on the "Polish" part of its past which serves as an identity-creating

factor. The shipyard is regarded above all as a symbol of overthrowing the communist regime, emphasized in reckonings with the past, undertaken by the actual authorities. Despite the historical findings, the shipyard is credited with being the birthplace of resistance to the USSR and having had a great impact on bringing down the Iron Curtain. However, the remaining past of Kaiserliche Werft Danzig stays beyond the interest of the Polish state and is developed in urban projects of private investors.

The memory about the shipyard, which is already recognizable for all the people in Poland, is additionally supported by legislative acts and projects ordained by authorities. That is why it serves as a substantiation of memory of the conquerors, which concentrates primarily on the issue of the first free trade union – Solidarność. This memory of the conquerors, represented by the narrative about the shipyard as a place of anti-communist struggle, demands the status of the official history of a place. As it proves to be susceptible to political turbulences, trends, and scandals, it is jeopardized by suppressions that become acts of forgetting controlled through the state. This presence of the authorities is unquestionable, since one of the organizations responsible for the revitalization projects is the National Heritage Board of Poland, a state institution. Also, the memory of conquerors uses the example of a shipyard to emphasize its rich past and diminish contemporary problems. Such memorial sites under the auspices of government administration involve a mechanism of neutralization used upon a memory that creates an image of the past according to the need for receptive conformism. The authorized heritage discourse created by the state builds solid narration about its past enabling the later issue of deindustrialization to fall into oblivion. The difficulties that started in the 1990s and the remaining problems of the shipyard are basically non-existent in a public space.

The shipyard raises a question about the value assessment of post-industrial heritage. Although decisions about what would constitute heritage are not totally arbitrary, in terms of the post-industrial heritage they might be questionable. It basically involves the act of acknowledging the object as culturally important, although it is not an interesting piece of architecture or manifestation of technological improvement. It is here

that we see the transformation of an outstanding into an ordinary trace of the past. In other words, the shipyard is an illustration of the "common past," the heritage of everyday life, connected with physical work, an element of global reality that also becomes a part of the UNESCO World Heritage List. As a candidate for the distinction awarded by the international committee, the object will become part of the global map of the heritage industry. This, however, leads to a question about the value assessment of heritage, with emphasis on its universality. In other words, can the importance of the shipyard be readable for non-Polish visitors as well? To what extend the shipyard past may be considered an example of universal values?

The presence of the tourist industry accompanied by the economic issues has also significant impact on the transformation of the ex-shipyard into a heritage site. As already mentioned, the heritage industry employs global tools of their evaluation such as the potential UNESCO distinction that places the object in the world heritage landscape and discourse. This involves creating a visitable experience of the past that resembles the strategies of entertainment centres. The metamorphosis of the shipyard is tending in the direction of exemplary post-industrial complexes reinvented for the demands of the heritage industry, such as standardization (e.g. creating a map and a route to help visitors to the shipyard), providing comfort and sustenance (e.g. food and leisure court), and creating attractions (e.g. climbing the crane and visiting the exhibition). However, this type of standardized internationalization of the national place of memory, which leaves no place for local interpretations, may not be welcomed by the state which promotes its own narrative about the shipyard and the Polish past.

That leads to another controversy, as the shipyard becomes a space that activates the gentrification processes. This strategy for marketing cultural uniqueness is eagerly exploited by various urban investors. This manner of constructing heritage and historical places becomes a general solution to the problem of enhancing the image of the urban space reproduced globally. In terms of the shipyard, the image of a place is created based on a pattern common in the USA and other European countries that tends to attract the attention of the so-called creative class. Characterized as a space with a glorious and rich past, it has also

attracted investors' attention who pursue expensive housing projects. Yet, the employees of the new Gdańsk shipyard may not seem to fit in such an "authentic" space.

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FIGHTING ILLIBERALISM: THE ROLE OF AWARENESS RAISING PROJECTS

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Abstract. Illiberalism recently became a favourite catchphrase of several political actors around the world. Although not necessarily precise, the term conjures alternative understandings of democracy, by contesting the inherent need of a democratic political system to be intimately tied to liberal values. This lack of precision is often instrumentalized to boost popular support for taking measures leading to discrimination and resisting or even fighting pluralism. This text aims to familiarize the reader with the existing conceptual debates surrounding the concept of illiberalism, while also offering a glimpse into the causes responsible for its popularity. Theoretical knowledge is then juxtaposed with information regarding an awareness raising project aiming to fight illiberalism in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The conclusion stresses the need for communication and education campaigns regarding the perils of illiberalism, especially in the more fragile democratic contexts of post-communist Europe. Citizens need to be aware of how illiberalism endangers democracy, as well as have at their disposal mechanisms for raising awareness regarding illiberal measures taken by various governments.

Keywords: illiberalism, Central and Eastern Europe, post-communism, democracy, awareness-raising project, civil society

This is the inaugural piece for the journal's new section ***Academia and civil society****, coordinated by Bogdan Mihai Radu (Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania, bogdan.radu@fspac.ro). In this section, we offer a space for the brief presentation of civil society projects relevant for the study and practice of democracy and democratization, and in which scholars and civil society stakeholders cooperate or use each other's expertise to produce new knowledge (e.g. databases, methodologies, analyses) and/or instruments (e.g. awareness-raising campaigns, policy recommendations, monitoring and reporting tools) that aim to contribute to good governance processes, to increasing civic culture literacy especially within democratizing or authoritarian societies, to higher levels of public accountability, or to answering specific needs of vulnerable populations. Each project is placed in the context of larger scientific debates relevant for the project's specific goal. The new section attempts thus to make more visible and open the conversation on an area of knowledge production on which we reflect less in contemporary political research, even if, as scholars, we may often (and often unconsciously) use data and methodologies generated through such projects.*

Illiberalism recently became a favourite catchphrase of several political actors around the world. Although not necessarily precise, the term conjures alternative understandings of democracy, by contesting the inherent need of a democratic political system to be intimately tied to liberal values. This lack of precision is often instrumentalized to boost popular support for taking measures leading to discrimination and resisting (or even fighting) pluralism. This text aims to familiarize the reader with the existing conceptual debates surrounding the concept of illiberalism, while also offering a glimpse into the causes responsible for its popularity. Theoretical knowledge is then juxtaposed with information regarding an awareness raising project aiming to fight illiberalism in countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Responding to illiberal vectors in the Black Sea Region (RESOLVE). The conclusion stresses the need for communication and education campaigns regarding the perils of illiberalism, especially in the more fragile democratic contexts of post-communist Europe. Citizens need to be aware of how illiberalism endangers democracy, as well as have at their disposal mechanisms for raising awareness regarding illiberal measures taken by various governments.

Context: Illiberalism as a concept

For a while now, references to democratic decline, erosion or backsliding permeated the vocabulary of research alarmed by seemingly serious setbacks of democracies (Diamond & Plattner 2015; Cianetti & Hanley 2021). Within the wider debate on democratic malaise, particular attention is given to the spread of illiberal discourse and practices that hinder the quality of democracies. While intuitively appealing, as a term indicative of purported malfunctions, illiberalism can be difficult to define, unless its depiction is linked to its counterpart: liberal democracy.

Several examples clarify this conceptual tie. According to Sajó & Uitz (2021, 977), "[i]lliberalism emerges from the systemic neglect and disparagement of liberal practices; it does not recognize the crucial importance of liberal values and institutions, but does not deny them in a systematic way either." In a similar vein, for Halmai (2021, 813) illiberalism takes issue with "the values of political liberalism: human rights, justice, equality and the rule of law, its commitment to multiculturalism and tolerance […]." Thus, while on balance illiberalism is not opposed to democracy per se, it does contend its liberal dimension, paving the way for shattering restrictions of rights and liberties. A characterization of illiberalism where the emphasis is placed on actors is offered by Lührmann & Hellmeier (2020, 8) in whose opinion: "[t]he illiberal actor – political leaders, governments, political parties, civil society groups, individuals – is one who is not wholly and fully committed to the norms and institutions that exercise control over the executive and uphold civil liberties and the rule of law." Then again, writing about Poland's illiberal turn, Kubik (2012, 80) approaches illiberalism "as a political option that is based on three principles: (1) populism, (2) (organizational) antipluralism, and (3) ideological monism".

The inclusion of populism in the characterization of illiberalism is not arbitrary. Populism too is averse to the liberal side of democracy (Mudde 2021) and the co-occurrence between the two phenomena is not unusual. Employing a populist discourse can become instrumental to

illiberal leaders in legitimizing their position and in obscuring the damage they inflict, by acting as actual protectors of democracy (Lührmann & Hellmeier 2020). The proximity between illiberalism and populism is also visible from the perspective of projecting alleged perils that put society or community at risk: "Representing the world (or at least "others") as threatening and boosting status loss fears is the favourite tool of populists in maintaining power and generating illiberalism" (Sajó & Uitz 2021, 982). On a related note, examples of illiberal leaders' insistence on salient topics with a strong divisive power are not difficult to find; such is the case of Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán's diligence in pointing that the liberal approach to issues like multiculturalism, immigration and same-sex marriage is defective, hence the efforts to cultivate a strongly conservative stance around these matters (Plattner 2019).

To the extent that illiberal derailments of democracy are constitutive of countries' overall dynamics (alongside utterly authoritarian setbacks, stagnation or democratic advancements), capturing illiberal instances can be subsumed to general evaluations of democratic performance. Such are the comparative assessments of democratic functioning and freedom observance, regularly issued by international organizations and research institutes (for recent accounts see for example Lührmann et al. 2019; IDEA 2019; IDEA 2021; Freedom House 2021). When emphasis is placed on particular contexts, regional or country-based studies allow the in-depth analysis of illiberal politics/ policies nested in specific settings. For instance, recent developments turned Central and Eastern Europe into a fertile area of illiberalism research (Stanley 2019; Cianetti & Hanley 2021; Halmai 2021). While Hungary and Poland are the likely front runners of such analyses, due to their particularly virulent take on illiberal enterprise (see for instance Krekó & Enyedi 2018; Drinóczi & Bień-Kacała 2019), worrying trends were also found in the Czech Republic (Hanley & Vachudova 2018).

From a different perspective, Glasius (2021) suggests that focusing on actual illiberal practices rather than states as units of analysis enables a clearer empirical assessment of illiberalism. Such practices cover a wide spectrum of actions that curtail the rights and freedoms, including "[…] patterns of interference with legal equality, legal recourse or

recognition before the law; infringement of freedom of expression, fair trial rights, freedom of religion, the right to privacy; and violations of physical integrity rights" (Glasius 2021, 339). Alternatively, Sajó & Uitz (2021, 980) highlight the purposeful nature of illiberal actions that "seek to shrink the space of reasoned public debate: they suppress critical voices, restrict civic space, and assert control over the media and academic freedom."

As illiberalism becomes manifest in various areas of the world, the newer democracies of the post-communist region seem particularly marked by worrisome trends. What makes this region susceptible to illiberal derailments? In 2017, the International Forum for Democratic Studies at the National Endowment for Democracy set out to find out what is the root cause of illiberalism in Central and Eastern Europe. To this end, they interviewed five leading experts (NED 2018). Here are briefly their positions, which are also synthesizing the major arguments that are present in different forms throughout the specialized literature on the topic.

Ivan Krastev, from the Center for Liberal Strategies in Sofia, Bulgaria, argues that post-communist illiberalism does not have a proper ideological root. For him, illiberalism's roots are in the change brought about by the end of the Cold War. At that moment, many former communist countries adopted democracy and market economy under the supervision and with the support of western liberal states. In other words, countries in Central and Eastern Europe embarked on a journey of fundamental transformation by imitating other countries perceived as champions of democratic performance. As Krastev notes, frustrations come from both the inherent inferiority perceived by the mimicker and the need to be constantly evaluated by those who created the original model (i.e. Western European countries, the EU, the US). It follows that, this imitation game was eventually imagined as threatening national sovereignty.

Anna Grzymala-Busse from the University of Stanford, UK, holds mainstream parties responsible for the increasing popularity of illiberalism. According to her, in the early days of democratic transition, the mainstream parties did not offer the space for public and substantive debate on the process of political and economic transformations that

were implemented, but rather they constructed liberal market democracy as the only way ahead. Later on, the same political elite who initiated reforms proved to be corrupt and ethically unsound. As a result, less frequentable parties seized the moment, and infused most political debates in the public sphere with overdoses of populism, giving thus many people the illusion of restoring ownership of their own polity. Under the guise of national saviours, these parties often compromised the functioning of democratically created institutions and, essentially, captured the state. FIDESZ in Hungary and PiS in Poland are most often quoted examples of such strategic yet cynical behaviour.

Péter Krekó from the Political Capital Institute and ELTE University in Budapest, Hungary, sees the root causes of illiberalism in Central and Eastern Europe as part of the global trends emphasizing identity politics. For example, in a rather successful effort to discredit progressive liberal values, the Hungarian government champions a political culture predating democratic transition and emphasizing a certain value hierarchy in the detriment of egalitarianism or autonomy. When such ideas are circulated in a landscape characterized by low political (and social) trust, by lack of political efficacy and by weak institutions, illiberal thinking gains significant ground. Although Krekó notes that civil society has been mobilized against rising illiberalism, its efforts were often rendered ineffective because illiberal states aimed to circumvent them.

Wojciech Przybylski from Visegrad Insight and Res Publica Foundation in Warsaw, Poland, considers that frustration with the pace of development in post-communist countries makes the public susceptible to authoritarian models. Although economic development has been rather sustained in all Central Europe, ideas of "not catching up with the West," often orchestrated by illiberal political players, have gained more ground, and have been actively supported by foreign players such as Russia, interested in destabilizing Central and Eastern Europe.

Dimitrina Petrova, human rights activist and Program Director of SOS Children's Villages, Bulgaria, considers that the new strategies for socio-economic status mobility and elite formation are responsible for the resurgence of nationalism and illiberalism. In other words, the

1989/1990 regime change was motivated, among many other factors, by the unfairness of the communist system. However, this was replaced by a system that is increasingly perceived as being also unfair. The population is aware and discontent that in the new system elites are corrupt and that meritocracy is nowhere to be seen. From this perspective, the situation does not differ much from what people experienced during communism. Initial enthusiasm with the fall of communism partially avoided a return to authoritarianism, but younger generations have a keen sense of the unfairness characterizing their societies. They do not trust the newly formed elites. At the same time, they may see in illiberalism a way out of this conundrum.

This brief overview of the root causes of illiberalism in Central and Eastern Europe depicts a rather complex mechanism of resisting liberal democracy, while seeking, for the lack of a better term, justice. Post-communist citizens have been repeatedly traumatized from many directions. They were threatened and controlled by their communist regimes. They were made insecure and frustrated by democratic transitions that were essentially resented as unfair, as they created a new corrupt political and economic elite often lacking legitimacy. They were constantly evaluated against other European, "more superior," people. Their feelings and emotions are further assaulted by a nationalist discourse – and, especially in Eastern Europe, nation states have rather short and precarious histories – that emphasizes imminent threats to their very survival. The lack of debate and low levels of civic education vis-à-vis what liberal democracy actually is, an overemphasis of individualistic materialism leading to lack of solidarity, rising levels of fake news and disinformation, and constant international influence from non-democratic countries such as Russia or China further complicate this puzzle. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that certain people are becoming susceptible to populist illiberal messages.

Awareness raising projects in the fight against illiberalism – a case study

The previous section showed that, in relation to Central and Eastern Europe, illiberalism can have deep-seated foundations, tightly linked to

the often troublesome journey these countries had throughout their democratic transition and consolidation. It is difficult to predict the outlook of the illiberal trends already set in motion, much less to devise the remedy that would reverse this route. However, being alert about illiberal developments and raising awareness about its dangers is well within our reach. These are the basic premises that ground the RESOLVE project discussed in this section.

RESOLVE (Responding to illiberal vectors in the Black Sea Region) is a project financed by the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation (BST) and implemented by the Center for the Study of Democracy (CSD) at Babeș-Bolyai University, in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. CSD has been already actively involved in projects developed in or addressing issues related to post-communist democracies for many years. RESOLVE is its first project focused specifically on illiberalism, and it targets Armenia, Georgia, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Romania, Ukraine and Turkey.

The main goal of this project is to create a safe space for engaged citizens to debate on topics related to illiberalism. While academic research projects usually use complex conceptualizations and measurements of different phenomena, RESOLVE aims primarily to offer citizens a toolkit for understanding illiberalism. For this purpose, its major objective is to communicate in lay terms what illiberalism is and why it has negative consequences for democracy. At the same time, the project offers interested individuals a secure cyber space where they can voice their concerns regarding political e-/involutions in their countries. The main attribute of this secure cyber space is that users can post messages in a completely secure and anonymous way, thus not having to fear eventual consequences from over-zealous public authorities trying to control civil society, journalists or whistle-blowers. The project also encourages initiatives to raise the alarm when governments adopt abusive measures through which different groups are discriminated against. After a message is sent to the project's team, it is analysed by experts in/on the country/countries to which the situation refers. Then, an operative team is in charge with spreading the word within networks of engaged democratic citizens in the whole Black Sea area. To finetune these tools, as well as to understand better the needs

and expectations of the potential users, the pilot phase also included workshops with students and civil society activists. After this phase was completed, the secure cyber space and the toolkit remained publicly available at https://www.alert-dem.org/.

The toolkit for understanding illiberalism is one way in which RESOLVE aims to familiarize the broader population with complex political science concepts. After conducting a review of the available scientific literature in the field, RESOLVE team member Toma Burean operationalized illiberalism into ten dimensions: (1) **discourse**, (2) **checks and balances**, (3) **education**, (4) **elections**, (5) **political participation**, (6) **multiculturalism**, (7) **freedom of opinion**, (8) **economy**, (9) **international relations**, and (10) **tax policy and social protection**. Each of these dimensions was broken into specific indicators and then, for each indicator, real-life examples of illiberal measures from the RESOLVE countries were identified. For example, for the dimension connecting illiberalism with international relations, potential indicators were hostile attitudes towards the USA or the EU, or provocatory positioning vis-à-vis historical rival neighbouring countries, often by introducing references to ethnic conceptualizations of the nation. This operationalization and de-construction process involved significant deliberation within the RESOLVE team, as well as through workshops and debates with various stakeholders. Consequently, the illiberalism toolkit (available at https://www.alert-dem.org/illiberalism_toolkit/) is now a fairly nuanced instrument for identifying and recognizing illiberal tendencies in several countries from the Black Sea region, and may serve as resource for civic education.

While the project cannot directly counteract illiberal tendencies of specific governments, it can contribute to raising awareness about such processes, and eventually create popular pressure leading to higher levels of public awareness and scrutiny. RESOLVE is not yet as popular as its creators thought it would be, but there are positive signals from civil society activists in the target countries. These stress the importance of creating a platform for sharing information regarding the most recent instances of illiberal policy making. Although those wanting to raise an issue can do so by email, by writing to the project team on Facebook or by using the dedicated secure platform, the latter is yet to become more

popular. For reasons related exactly to its reinforced security, the secure platform is not 100% user friendly. To make it more useful for the targeted audience, as well to make it better known, a campaign that aims to raise awareness about its existence is currently ongoing.

There are several things to note when it comes to the project's implementation and impact. First, during workshops with students and civil society and through the regular meetings of the project's team, it became obvious that there is an increasing need for awareness-raising projects, especially in the sphere of political transformation in more recent democracies. In post-communist countries, democracy is still a concept that needs to be internalized by the society. Consequently, information on what democracy is needs to be made available to the broader population. Although much has been written on democratic transition and consolidation, very little of the academic discourse actually trickles down to the average citizen. Consequently, the illiberalism toolkit that the RESOLVE team created aims to familiarize people with a rather abstract and complicated concept (i.e. illiberalism). In implementing the project, the team observed that there is dire need for operationalizing concepts at the core of the political and economic system; otherwise, citizens may not form a correct and accurate understanding of what democracy, liberalism, human rights or freedom actually mean. Moreover, core concepts of democracy may be confiscated by illiberal and/or populist regimes, leading to polarization in society. For example, construing minority rights as a threat to the majority or even to national sovereignty, as it happened, for example, with sexual minorities in Hungary or Poland, may have created the impression that minority rights are not essential in a democracy.

Second, by interacting with students from several universities, the RESOLVE team observed that young people are keener to find out more about the political systems they live in, while at the same time being more reflexive about the shape and content of the societies they live in. In the Black Sea region, young people who are in their 20s have already been living in democracies all their lives, even if those democracies are not perfect. As such, it is possible that they are more aware of and more interested in the shape that their polities take. Throughout the implementation of the project, it became obvious that young people

are/should be? the most important target group, because of both their willingness to find out more about democracy and their openness to new ideas, as a result of their socialization in democratic systems.

Third, when implementing multi-country projects of awareness-raising, it is critical to take local context into account. When the RESOLVE team popularized the newly constructed illiberalism toolkit, it observed that illiberal issues differed from country to country. For example, minority rights were at stake in Hungary, Poland or Romania, religious freedom was at stake in Georgia, and overall respect for human rights was problematic in Turkey. Not all countries face illiberal threats along the same lines. It then becomes very important to adapt awareness-raising messages and campaigns on the perils of illiberalism to the ever-changing local context.

Fourth, education for democracy has not always been a top priority in post-communist countries and commitment to liberal values in teaching civic education even less so (Feșnic 2015; Bădescu et al. 2017). In this context, when understandings of what democracy is and is not among the population are frequently incomplete, it is important to trace the effect of fake news on these understandings. In many of the RESOLVE countries, deliberate disinformation was frequently used as governmental strategy. For example, Viktor Orban's discourse on the dangers associated with incoming migration or his attack on businessman and philanthropist George Soros, who founded the Open Society institutes network, transmitted a signal of fear in a large segment of the population, which then embraced his illiberal ideas. Therefore, it is essential to not only inform the population effectively about what liberal democracy is and how it functions, but also identify the sources of disinformation.

Not least, implementing a raising awareness project on illiberalism in countries of the Black Sea Region can be challenging, especially given the fast dynamics of discourse change and the specificities of each local context. Nevertheless, communicating abstract ideas and complicated concepts developed in academic research to the broader population should become a priority for civil society and scholars alike.

Illiberalism seems to be a particular way of doing politics that represents a global threat. Nevertheless, post-communist countries are

perhaps more prone to fall victim to it because neither their institutions, nor their prevailing political culture have yet been built strongly enough to resist its assault. It is very important that citizens are made aware of the threats that illiberalism poses, and that they have at their disposal various channels for expressing their discontent. It is up to those actively seeking improvements in the quality of democracy to create networks of engaged stakeholders that have the ability to bring those issues to the fore. While exposing a problem is not the same with finding its solution, it is still very important for ideas to circulate and for people to have a safe space where meaningful debates on the quality of democracy can be held. Awareness-raising projects are therefore key in creating democratic political culture, especially in countries undertaking democratic transition or consolidation. There is pressing need for academic debates to be circulated among the broader population. In order to do this, scholars and civil society activists could work together in making sure that abstract concepts and ideas are communicated effectively, while, at the same time fighting disinformation.

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DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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NOTE DE LECTURE

Bérengère MARQUES-PEREIRA. 2021. *L'avortement dans l'Union Européenne: Acteurs, enjeux et discours*. Bruxelles: CRISP, 281 pp. ISBN 9782870752524

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La question de l'avortement est un thème éminemment politique, qui peut être approché par le prisme des mouvements sociaux, des luttes féministes, des politiques publiques, du droit (national et international), de la construction nationale, des idéologies politiques, des religions etc. Sujet « sensible » et souvent controversé, l'avortement est devenu, ces dernières années, une cible des opposants à l'égalité de genre (Verloo 2018) et un thème de mobilisation dans les campagnes anti-genre dans certains pays (Kuhar & Paternotte 2017). Si au niveau de l'Union Européenne le droit à l'avortement semblait acquis, il est remis en question, à différents degrés, dans plusieurs pays membres. La Pologne a déjà adopté une loi qui interdit l'avortement, et les autorités de la Hongrie et de l'Italie ont également exprimé des positions anti-avortement.

Dans ce contexte, une analyse rigoureuse des acteurs et des enjeux politiques et sociétaux qui se jouent dans ces oppositions à l'avortement est extrêmement nécessaire et le livre de Bérengère Marques-Pereira mérite une lecture attentive. D'autant plus que l'auteure, professeure à l'Université Libre de Bruxelles, est une spécialiste reconnue de la

question de la citoyenneté sociale et politique des femmes en Europe et en Amérique latine et s'est penchée depuis un bon moment sur le droit à l'avortement. Les nombreuses publications, conférences et collaborations internationales imposent Bérengère Marques-Pereira comme une référence incontournable dans le domaine « genre et politique » et son nouveau volume vient le confirmer.

Se situant dans le sillage des recherches qui raisonnent en termes de rapports sociaux de sexe et approchant le droit à l'avortement à partir du concept de « régime de citoyenneté » (p. 12), Bérengère Marques-Pereira analyse, à travers chacun des cinq chapitres, la question de la citoyenneté sociale au regard de l'avortement : « politique de santé publique, gratuité de l'acte médical pour les femmes nationales, résidentes, migrantes, sans papiers etc » (p. 13). Car, pour reprendre les mots de l'auteure : « Les femmes ont conquis leur émancipation par l'acquisition des droits de citoyenneté civile, politique, économique et sociale. En revanche, l'extension de cette citoyenneté à la liberté reproductive demeure un enjeu pour le contrôle des femmes sur leur sexualité. » (p. 13). Cependant, si l'on veut analyser les acteurs mobilisés dans cette confrontation et déceler les logiques discursives des uns et des autres afin de comprendre les enjeux politiques qui les sous-tendent, une première difficulté surgit dès le premier balayage du terrain. En effet, les acteurs sont divisés, de manière générale, entre ceux qui se déclarent *pro choix* (défenseurs du droit à l'avortement) et ceux qui se proclament *pro vie* (les opposants à ce droit). « Les premiers intègrent l'accès à l'avortement dans les droits reproductifs et sexuels et incluent ces derniers dans le champ des droits humains. Les seconds (…) s'inscrivent dans une vision restrictive des droits humains, qui exclut tout accès à l'avortement » (p. 6). Si la référence au langage des droits humains est mobilisée – différemment – par les deux camps pour légitimer leur propos, la position des *pro-vie* est radicale et exclusive, car pour eux « la parole éthico-politique ne peut être prise en considération qu'à l'aune de la Loi naturelle, c'est-à-dire immuable, car transcendantale, et qui s'impose aux croyants comme aux non croyants » (p. 6).

J'insiste sur la difficulté de construction de l'objet de la recherche, qui est récurrente pour tous les sujets qui sont au cœur des controverses politiques, des productions discursives et des constructions identitaires

dans les campagnes anti-genre. Bérengère Marques-Pereira se pose la question de l'usage du langage de ces protagonistes au risque de « faire fi à la neutralité axiologique » ou de paraître normatif. L'auteure postule que « la neutralité est impossible tant la connaissance savante demeure située dans un contexte social, culturel et politique » (p. 6) et souligne que « l'histoire de la construction des problématiques scientifiques et indissociable de l'histoire des faits sociaux, des représentations sociales et des pratiques qui les soutiennent » (p. 7). Je considère en effet que cette option, qui se place dans la descendance de la théorie de la « science située » (Haraway 1988) favorise des choix méthodologiques et des approches épistémologiques susceptible d'interroger finement la complexité des débats sociétaux analysés.

Pour éviter la ratification des catégories du langage courant ou du langage politique par rapport à l'ordre sexuel, l'auteure se propose de « déceler les logiques discursives des uns et des autres dans le contexte international et européen des années 1990 à ce jour » (p. 7) ; son analyse se penche sur l'enjeu du droit à l'avortement, même si d'autres enjeux traversent l'opposition entre les *pro choix* et les *pro vie* (i.e. l'orientation sexuelle et l'identité de genre, la procréation médicalement assistée, etc).

Dans *l'Introduction* Bérengère Marques-Pereira pose les repères théoriques et méthodologiques de son analyse. Je retiendrai, outre les aspects déjà soulignés, une définition très utile des termes *pro choix* et *pro vie* (pp. 7-8), explicitant les éléments historiques, idéologiques et politiques explicites ou implicites. L'auteure choisit de ne pas utiliser ces termes, qui relèvent du registre normatif, et opte pour les expressions « partisans et opposants au droit à l'avortement », qui seraient davantage dans le registre du constat des faits. L'ouvrage est organisé en cinq chapitres, que je présenterai en ce qui suit ; chaque chapitre est accompagné d'une section d'*Annexes*, où sont synthétisées des informations extrêmement utiles tant pour la compréhension de l'analyse de Bérengère Marques-Pereira que pour des recherches futures sur le sujet.

Le premier chapitre offre une excellente synthèse des régimes légaux de chaque pays européen en rapport avec le droit à l'avortement, la pénalisation de l'avortement et l'accès effectif à l'avortement. La diversité des situations juridiques résulte à la fois du fait que l'avortement relève du principe de subsidiarité et de la souveraineté

nationale, tout comme des spécificités politiques, sociales, religieuses et culturelles des États membres. L'analyse des critères légaux met en évidence plusieurs facteurs qui sont différemment traités dans les législations nationales : le délai pour une demande d'IVG ; l'accès financier ; l'accumulation des conditions légales ; les lois totalement ou extrêmement restrictives (pp. 17-18). En dehors des critères légaux, le recours abusif à la clause de conscience est une pratique qui devrait être plus attentivement analysée. Car en fait, « un régime légal ne garantit pas à lui seul l'accès effectif à l'avortement », d'autres obstacles pouvant intervenir, tels les coûts, les conditions bureaucratiques, les stéréotypes de genre et la stigmatisation (p. 20). Afin de prendre en compte cette diversité de facteurs et de configurations possibles au niveau des États européens et en rapport avec les options théoriques mentionnées, Bérengère Marques Pereira distingue 5 types de régimes (p. 23) :

- un régime d'autorisation consacrant un accès aisé et des conditions peu contraignantes (ex. Danemark, Finlande, Pays-Bas, Suède) ;
- un régime d'autorisation avec dépénalisation partielle ou totale, soumise à des critères ; l'accès est assez important (Belgique, France, Luxembourg, Royaume-Uni, à l'exception de l'Irlande du Nord jusqu'en 2019) ;
- un régime d'autorisation dans des pays de l'Europe du Sud et du Centre avec un accès restreint /entravé de fait (Allemagne Autriche, Chypre depuis 2018, Espagne, Grèce, Italie, Portugal, République de l'Irlande depuis 2019) ;
- un régime légal d'autorisation, mais avec un accès entravé par des procédures restrictives (Bulgarie, Croatie, Estonie, Hongrie, Lettonie, Lituanie, République tchèque, Roumanie, Slovaquie, Slovénie) ;
- un régime d'interdiction de l'avortement, avec des conditions très restrictives d'accès (Malte, Pologne).

Chacun des cinq régimes est analysé séparément, avec la prise en compte des contextes historiques et des acteurs qui ont joué un rôle important dans l'obtention de l'accès à l'avortement ou dans l'opposition à l'avortement. *L'Annexe 1* (pp. 155-163) offre un tableau synthétique de

cette classification, indispensable à toute analyse comparative sur le droit d'avortement et les politiques reproductives au niveau européen.

Le deuxième chapitre (« Santé reproductive et sexuelle et droits reproductifs et sexuels dans le champ des droits humains ») propose une réflexion sur la construction sociale des notions de santé reproductive et sexuelle et de droits reproductifs et sexuels ; l'auteure approche les deux notions sous l'angle de la reproduction, question développée au niveau international dans les années 1980 – 1990. Le chapitre identifie l'émergence de ces concepts dans les débats internationaux et leur transposition dans le langage des droits de l'homme, tout comme leur institutionnalisation au niveau des organisations internationales, dont notamment l'Organisation Mondiale de la Santé. Le rôle des groupes et associations féministes, notamment des réseaux transnationaux féministes, est aussi analysé. Ce chapitre offre une analyse très fine des définitions et redéfinitions de tous ces concepts à travers les conférences des Nations Unies, en insistant sur les droits humains qui y sont associés : droit à la vie, droit à l'égalité et d'être libre de toute discrimination, droit à la santé, à la santé reproductive et au *planning* familial, pour ne donner que quelques exemples (p. 41). Les traités internationaux sont une autre catégorie de sources soumises à l'examen critique, et le tableau 2 (p. 45) dresse un panorama des principaux instruments juridiques, internationaux et européens, liés aux droits humains. *L'Annexe 2* (pp. 171-204) reprends tous les textes juridiques et politiques utilisés dans l'analyse ; outre le fait que cette Annexe constitue un support empirique très solide, elle peut servir à d'autres chercheur.e.s qui s'intéressent au sujet et qui pourraient appliquer à ces textes une analyse thématique adaptée à leurs problématiques de recherche.

Le troisième chapitre se penche sur l'analyse de « l'opposition du Saint-Siège à l'inclusion de la santé reproductive et sexuelle et des droits reproductifs et sexuels dans le champ des droits humains ». Le corpus analysé est composé de deux grandes catégories de textes : a) les encycliques, les lettres apostoliques les audiences liés aux droits les plus fondamentaux aux yeux du Grand Siège ; b) les réserves émises par le Saint-Siège lors des conférence de Caire (1994) et de Pékin (1995) ; les positions exprimées par les représentants du Saint-Siège de 1994 à 2018 sur les thématiques de la population et du développement, des

droits des femmes et des droits humains. (p. 57). L'analyse thématique de ce corpus met en évidence les thèmes qui sont instrumentalisés par le Saint-Siège pour rejeter les nouveaux droits de l'homme et notamment l'avortement : l'avortement est un crime ; la complémentarité naturelle et sociale des sexes ; la transcendance de la loi naturelle (p. 58). Dans l'analyse de la complémentarité des sexes Bérengère Marques Pereira refait une sociogenèse rapide des différentes conceptions philosophiques et théologiques ; une référence à la pensée médicale serait également éclairante, à mon avis. Est évoquée également la position anti-genre du Vatican et l'instrumentalisation d'un « nouveau féminisme » pour réimposer l'essentialisation de la différence des deux sexes. Enfin, l'interprétation des positions du Saint-Siège au regard des définitions onusiennes de la santé reproductive sexuelles et de droits reproductifs et sexuels montre que celles-ci « restent inchangés au regard de son discours doctrinal et religieux, même s'il adopte les vocabulaires séculier et juridique de ces instances » (p. 73). Le mérite de Bérengère Marques Pereira est de déceler, derrière cette ambiguïté discursive et de positon du Saint-Siège, les enjeux proprement politiques : imposer sa vision de la loi naturelle comme seule légitime et consolider les alliances conservatrices au niveau étatique. *L'Annexe 3* reproduit tous les textes utilisés, offrant, de nouveau, une base empirique pour des analyses prochaines.

Le chapitre quatre propose une analyse des arguments avancés par les partisans et les opposants à l'avortement, notamment sous l'angle des droits humains. L'auteure choisit de travailler sur les positions de deux réseaux transnationaux : *European Federation One of Us* et *The High Ground Alliance for Choice and Dignity in Europe*. Les *Annexes 3* et *4* (pp. 205-233) inventorient toutes les associations réunies dans ces deux réseaux, constituant un instrument empirique très utile pour les recherches sur les mouvements anti-genre, par exemple. Les principaux thèmes/arguments des opposants à l'avortement sont : la protection du fœtus ; la protection de la dignité de la femme ; la protection de la liberté religieuse et de conscience. De l'autre côté, les partisans de l'avortement centrent leurs arguments autours des thèmes suivants : droit à la santé et intégrité physique des femmes ; droits des femmes

à l'auto-détermination, à l'autonomie et à l'égalité active avec les hommes ; la neutralité du rôle de l'État.

Enfin, le dernier chapitre se penche sur le droit à l'avortement en Belgique de 1970 à 2020. Cette analyse a tout d'abord le mérite d'offrir une synthèse très utile sur le cadre juridique et l'activisme en faveur ou contre l'avortement, avec notamment une analyse minutieuse des mobilisations et des enjeux politiques autour de la loi de 2018. Mais ce chapitre constitue aussi un exemple réussi d'une étude de cas national, qui pourrait inspirer des démarches similaires.

Les Conclusions soulignent les perspectives théoriques et empiriques ouvertes par cet ouvrage. Il faut retenir cette « double problématisation de la revendication du droit à l'avortement au sein de l'Union européenne » en termes de citoyenneté et en termes de droits humains (p. 141). Cette articulation, qui impose une approche interdisciplinaire (sociologie politique et pensée politique) représente la contribution théorique de Bérengère Marques-Pereira à l'analyse de l'avortement. Le droit à l'avortement est « une question de régime de citoyenneté » (p. 143), car une citoyenneté effective des femmes à l'égalité avec les hommes impose la prise en compte des droits reproductifs, afin d'assurer l'autodétermination des femmes. Cependant, vu que les régimes d'autorisation ou d'interdiction de l'avortement relèvent de la compétence juridique des États, l'argument d'une citoyenneté universelle se heurte aux limites du principe de subsidiarité. La référence aux droits humains peut être mobilisée pour transgresser les frontières nationales, mais il faut aussi prendre en compte les résistances importantes de la part des réseaux conservateurs.

Cette présentation ne saurait rendre toute la richesse théorique et empirique du livre de Bérengère Marques-Pereira. Son analyse démontre magistralement que l'avortement est un révélateur pour plusieurs processus et phénomènes politiques actuels : les régimes de citoyenneté dans les États démocratiques, les registres juridiques de l'Union Européenne ; les mouvements sociaux et les réseaux transnationaux autour des questions liées aux droits de l'homme, la reproduction, la famille (en un mot, les registres de l'égalité de genre) ; la tension entre les droits humains et la citoyenneté. L'excellente analyse des redéfinitions successives des catégories juridiques et

l'instrumentalisation du langage des droits humains apporte un éclaircissement nécessaire pour toute réflexion sur les débats et mouvements pour ou contre l'avortement. Les *Annexes* représentent un instrument empirique précieux pour des recherches futures. Je considère que ce volume est une référence obligatoire non seulement pour toutes les recherches sur l'avortement et les mouvements / campagnes anti-genre, mais en général pour le domaine des sciences politiques.

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BOOK REVIEW

Lyndsey STONEBRIDGE. 2020. *Writing and Righting: Literature in the Age of Human Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 176 pp. ISBN 9780198814054

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The rhetorically scintillating homophonic pair within the title certainly catches the reader's attention to one of the still very few extensive works that explore the role that literature has played in the history of human rights. Both *writing* and *righting* rely on creativity and comprehension to render human values understandable and visible. But in this collection of essays that continues the line of argumentation already developed in *The Judicial Imagination: Writing After Nuremberg* (Stonebridge 2011) and *Placeless People: Writing, Rights and Refugees* (Stonebridge 2018), Lyndsey Stonebridge goes beyond the assumption that literary education brings obvious humanizing benefits. More specifically, she argues that literary writing has been a co-author of the history of human rights writing. Therefore, writing should not be analyzed only through its instrumental function of recording the past. Furthermore, the development of literature should be understood in close connection to the development of human rights, as literature has been essential for the creation and maintenance of human rights, as well as for challenging different perspectives on human rights. For instance, each of the histories from which human rights developed more consistently – those

of the Second World War, of the decolonization period and of the Cold War –also has several histories of corresponding literary genres, such as the Holocaust testimony, the anti-colonial poetics, and the *samizdat* underground. All these literary genres address ideas about human dignity and equality. At the same time, the literary genres may closely follow the political project, as illustrated for example by the intertwined histories of the decolonization of human rights and of the decolonization of literary studies and the humanities.

Drawing upon Jacques Rancière's view that literary communities are ultimately communities of humans and, consequently, they will develop ideas and norms related to human relations (Rancière 2016), Stonebridge argues that literary communities also matter to human rights, as they identify a plethora of forms of being human, and transform human values into lived experience, transcending thus the nature of fiction. The art of writing reveals the complexity of humanity and creates a language of rights that exceeds the field of arts. To advance her point, Stonebridge explores the concept of literary empathy, which she considers to be a commodity. Skeptical of the role of sentiment, moral compassion or regret that reading entails, she argues that very good writers succeed in doing more than relying on empathy, namely they manage to create innovative forms through which inequity becomes visible for the reader. When the "banality of language" leads to a state of indifference and even blindness, literature can render visible the words of those who are usually excluded or marginalized.

Within this context, the volume's main argument is that writers are needed more than ever, not because they can generate empathy, but because they can name in a more precise manner those forms of injustice that otherwise would be difficult to identify as human rights violations. Then again, creative and innovative literary forms are also needed to counterpoise the soft literary humanitarianism and uncritical idealism that crept into the mainstream debates on human rights. She claims that the latter has thwarted the "righting" efforts because it has linked human rights with personal empathy and liberal individualism, contributing thus to the growth of inequality and injustice. If human rights today should call for action, moral sympathy per se cannot act as a factor of change. In an "age of impunity." human rights are under

attack from various directions, including the deficient use of the word itself, which no longer carries enough weight. Therefore, this is also a language crisis and literary writing has the effective means to address by facing the issue of the visibility of human rights infringements. More specifically, new literary genres can show what abuse is from the perspective of the abused.

The chapter "Words of fire" is particularly illuminating for this point, as it explores the close relationship between literary creativity and the politics of citizenship, especially from the victims' perspective, whose voice may be listened to, but it is rarely heard. Stonebridge uses the striking example of one devastating testimony of a survivor of the fire that engulfed the London residential building Grenfell Tower in June 2017. One month after the events, in a meeting with the local authorities that was largely covered in the media, a woman of Iranian origin tried to claim back her human dignity by quoting, in original, from Saadi (Sadi of Shiraz), a famous 13th century Persian poet. She asked not for pity or solace, but for human rights to be respected: "You who are mindless of others' pain / Do not deserve to be called human" (p. 65). And when contemporary poet Ben Okri also reacted to the tragedy and recited a poem on Channel Four News, his words stood for an explicit creative political act. Stonebridge thus demonstrates that poetic words are intense actions, they point out the failure of the ordinary language and help create a poetics of citizenship.

Prior to that, she goes through the history of human rights from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and John Locke up to the 20th century debates and admits that, to a certain extent, literary sensibility could compensate for the lack of solidarity. The whole tradition of natural rights went hand in hand with the history of the novel as a revolutionary genre, from *Robinson Crusoe* that inspired the drafting of Article 29 of the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* to Milan Kundera's "anti-politics" and J.M. Coetzee's understanding of the novel as a genre that could not fully develop within colonial settings (pp. 31-40). The 18th century legacy of moral imagination required new ways of imagining freedom and human dignity in the post-colonial "deformed and stunted" setting that Coetzee complained about. Difficult though it might have seemed, literary writing has indeed been able to create a political context and

thus assert the belief that moral progress is still possible in the aftermath of wars, atrocities, and crimes against humanity.

Next, in the chapter "Experimental human rights", Stonebridge explores Virginia Woolf's seminal essay *Three Guineas* (1938) and its direct indictment of progressive liberal internationalism alongside the bold critique of militarism, fascism and capitalism. Woolf's "ethics of care" reflects not only her daring originality and freedom of thought that challenge the patriarchal inequalities of power, but also reveals the connection between the development of human rights and literary modernism, with the latter emerging in parallel with an alternative use of language aimed to counterbalance the new experiments in political morality. From this perspective and written roughly around the same time, Simone Weil's essay *The Power of Words* (1937) also belongs to the same modernist type of protest against the failed humanism of the epoch. Woolf's argument about the pervasiveness of structural violence within patriarchy is further echoed in the chapter "The bewilderment of everyday choice" which addresses the nature of violence, especially in connection to the writings of Sigmund Freud and with references to the recent case of Shamima Begum, the UK citizen who, aged 15, left for Syria to join the extremist group Islamic State and later attempted to return but was denied her citizen rights by UK authorities. For Freud and many after him, violence is perceived as latent in any political system. Consequently, the bewilderment in front of the war outbreak is only a helpless acknowledgement of the irrefutable existence of violence. At the same time, if citizenship meant to forfeit the right to be violent, the desire to be violent will never perish. In this context, Stonebridge is concerned with recent cases of *de-citizenship* (i.e., withdrawal of citizenship), which illustrate how violence has been politically instrumentalized. De-citizenship and statelessness are thorny subjects that she has addressed throughout her previous teaching and literary criticism concerning refugees' condition. In this volume, as an example of a literary treatment of this theme, it is worth mentioning her discussion of Kamila Shamsie's novel *Home Fire* (2017), whose female protagonist – Aneeka – is a coruscating contemporary version of Antigone, who asks for her right to mourn her brother, a member of the Islamic State.

In the longest and last chapter of the volume ("Survival time / Human time"), Stonebridge analyzes Hannah Arendt's works, especially the idea of the "abstract nakedness of merely being human." She chooses Arendt as a convenient way to propose another frame for thinking about rights writing. Arendt's texts are placed in a dialogue with the Iranian and Kurdish political writer Behrouz Boochani, whose novel *No friend but the mountains* (2018) is one of the most significant literary achievements of refugee writing, a genre speaking directly about the condition of the victim. Boochani explicitly referred in interviews to his endeavor to create a new, "transformative" language capable of raising the readers' awareness of the realities of displacement and deportation. The outrageousness of genocides and the oppression of totalitarian states has been replaced by *refoulment*, the contemporary calculated organization of violence and brutality, the intentional degradation of human life in refugee camps and prisons. In Boochani's text, written initially in the form of WhatsApp messages sent from the offshore Australian Manus prison based in Papua New Guinea, the title's metaphor does not only connect the vivid childhood memory of the mountains of Kurdistan with the mountains on the Manus island but also stands for the mottled image of the human condition forever tinged by *kyriarchy*, i.e. a social system in which different forms of oppression coexist, overlap, and are essential for the system's survival. And it is this inescapable intersection that has become the contemporary dwelling of humanity, as Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke foresaw in a line quoted by Arendt in *The Human Condition*: "an uncertain abode in the darkness of human heart" (p. 103). Like Primo Levi, Behrouz Boochani struggled to keep human time alive against a dehumanizing backdrop. Moreover, Stonebridge argues that the placeless and timeless condition stemming from forced displacement should not be reduced to the genre of individual testimony or trauma about an experience "out of time." Instead, there is a narrative continuity in reconstructing the "human time" lived and written by the survivors of political statelessness. Therefore, the new poetics of political life outside the nation-state created by the refugee writers represents a critical addition to the canon of writing for defining humanity.

The volume's conclusions put a strong emphasis on the recognition of the narratives of the "sufferers of history." A telling example is Hannah Arendt's teaching method that included literature in the syllabus of political science classes to help students understand the perspective of the powerless, of those who are not in charge. Stonebridge claims that literature could play an essential part nowadays; consequently, very good writers have the mission to write the history of survival and suffering appropriately. In this context, she provides the example of Yousif M. Qasmiyeh, a poet born and raised in Baddawi, a multicultural refugee camp in Lebanon. In both a poetic and political attempt to "chase a history that is forever disappearing" (p. 118), Qasmiyeh is literally "writing the camp," as his poetry has become the archive in the making of the de-politicization of refugees' experience. In an age of impunity and turmoil, de-citizenship and blatant inequalities, critical-creative literary genres could put forward another way of writing human rights and righting what was wronged. Therefore, books of high literary merit are needed more than ever. But to fully understand their value, we also need inspiring and original works of literary criticism, as is the case with this volume, which offers a rewarding experience also for any reader interested in the history of human rights.

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