

Coronavirus Pandemic: Eight theses on Covid-19

Monday 16 March 2020, by [TANURO Daniel](#) (Date first published: 9 March 2020).

“The Covid-19 is yet another warning: capitalism, which leads humanity to barbarism, must be ended.” For a broad range of articles on the topic consult ESSF (Europe Solidaires Sans Frontières) under the keyword [coronavirus](#).

International Viewpoint

1. The fact that the economic slowdown preceded Covid-19 should not lead to denying either the economic impact of the epidemic (interruption of some production processes, disruption of supply chains, sectoral impacts on air transport and tourism, etc.) or the seriousness of the threat it poses as such. A disruptive phenomenon with exponential dynamics, this epidemic is a specific amplifier of the economic and social crisis. It also reveals the fragility of the capitalist system and the dangers it poses for the working classes, in particular through its congenital fossil-based productivism, the fundamental cause of the ecological and climate crisis.

2. Controlling the epidemic would have required prompt action and strict measures to monitor the health of travellers from contaminated areas, identify and isolate infected people, limit transport and strengthen health services. Stuck in the neoliberal policies with which they tried to counter the economic slowdown, the capitalist governments were slow to take these measures, then took them insufficiently, which forced them to then take more severe measures, while always chasing behind the spread of the virus. Zero stocks, cuts in the fields of health and research and flexiprecarity of work must be blamed in the crisis.

3. Scientists sounded the alarm during the SARS coronavirus epidemic in 2002. Basic research programmes were proposed in Europe and the USA which would have made it possible to better understand and prevent this category of virus reappearing in new forms. Governments refused to fund them. An absurd policy, but tailor-made for leaving research in these fields to the pharmaceutical industry, whose goal is not public health but profits from the sale of drugs on the market for solvent patients.

4. Like any disruptive phenomenon, the epidemic first elicits reactions of denial. These can then give way to panic and panic can be exploited by demagogues to play the game of authoritarian strategies of technological control of populations and limitation of democratic rights, as in China and Russia. There is also a serious risk that the Covid-19 will be used by the fascists as a pretext to justify and intensify the racist policies of refoulement of migrants.

5. The left cannot be content with reducing the exogenous factor of the health crisis to the endogenous capitalist economic crisis. It must take into account the health crisis as such and

develop proposals to combat it in a social, democratic, anti-racist, feminist and internationalist way. Against individualism, it must also adopt for itself and advocate in social movements responsible collective behaviours from the point of view of non-propagation of the virus. Unlike the measures to limit car use taken by certain governments in response to the “oil shock”, for example, no one can avoid their responsibility for health: their own, that of their loved ones and public health, without forgetting responsibility for the global South. Either the social movements take this issue in their own hands, democratically and from the social realities of the dominated, or else the dominant ones will impose their liberticide solutions.

6. The major danger of the epidemic is the possible saturation of hospital systems. This would inevitably lead to a worsening of the price paid by the poorest and the weakest, in particular among the elderly, as well as a further shift of care tasks into the domestic sphere, that is to say generally onto women. The saturation threshold obviously depends on the countries, the health systems and the austerity policies that have been imposed there. It will be reached all the more quickly insofar as the governments are running behind the epidemic instead of preventing it. The fight against the epidemic therefore requires a break with austerity policies, a redistribution of wealth, refinancing and de-liberalization of the health sector, the suppression of patents in the medical field, North-South justice and a clear priority given to social needs. This implies in particular: banning dismissals of infected workers, the maintenance of wages in the event of partial unemployment, stopping checks, “activation” and sanctions against social security recipients, etc. It is mainly on these questions that we must intervene to counter irrational responses and their potential for racist-authoritarian slippage.

7. There are many commonalities between the Covid-19 crisis and the climate crisis. In both cases, the capitalist system’s logic of accumulation for profit makes it incapable of preventing a danger of which it is nevertheless aware. In both cases, governments oscillate between denial and the inadequacy of policies designed primarily according to the needs of capital, not the needs of populations. In both cases, the poorest, racialized and weakest, especially in the countries of the global south, are in sight, while the rich say that they will always get by. In both cases, governments are using the threat to advance toward a strong state while far-right forces are trying to take advantage of fear to put forward foul Malthusian and racist responses. In both cases, finally, the social law of capitalist value comes into direct contradiction with laws of nature with exponential dynamics (the multiplication of viral infections in one case, warming and its positive feedbacks in the other).

8. The climatic danger is however infinitely more global and more serious than that of the virus. The same will obviously apply to its consequences if the exploited and the oppressed do not unite to bring down this absurd and criminal mode of production. The Covid-19 is yet another warning: capitalism, which leads humanity to barbarism, must be ended.

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P.S.

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