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In the midst of the crisis of civilization, there is a pandemic: unveiling vulnerabilities and emancipatory potentials

No meio da crise civilizatória tem uma pandemia: desvelando vulnerabilidades e potencialidades emancipatórias

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ABSTRACT

This debate, an essay, reflects some challenges for society in the face of the current pandemic of COVID-19, in particular for health, surveillance and promotion. We assume that the current crisis is part of a broader civilizational crisis with multiple dimensions - social, economic, democratic, environmental and health- and that public health will need to reinvent itself in an emancipatory perspective. The article is organized in four topics. In the first, we present our main conceptual keys; in the second, we defend our central argument: the current pandemic intensifies previous injustices and vulnerabilities that mark capitalist and colonial modernity, which are strongly excluding and racist. In the third, we reflect on the crossroads, challenges and emancipatory possibilities in the face of the gaps opened by the proximity of death and the dilution of borders between normality and urgencies, including wealthier groups and countries. We finish the text with some reflections inspired by wise people and artists from Minas Gerais, a Brazilian State, such as the indigenous Ailton Krenak, the writer Guimarães Rosa and singers of *Clube da Esquina*.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19; Pandemic; Surveillance; Emancipation; Crisis of Civilization

RESUMO

Esse debate, em forma de ensaio, reflete alguns desafios para a sociedade diante da atual pandemia da COVID-19, em particular para a saúde, a vigilância e a promoção. Assumimos que a crise atual faz parte de uma crise civilizatória mais ampla com múltiplas dimensões – social, econômica, democrática, ambiental e sanitária –, e que a saúde pública/coletiva precisará se reinventar numa perspectiva emancipatória. O artigo está organizado em quatro partes. Na primeira apresentamos nossa chave de leitura conceitual, na segunda defendemos nosso argumento central: a pandemia intensifica injustiças e vulnerabilidades anteriores que marcam a modernidade capitalista e colonial, excludente e racista. Na terceira, refletimos sobre as encruzilhadas, desafios e possibilidades emancipatórias diante das fendas abertas pela proximidade da morte e a diluição de fronteiras entre a normalidade e as urgências, inclusive para grupos e países mais ricos. Encerramos o texto com reflexões inspiradas em sábios e artistas de Minas Gerais, como o indígena Ailton Krenak, Guimarães Rosa e o Clube da Esquina.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: COVID-19; Pandemia; Vigilância; Emancipação; Crise Civilizatória

INTRODUCTION

The current crisis as a crisis of our civilization

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, two interconnected questions of particular importance stand out: what will we be and do when we return to the post-pandemic "normal" state—whatever that means—and will we ever return to "normality"? To what extent is the current crisis an opportunity for change toward fairer, healthier and more sustainable societies or, on the contrary, will new dystopias take place and affect the lives of the most vulnerable groups and ultimately of the planet itself? The answers to these questions are certainly not trivial, but they can help us think about possibilities for renewing the academia, particularly in the areas of collective health, health surveillance, and health promotion.

In this text, as an essay, I will offer some reflections that associate the current crisis with a set of broader crises that predate COVID-19, but that have been worsened and made more visible by the current pandemic. The grounds for this essay are the conceptual advances marked by the recent creation of the Ecologies, Epidemiology and Emancipatory Health Promotion Nucleus of the National School of Public Health of the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Neepes/Ensp/Fiocruz);[1] the conference held in November 2019 at the 8th Brazilian Symposium on Health Surveillance (Simbravisa) in Belo Horizonte, called Perspectives of New Paths for Health Regulation;[2] and an interview for the Center for Strategic Studies at Fiocruz on the social and environmental challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.[3]

The reading key we propose requires interdisciplinary knowledge, collaborative methodologies, and intercultural dialogues that support social struggles and emancipatory processes for health, dignity, and territorial rights of the populations, both in the countryside and in the cities. We are based on three interdisciplinary fields of knowledge, all of which are related to the pursuit of social justice with implications for the enforcement of inclusive public policies and democratic practices with social movements. The first is collective health, the academic arm of the Brazilian health movement in the struggle for health justice and the public health system (SUS). The second is political ecology, which expands political economy with a focus on the ecological crisis and the contributions of ecological economics, critical geography, sociology, and environmental anthropology. Political ecology articulates several movements and organizations that fight for environmental justice through mobilization around environmental and territorial conflicts.[4]

The third refers to post-colonial references, especially the epistemologies of the South developed by sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos,[5] whose work has as one of its central marks the pursuit of cognitive justice. We will pay more attention to its meaning here for two reasons: its concepts and authors are widely unknown in the field of collective health and, at the same time, his work encourages reflection on the crisis of civilization of western Eurocentric modernity and the need for dramatic changes in the epistemological bases of modern science.

The post-colonial references and the epistemologies of the South address the reinvention of social emancipation based on the critique of Eurocentric modernity and its three axes of domination—capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy—which mainly affect the peoples of the Global South. This should not be understood from a geographic perspective, but as a metaphor for the peoples and regions oppressed by colonial domination. This domination continued even after the independence of the colonies through practices like racism, which make certain peoples and social groups invisible and excluded. The idea of a Global North, rather than a representation of the center of political and economic power around which global capitalism orbits,[6] is expressed in the claim of an ontological superiority in the construction of Eurocentric modernity, predominantly white, male, and logocentric.

The epistemological focus highlights the central dimension of knowledge that is inseparable from power. The strategic importance of modern science is recognized for its ability to systematize knowledge, predict and control phenomena. However, it can also enable domination, not only because it serves the interests of hegemonic economic and political power, but because of its claim to superiority that denies or overlooks other types of knowledges and possibilities of relationship with nature found in the worldviews, cultures, peoples, and communities of the Global South. It is this purported superiority of Eurocentric and colonial modernity that lies behind racism, sexism, and radical exclusions that, in turn, unleash violence against indigenous and black people, peasants, women, and the LGBTQI+ community.

This purported ontological superiority forms the subtle grounds for the abyssal thought proposed by Santos[5] and the radical exclusions of those who live "beyond" these abyssal lines, called by Frantz Fanon the non-being zones of invisible subjects whose lives do not matter to the dominant power. More than an economic and ideological order, radical exclusions have an epistemological and ontological substrate that reduces sensitivity to the suffering caused by political and economic systems. For modern and abyssal thinking, science, economics, and technologies are inevitable ingredients of "progress", but they should not warrant any epistemicide, that is, the extermination of knowledge systems considered non-scientific and coming from peoples and communities that, despite much historical violence, continue to live and reinvent themselves in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

The logocentric characteristic of Western modernity is important to explain the current crisis beyond the fight against social inequalities that lead to material poverty. In this sense, the search for dignity performed by cognitive justice recognizes the spiritual poverty in the formation of modern consciousness as the basis of the ethical and existential drama of the crisis of our civilization. The term "logocentric" refers to the tendency of Western thinking to regard the *logos* (Greek term meaning word or reason) as superior and the only possible way to answer humanity's questions. Thus, the logical and analytical rationality realized in modern science, albeit dialectical and complex, eventually despises other philosophies

and languages, present both in traditional cosmologies, folklore, and countless artistic expressions that combine reason and affection, knowledge and ethics, immanence and transcendence. It is such inspiring philosophies and languages that have always provided the bases of practical wisdom in the daily lives of people, families, and communities.

The purported objectivity and neutrality of modern science, together with the modern State and Law, eventually created walls supported by specialists, their paradigms, and institutions. The academia is under a bell jar that makes it less human and hinders its exchanges with other types of knowledges and needs, including those of a non-material nature, such as affective and spiritual knowledges. The typically modern academic, institutional, legal, and economic spaces often reject systems of knowledges and practices that deal with the mysteries of life and human dignity, which provide practical and wise answers to fundamental questions at the individual, community, and collective levels.

Cognitive justice originally comes from Indian sociologist Visvanathan,[7] who studied the destructive consequences of Western hegemonic science in countries considered "undeveloped", whose worldviews, cultures, and knowledges are seen as barriers to progress. The absence of cognitive justice in modernity contributes to the crisis of civilization by creating a gap between reason, affection, and spirituality, the bases of human dignity. By excluding inspiration, faith, and spirituality from the dialogue between science and its institutions with people, modernity eventually encourages the expansion of religious fundamentalism like that of neo-Pentecostals and their prosperity theology. This has enabled electoral alliances and arrangements that are filled with contradictions, paradoxes, and cognitive dissonances between deniers and neoliberals in mainstream media, in the "market" and in several modern institutions. These strange alliances form the basis of recent governments that proclaim social fascism and different forms of violence, representing a major threat to what is usually considered one of the greatest achievements of modernity, the Democratic Rule of Law.

According to Santos & Meneses,[5] global social justice can only be achieved with global cognitive justice, meaning the search for active interactions between various knowledge systems currently overlooked by modern science and its institutions. In this sense, the pursuit of cognitive justice in conjunction with other forms of justice tries to improve conceptual and pragmatic bases to build emancipatory processes and enable the transition toward post-capitalist, post-colonial, and post-patriarchal societies. Without cognitive justice, other struggles for justice will continue to reproduce radical exclusion and disputes through wars, oppression, and destruction of nature. This reasoning enables us to go further with Boaventura's maxim: world peace between peoples can only be achieved with global cognitive justice.

Within the epistemologies of the South, the challenge of cognitive justice can be met by the ecology of knowledges, and intercultural dialogue and translation, inspired by Boaventura, it also requires methodologies that we may call sensitive and co-labor-active,[8] which build knowledges not about, but together with social movements and invisible communities. Co-labor-active methodologies take ethical and political responsibility for the results of the investigation with respect to the systematically excluded subjects, their needs, knowledge systems, values, and practices.

The universe (or pluriverse) of knowledges of countless peoples is recognized by cognitive justice as important in the relationship with nature, community life, and the mysteries on the borders between beings, society and nature, life and death, earth and sky or cosmos. It is this knowledge that makes up the pragmatic yet enchanted wisdom that gives meaning to different peoples and communities that are often called traditional. The challenge for science and academia in this crisis of civilization is to open up for active dialogue with such knowledge systems in search of wisdom, without however ignoring quality criteria and technological progress. But science without wisdom has radically expanded the destructive potential of wars, human exploitation, and environmental degradation. Therefore, cognitive justice is not only a matter of consciousness. Today, it is a matter of survival in extreme and complex settings, including the dangerous dispute between a decadent empire (USA) and a rising one (China) for political and economic hegemony.

Dealing with complex problems involving uncertainties and high stakes has always been a challenge for science, and the COVID-19 pandemic has radicalized complexity on a global scale in surprising ways. According to scholars of the so-called post-normal science in a recently published article, "to face the pandemic, science has never seemed more necessary and useful and, at the same time, more limited and powerless. The existing contract between science and society is collapsing. A new agreement is urgently needed for us to navigate in the near future".[9]

To meet the challenge of knowledge and incorporate cognitive justice in the emancipatory perspective that we propose, our methodological approach requires the interaction between academic language and other languages of life, whether they are popular, artistic, performance-based, audio-visual or poetic-musical. In other words, it requires blurring the rigid borders that separate knowledge and wisdom, science and consciousness, feeling and thinking, reason and heart (or *coracionar*).[10] Along with decolonizing, these views emerge as philosophical, political, educational, and epistemological horizons for emancipation and the transition toward other possibilities of being, knowing, and doing.

From our perspective, major current problems and emancipatory possibilities of change involve articulating various dimensions of justice. In this process, health, ecology, economics, democracy, State, and science can help us resist dystopias and make our transition toward post-capitalist and post-colonial societies. Systemic, structuralist, and totalizing intellectual analyses are important, but they often disregard,

overshadow, and overlook knowledges and experiences that point to emerging humanizing micropolitics in community spaces. The balance between both approaches (macroanalytic and existential-everyday) is very important so that we do not fall into paralyzing states, either because we keep working with the same beliefs, customs, and paradigms that shape our perception of reality with pre-designed solutions or because we stop interacting with other existing types of knowledges and practices that allow self and inter-knowledge in an increasingly connected society.

DISCUSSION

Vulnerabilities and the pandemic: unveiling and worsening pre-existing injustices

Now let us return to the topic of the COVID-19 crisis. The previous item presented the key for reading the main thesis we propose: the pandemic crisis reinforces an overarching crisis of the Western, capitalist, and colonial society. Modernity, seen as the ultimate stage of progress and evolution, has made everyday practices of violence and oppression invisible, overshadowing other emancipatory possibilities of change. In this sense, the pandemic reinforces and intensifies pre-existing social, health, and environmental injustices, making ideologies and manipulations that hide certain interests even more evident. The time is critical for several public health problems in vulnerable groups, but it can also encourage reflection and drive change.

The pandemic reinforces the idea that we live in a time in which the boundaries between normality and abnormality are increasingly blurred. The short time of disaster and urgency is spreading rapidly on scales that intersect spaces and places across the planet. This warning was already present in the work of critical intellectuals, environmentalists, and authors like Naomi Klein, when analyzing disaster capitalism,[11] and Harvey, when discussing the dangerous contradictions of neoliberal capitalism.[12] The current landscape gives us the feeling that war and catastrophe movies are coming out of the screen like magic and becoming part of our lives. But this reality that looks like fiction can feel like a nightmare when we cannot simply end the session by pushing a button.

Throughout the 20th century, modernity not only witnessed but also generated major tragedies: the two World Wars, of which the Second ended with the episode that revealed the potential for the extinction of the human species by nuclear technology; the Great Depression, which spread across the world and now threatens to return in another way; dictatorships and huge social inequalities that did not seem to bother the rich and so-called democratic countries, which, in fact, systematically supported and benefited from anti-democratic regimes in other countries; and the current ecological and climate crisis.

These episodes have shown, despite the deniers and their different types of fundamentalism (like unlimited economic growth and prosperity theology as bases for redemption), that we do not need weapons of mass destruction: the "normal" mode of production and consumption of globalized capitalism seems to be enough to destroy the planet. Today, there are no signs that this is going to be tackled by the powerful forces that largely control production systems, financial flows, institutions like central banks and mainstream media, public debates, and electoral processes.

Despite the countless tragedies that occurred throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, several social struggles and emancipatory processes during this period enabled some hope and even some achievements, especially after the Second World War, with varying cycles of time and intensity. In the Global North we had the isolated experience of Social Welfare in Western Europe to compete with the socialist experience of Eastern Europe and China, as well as various cultural and social movements that have supported the search for freedom, peace, gender equality, and harmony with nature. In the Global South, we had several victorious anticolonial struggles, revolutionary and democratic experiences in various countries and regions of Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

More recently we could witness the processes of redemocratization after the end of military dictatorships in Latin America in the late 20th century, which had its democratic peak in Brazil at the turn of the 21st century. In all these periods, achievements coexisted with countless contradictions and were systematically interrupted, corroborating the hypothesis that we are experiencing a crisis of capitalist modernity that limits emancipatory processes. In recent years, we saw the parliamentary-legal-media coup in Brazil that removed President Dilma Rousseff from office without legal justification and pushed the country into a time of backwardness and destruction, especially after the election of a far-right government.

The idea that we are experiencing some kind of continuous disaster, exacerbated by the current pandemic, had already been addressed by social scientists like Ülrich Beck and his risk society.[13] It is also at the origin and diffusion of the important concept of social vulnerability in studies on disasters in the 1990s, which revealed that the most vulnerable groups experience "daily disasters".[14] These isolated everyday tragedies were just waiting for a specific moment of latency to break out in the form of a disaster, showing society's vulnerabilities in a dramatic manner. Although not always perceived by disaster experts, the vulnerability theory indicated that the boundaries between "natural" and "technological" disasters are artificial, since they are all irreparably social in their origins and consequences. This theory was instrumental in explaining why similar events like earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, epidemics, or even explosions and spills in chemical plants and nuclear reactors can have radically different consequences. In some cases, they can kill a few in richer and more resilient countries, or hundreds of thousands in the poorest and most vulnerable countries of Latin America, Asia, and Africa.[15] The theory of social vulnerability in the contemporary world is fundamental for us to understand that disasters express social, health, and environmental inequalities and injustice.

Just remember the disasters that have become more and more frequent in recent years and that, as soon as they make the headlines, are overlaid and outshined by others. There are countless recent examples:

1. Disasters related to climate change and events like floods, droughts, and hurricanes like Katrina, which in 2005 killed almost 2,000 people in the southern United States, mostly black and poor. In Brazil, the floods that occurred in Nova Friburgo/RJ in 2011 officially caused 900 deaths, 100 missing persons and about 30,000 people displaced and homeless. As is common in vulnerable contexts, estimates point to a far greater number of deaths and missing persons.

2. Technology disasters include nuclear and oil-related episodes, whose most recent and yet unexplained example in Brazil was the spill on the Northeast coast that affected fishermen all over the region. There are also disasters typical of the neo-extractive model based on agribusiness and mining. Clouds of pesticides that fall over schools and communities close to soy plantations have become a frequent tragedy in recent years. We have also had the disasters of neo-extractive mega mining operations involving powerful corporations like Brazilian Vale and Anglo-Australian BHP Billiton. Mariana's recent disaster in 2015 had 19 deaths and about 1.2 million affected along the Doce River basin. A similar disaster occurred in Brumadinho, in 2019, showing that we are not learning from our mistakes. On the contrary, governments and institutions continue to support companies like Vale without enforcing effective restrictions. The rupture of Vale's tailings dam in Brumadinho was the biggest work accident in Brazilian history, with a death toll of 259 people and 11 still missing, not to mention the indigenous peoples and farmers affected in a similar way to Mariana.

3. Finally, chemical and atmospheric pollution, as well as the lack of sanitation in city outskirts and slums, also plague our metropolises and the people who live in the *sacrificial zones* described by some scholars of environmental justice.[16] In fact, epidemics known in Brazil as dengue, zika, and chikungunya also mix social, health, and environmental injustices, since mosquitoes proliferate mainly in poor areas without sanitation and precarious housing. The alternatives for controlling the problem by health departments end up focusing on the elimination of mosquito larvae with the intensive use of insecticides.

Certainly, the current pandemic will reinforce several existing social and environmental vulnerabilities. The first analyses of COVID-19 deaths in the USA and in Brazil confirm the greater vulnerability of groups like black people, the poor, precarious workers in general, and healthcare professionals in particular, as well as inhabitants of areas with bad air pollution.

There is another issue linked to COVID-19 that involves the environmental injustice generated by the capitalist farming model, also known as agribusiness. There are strong indications of the systemic origins of the pandemic in this mode of production that destroys nature, eliminates biodiversity, and creates farming systems that, as Vandana Shiva says, do not produce food, but commodities, environmental degradation, and diseases. For evolutionary biologist Wallace, author of a book from 2016 called *Big Farms Make Big Flu*,[17] the industrial breeding of animals like hogs, chicken, and cattle is one of the social and environmental tragedies of our time. In addition to their feed coming from monoculture plantations, this production mode includes the mass torture of animals and the destruction of ecosystems. This industrial process also enables the spread of pathogenic microorganisms in increasingly urban and dense environments. However, agribusiness and food empires remain under the protection of the media, which does not discuss or confront the association between them.

Several vulnerability processes already existed and have gained momentum in recent years. The pandemic seems to be making these processes more intense, comprehensive, and explicit, with statistics that skyrocket in countries and territories with strong social inequalities and neoliberal governments that prioritize economic freedom, in an endless overlapping of crises and disasters. On the other hand, uncovering vulnerabilities can increase the visibility of injustices, racism, and violence. In Brazil, although the first cases of COVID-19 appeared in people from the upper classes returning from trips abroad, the upward curve of cases now affects mainly the socially and environmentally vulnerable regions and territories, including residents of slums and outskirts without sanitation or adequate housing conditions and precarious workers in essential services like healthcare, mass transportation or even uberized riding services. Indigenous peoples are also vulnerable, especially those who live and circulate in cities, or even those whose territories are invaded by miners and loggers, encouraged by the official discourse of authorities that support them.

Crossroads, challenges, and emancipatory possibilities for society, collective health, and surveillance

Despite reinforcing pre-existing injustices, the pandemic seems to have enabled something new: the "included" social groups and even the elites were forced to take a closer look at the phantom of death, one of the greatest taboos of modernity. That's because regardless of the inequality between groups and regions that are more protected or more vulnerable, the barriers between "developed" and "underdeveloped" areas are not enough to prevent the rich from falling ill and dying. Even privileged elite groups, with all their political and economic power, can be the next victims of a virus that reproduces, adapts, and spreads at a frightening speed.

Concerns about the destructive power of the economic system and its technologies have been latent since the opening of the pandora box by modern science and its technologies, in particular with the experiments with chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons that took place in the 1st and 2nd World Wars, the latter ended with the bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. But, as is customary among humans, the fear of modern destruction

soon dissipated, especially after the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall. The emergence of global ecological crises and climate change had already announced the imminence of a global crisis, but now the pandemic has disruptively awakened us to search for new paradigms of human responsibility for the destiny of the planet. This perspective was announced 40 years ago by philosopher Hans Jonas and his Responsibility Principle,[18] heuristics of fear that materialized in the precautionary principle and became one of the environmentalist mantras that have been silent in the last decades of economic growth and neoliberalism.

As the foundations of market-oriented economic growth are shaken, the current crisis has created cracks in the headlines of mainstream media and given visibility to injustices that were previously invisible. The pandemic has confronted the neoliberal and universal belief in a type of progress based on unlimited economic growth, the sacrifices that much of the population has to endure to achieve it (with the end of the protective state and redistributive public policies), and the final reward of access to the paradise of rampant consumerism. It is no coincidence that this belief has mixed economic (neoliberalism), religious (speaking in the name of God and spreading punishment and reward), and political (social fascism, authoritarianism, racism, sexism, and supremacism) fundamentalisms.

The chaotic processes underway may open a door for reflection, initiatives, and policies that tackle inequalities and strengthen solidarity actions, which are taking place everywhere and could take us to another level of human consciousness. However, the word crisis, in its disturbing and violent sense, has a dangerous meaning that can also influence authoritarian practices in the future of health surveillance. Since we live in a permanent crisis, the economy, public management, and public health can be transformed into a state of permanent exception, as philosopher Giorgio Agambem has been warning us since the measures adopted during the war on terror. Now, the justification would be the war on the virus, with a dangerous fusion between the power of medicine and risk sciences and the military power of the State to control the behavior and movement of people, purportedly for the sake of health. Should this continue to increase, Agambem's warnings about states of exception will join those of Ivan Illich and his concerns about biomedical power. The current polarization between negationists and scientific evidence tends to cover underlying political and philosophical questions about the tensions and possible alliances between the State, the market, militarism, and science in shaping ongoing anti-democratic regimes, especially in the current context of disputes between two empires for the control of global economy.

The political and democratic crisis in countries like the USA and Brazil confirms something of which post-colonial references have been warning us for a long time and that the current pandemic has made even clearer: the violence against the radically excluded and the most vulnerable has always been there, even before the current upsurge. However, this violence remained invisible in apparently normal times of "peace" and functioning institutions, even because Brazil has made substantial progress in the reduction of social inequalities. But none of these dimensions of justice, whether social, health or environmental, can go very far without a cognitive justice that fights radical exclusions based on racism, violence against indigenous people, blacks, women, the LGBTQI+ community, the working class, and the poor.

Cognitive justice also includes and implies the rescue of historical justice. This means repairing the present injustices that started in the past, for example, against indigenous and black people enslaved in Brazil for centuries. Similarly, albeit apparently less intense or visible, the injustices against peasants and family farmers who were expelled from their land and are fighting for agrarian reform, or even the violence of the State during the military dictatorship against countless political activists. The 1988 Constitution made an important leap in recognizing the rights of indigenous and quilombola peoples, but it was an unfinished process whose progress was limited even during progressive governments. Without historical justice and its political, cognitive, and curative processes, intolerance in Brazil has grown with manipulations and fake news widely shared on social media. This should be an important lesson for Brazil: we must strengthen cognitive and historical justice in future times of redemocratization, as it happened in other countries of Latin America and Africa, despite their limitations and particularities.

The emergence in Brazil of a government that follows the neoliberal agenda and openly preaches social fascism has increased intolerance and violence against countless social groups, like indigenous people, quilombola, and peasants. Currently, countless setbacks are underway in the Federal Congress, like Bill (PL) n. 191,[19] filed on February 6, 2020, which regulates the exploitation of mineral resources and the use of water resources in indigenous lands; Provisional Measure (MP) n. 910, of December 10, 2019, recently replaced by Bill n. 2.633, filed on May 14, 2020,[20] which in practice regularizes land grabbing on federal public lands; and Normative Instruction (IN) n. 9, of April 16, 2020, that turns the National Indian Foundation (Funai)[21] into a certification body for land illegally taken from Indigenous areas. These are measures that, if effectively implemented, will greatly increase vulnerabilities and injustices in Brazil.

The ongoing tragedy has led us to a crossroads: in the face of the pandemic and the proximity of death, we can become more human and find other possibilities of living, coexisting, and reinventing ourselves as people and as a society, or we can maintain and reinforce the mechanisms that hide the origins of the crisis, our vulnerabilities and injustices.

With regard to public/collective health, we must be aware of how we are going to face the pandemic. We cannot turn a blind eye to the important role of health in building emancipatory, democratic, and distributive processes. Although very important, the focus on biomedical care for severe cases, the search for the "definitive" future vaccine, and the epidemiological and health surveillance centered on social distancing may conceal the reasons behind the crisis and silence other

important agendas. This happened recently in Brazil, in the control of arboviruses (dengue, zika, and chikungunya), when more democratic and popular governments invested heavily in control when they could have improved basic sanitation and the right to decent housing. Therefore, we have a strategic political and epistemological task in health: will health surveillance maintain, reproduce or even reinforce inequalities and injustices, or contribute to addressing them by promoting emancipatory processes?

Several clues have been given to build the emancipatory bases for new health surveillance and promotion practices. A key issue involves rethinking health regulation beyond state technobureaucracy and technoscience, as well as enhancing social participation beyond existing social control and the SUS ombudsman. This regulatory system has always been fragile to face the growing power of the market and corporations, and with the growth of social fascism its mission now seems very difficult to accomplish: resuming the role of the protective State that is being dismantled and fostering experiences that incorporate the principles of social participation, solidarity, dignity, and reciprocity.

In this sense, the health crisis also expresses a crisis of democracy in the face of the unlimited power of the market and large corporations that have been undermining the three pillars of modernity: Law, State, and Science. Alternatives need to explore regulation with bolder practices of social participation, not from consumers or beneficiaries, but from citizens. Some examples in recent years were under construction, like Joint Board Resolution (RDC) n. 49, of October 31, 2013,[22] on productive inclusion, which sought to benefit family farmers and other important sectors in the solidarity economy. Another discussion that did not make much progress in Brazil involves the creation of pesticide-free and GMO-free areas, which are essential to check the expansion of monoculture plantations into areas of environmental conservation, agrarian reform, as well as indigenous and quilombola lands.

The current challenge is to resist the growth of social fascism while thinking and supporting ongoing experiences, strengthening emancipatory potential for surveillance and promotion. For that, we must incorporate new paradigms in our law, State and regulatory framework, including possibilities of dialogue between scientific knowledge and traditional and folk knowledges. For example: how can we think of regulatory strategies with practices of herbalists, healers, prayers, indigenous shamans, traditional midwives, or quilombola healers? The current regulatory framework is critically unfair as it does not differentiate large corporations and food and pharmaceutical empires from small farmers, traditional peoples, and communities. With purportedly scientific arguments, the State and health surveillance bodies eventually threaten them with civil or criminal lawsuits.

Traditional medicine, officially called complementary integrative practices (PICs), represent vitalist and holistic knowledge systems that approach nature and ecosystems, spirituality, body-mind confluence, life cycles, including the recognition and dignity of dying. PICs are considered marginal and subordinated to biomedical knowledge. At most, they are accepted when there are market pressures and socially included groups that demand certain traditional therapies, like traditional Chinese medicine, Ayurvedic, herbal medicine, homeopathy, Reiki, and a few others. But several popular practices of prayers, healers, indigenous peoples, peasants, and peoples of African origin are systematically neglected. The behavior of science and biomedical health professional corporations tends to be exclusive, racist, and generate epistemicides against traditional knowledges of care and nutrition.

A paradigmatic renewal for health surveillance toward cognitive justice has been experienced by social movements and institutions that defend traditional communities, like the Brazilian Public Prosecution Office, through the enforcement of customary law, defined as that which arises from the customs of a certain society, not going through formal law-making processes. This right has been invoked, for example, to support the continuity of practices like the living pharmacies of prayers and healers in central Brazil. This approach is especially relevant in health, since customs and cultural practices of different peoples are at the origin of holistic therapies that do not differentiate body-mind-spirit and that can be found in countless worldviews and cultures and their interaction with nature. Recognizing them is one of the challenges of cognitive justice. Furthermore, it implies other conceptions and relationships between State, Law, Science, and their institutions with peoples, communities, and their territories, especially the so-called traditional ones. It also implies thinking about regulation beyond the capitalist logic of the market, since they involve other conceptions of economy and market based on dignity, solidarity, reciprocity, sharing, circularity, and sustainability in care, food, and the continuity of human and non-human life. These are the concepts that support important emancipatory processes today.

CONCLUSIONS

Inconclusive words inspired by Ailton Krenak, Guimarães Rosa, and Clube da Esquina

Cognitive justice requires dialogue and intercultural translation. For that, we need to be aware of the power of words, active listening, and active silence to reverse the superficial trends of a society marked by compulsive consumerism without respite to reflect. To take care of the most vulnerable and fight injustices, we must understand the present to change the future. This is one of the lessons that women, ecologists, traditional peoples and communities, solidarity networks in the streets, city outskirts, and slums teach us every day.

The pandemic tragedy may be an opportunity to move forward with cognitive justice by opening loopholes, lifting veils, and freeing our creative imagination to create solidary bonds and reinvent other possible worlds. For that, we also need to listen

to those who hold the knowledge systems of the Global South. For example: for Ailton Krenak, an indigenous intellectual who recently published books on "Ideas to postpone the end of the world" and "Tomorrow is not for sale", the current crisis is an opportunity for humanity to awaken and steer its course. He warns us: "If we go back to normal, it is because the death of thousands of people was not worth anything".[22] We hope we can take advantage of this moment of crisis and "pause" forced by the pandemic to learn who we are, how we relate to each other and to nature, and what is not going well in the way we think, feel, and act in the world. Basically, Krenak's cry is for cognitive justice in the return to the wisdom that several indigenous peoples still hold.

Guimarães Rosa's world is also a source of inspiration for the present moment. Rosa was honored at the 8th Simbravisa in Belo Horizonte, and his book *The Devil to Pay in the Backlands* brings the experience, voice, and language of the radically excluded: gunmen, rascals, prostitutes, children, madmen, the poor, oxen, animals, beasts... In Rosa's work, vulnerability, rather than a representation of weakness and defeat, is a poetic metaphor and a clue for everyone: the human being is an unfinished and ever changing project. By expressing themselves and living without Manichaean dualisms, people can overcome limitations and vulnerabilities, face death, live in love and become wise with the challenges, knowledges, and experiences built up along the away. In Rosa's characters, life, reason, love, passion for and of beings, incommensurable nostalgia, the search for transcendence, meaning, and dignity in limit situations are permanently at play. Characters like Riobaldo and Diadorim, with their tragedies and challenges, humanize us, as they teach us to live with courage and without fear; without the God of guilt that punishes and treats nature as wild, diabolical, and negative chaos; to face the Devil who launches evil suggestions, lies, and betrays. Guimarães Rosa's pursuit, like that of other great artists, philosophers, and sages, seems to be to finally find peace, to reorganize the inner and outer worlds, to resist and re-exist. Rosa reminds us of wise educator Paulo Freire with his concept of "*inéditos viáveis*" or untested feasibilities to find a light at the end of the tunnel.

With the challenges of the current crisis of civilization, will we have the courage, inner strength, clarity, and political organization to, in the face of so many powerful interests, lift the veils and awaken hearts and minds to change or, on the contrary, will we keep veils in place to manipulate and prevent change?

This bifurcation and the paths that will come will certainly depend on a lot of work, energy, effort, care, wisdom, and art. If it is true, as many say, that things will never be the same after this pandemic, may we sing and dance together with Milton Nascimento, who composed the song *Nada Será Como Antes* (Nothing Will Be as It Was) with Ronaldo Bastos, which is on his Clube da Esquina album: "*Eu já estou com o pé nessa estrada/ Qualquer dia a gente se vê/ Sei que nada será como antes, amanhã...*" ("I already have my foot on this road / Any day we will see each other / I know that nothing will be as before, tomorrow ... ").

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Authors' Contributions

Porto MF – Conception, planning (study design), data acquisition, analysis and interpretation and writing of the paper. The author approved the final draft of the paper.

Conflict of Interest

Authors have no potential conflict of interest to declare, related to this study's political or financial peers and institutions.