

A Post-Pandemics Global Uncertainty

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Abstract

Humanity is now concerned with the COVID-19 pandemics and its direct and indirect natural, social and economic consequences. This pandemic isn't a crisis like an economic or political one. It's a truly critical situation (hereafter the CS) with massive necessary losses in all spheres of social, economic and natural life. It couldn't be labelled as new post-modernity of the sociobio-technical system (hereafter the global SBT-system) in which the biosphere is rapidly transformed. Therefore, These transformations could be labelled as the emergence of all-embracing and all-penetrating uncertain global SBT-system. With the small and temporary islands of a certainty and calm way of life. But we, the researchers should look further, namely what kind of world's order will be after the pandemics end. To my mind, the coming post-pandemics period will be burdened with growing uncertainty in all spheres of human life. The aim of the article is to analyze some key issues of this CS and its various consequences in the post-pandemic period. The methods of such study should be systemic and interdisciplinary one.

Keywords

Forecasting, Globalization, Humanity, Pandemics, Post-Pandemics Period, Interdisciplinary and Systemic Approach, the SBT-System, Time, Uncertainty

1. Posing the Question

Humanity is now concerned with the COVID-19 pandemics and its direct and postponed natural, social and economic consequences. This pandemic isn't a crisis like economic or political one. It's a true critical situation i.e. the global CS, with massive necessary losses in all spheres of social, economic and natural life. But we, the researchers should look further, namely what kind of world's order will be after the pandemics end. Z. Brzezinski has been absolutely right stating that a kind of the turmoil will come on the eve of the XXI century (Brzezinski, 1993),

and our world will be out of control. It once more reminds us that we, the sociologists and the futurists couldn't restrict our thinking within the "modernity—postmodernity" master frame only as it has been done by U. Beck and his colleagues (Beck et al., 1995).

In current sociological works the issue of an uncertainty of dynamics of modern world has periodically mentioned but not theoretically analyzed (Bauman, 2001, 2017; Beck, 1992, 1999; Castells, 1996, 2004; Dowty & Allen, 2010; Fisher-Kowalski, 1997; Fisher-Kowalski & Haberl, 2007). The article of Oross (2019) is the exception but it dealt with the social uncertainty in the EU before the above pandemics beginning. Some years before I've studied the processes of shaping of the SBT-systems and the CSs generated by them (Yanitsky, 2014, 2016). To my mind, the issue is not that current global processes are insufficiently reflexive (Beck et al., 1995) but is that the current pandemics has suddenly turned global world into chaotic situation. That is why I see necessary to analyze it from the theoretical-methodological viewpoint.

As some empirical data has already showed, especially related to global labor market, they predict the beginning of global turmoil already now. At the same time some companies, especially service ones are ready to change their profile immediately now as well. But what will be the main archetypes of mode of production, social reproduction and of human behavior in various parts of our world is the most disputable question. Thus, I'd like to discuss some questions related to our common or separate future in the post-pandemics i.e. in the post CS period. I'd stress that the following paragraphs are my considerations only because there is neither relevant mass surveys nor well-substantiated concepts of coming of the next transition period. I'm convinced that it will be true global transition period because the pandemics seriously violated global structural-functional organization and its time-rhythms.

I'm especially interested in what direction the triad "science—teaching—social practice" will be moved and transformed as a whole and in its parts, and how these parts will be interrelated.

2. State of Affairs at the End of the Current Pandemics

Firstly, the above pandemics have violated all sphered across the global community, from the global structures, transnationals and nation-states till local communities and individual mode of living. Some enterprises continue to work while the others have failed. In sum, it has been the shock much more serious than the WWII. That is why I agree with Brzezinski that the times on the eve of the XXI century will be the period of global turmoil. But I disagree with him that the "political ideas are likely to be increasingly central" (Brzezinski, 1993: p. X). As the current pandemics and its consequences clearly showed, a secrecy and insufficient attention to the development of the biological sciences and medicine coupled with an involvement of superpowers into a geopolitical competition has made human community unprepared to global threat named the COVID-19 pandemics.

Secondly, in the global society all sciences, be it natural, social or technical, have to be globally-oriented and organized as well. The human, economic and other losses will be much less if we have a united (global) scientific community including the virology. Unfortunately, under current conditions all sciences have become a dependent part of the market economy. Not the political ideas but market competition has become a driving force of any research and developments. Ideally, the structure of scientific knowledge should have the same structure as the global SBT-system. In other words, the science as a social institution should have the same degree of the interdisciplinary interrelationships and complexities as the above global system.

Thirdly, it seems to me that the structure and functions of international organization will be substantially reformed. The matter is that the OON, WHO, the European Union and many other international organizations has made nearly nothing to prevent the pandemics in question and recently have no ideas concerning of the coming transition to post-pandemics period as well as the resources and practical measures to implement it. Their unpreparedness to critical situations may be well-illustrated by worlds of the UN secretary general Antonio Guterres. He said that there are four Riders of the coming Apocalypses: the highest geopolitical tension, climatic crisis, global mistrust in relation to existing political institutions, and a “dark side” of the digitalized world. And no one word about the coming pandemics and how to cope with it. Another example is indicative as well. In the end of the April 2020 the EU leaders have several times discussed when and how to cancel the period of self-isolation and to open the EU borders. It’s appears that they have no the concrete concepts concerning post-pandemics future.

The same picture one may see in the US, Russia and other business-based societies. What will be the structure of a hired labor in the near and more remote future? Which kinds of business are possible to revitalize and which ones will die? Or the captains of the Big Business are fully relied upon the global market self-regulation? It’s indicative that all abovementioned social institutions are relied upon the mechanisms of self-regulation of this market. And, then, what about the Brzezinski’s statement that the “political ideas are likely to be increasingly central?”

There is one more example. About two years ago two public committees of the UNESCO, namely the committees of natural and social sciences had decided to merge in one united committee of science. It has been a good signal not only to global scientific community but to other agents of human activity as well.

Fourthly, there are many signals that the “self-isolated people” having time to think over the situation at hands, and being tired of transformation their life into an isolated-and-online only, have decided to change the place of their work or to launch their own business or other life project. The economy and politics leaders forget that the social networks are offered to people many variants of how to survive in the post-pandemics times.

Fifthly, when the ongoing quarantine will be ended I foresee an intensive re-distribution of population between cities, regions and countries. But what will happen if there will be the second wave of the pandemics or another CS? It's one more factor that has to be taken into account. All said above signifies that all of the above mentioned actors are concerned of how to survive "here and now" and have no strategy of the way out from the pandemics and what will be in the post-pandemics times.

Sixthly, therefore it's quite naturally that the various scientists and scholars together with public activists and the grassroots organizations began to organize online discussions concerning the post-pandemics times. It's indicative as well that such discussions may be both much more fruitful theoretically and practically than top-down instructions. It does not mean that the result of such discussions will necessarily be converted into political or economic decisions. But the very fact of the existence of such discussions serves a fertile ground to interdisciplinary contacts, for the understanding of the metabolic processes within the global SBT-system and then back toward the decision-makers. This trend is much more important than the total "chipizatsiya" of world population.

Seventhly, in contrast to the pandemics times with necessary self-isolation measures, a post pandemics times will be a period of maximum free behavior in order to quick restoration of normal life. But to my mind, this "normal life" will be different from the pre-pandemics one. I foresee that the ordinary people will become much more attentive and even suspicious then they are now.

3. Pluses and Minuses of a Self-Isolation Regime

Till humanity develops the necessary measures against the pandemics and other CSs this regime will be the only one efficient preventive measure. But this regime has its own difficulties and minuses. *Firstly*, such regime means the serious losses of productive forces, supply of the inhabitants of some necessary resources and services. *Secondly*, many small and average businesses may finally extinguish. *Thirdly*, this regime hasn't been well substantiated legally, and this matter isn't an easy task as well. *Fourthly*, the regime of self-isolation requires new technologies for its organization, maintenance and control.

Fifthly, the efficiency of such regime is dependent on a time length of its duration. An online communication for a work, education and rest time is well but within a certain time-limits. If a society lives in such conditions for a long time the violations of such regime including protest actions will begin. And such human resistance against the regime may have a cascade effect.

Sixthly, the global community at large in all possible aspects, namely the restructuring of productive forces, trade and its logistics, medicine, education system, spare time, etc. turned absolutely unprepared to such radical transformations. In some respects the self-isolation regime has been rather like to a return to the pre-modern times.

Finally, if the regime of self-isolation has a long-term character there is risk of a decay of a certain society or/and the emergence of inner and outer tensions and

conflicts.

In sum, the self-isolation regime is a one-sided (administrative) approach to struggle against such multisided CSs. Therefore, the modern science as a social institution should make double qualitative turn. Namely, it's the time to enhance the work on the development of more complex i.e. systemic and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of any global and local CSs and the multiplicity of their direct consequences and feedbacks.

4. Science, Education and Public Concern Should Outstrip the CS Development

Until now the science and education follow the global SBT-system development. That is these two social institutions have been the subaltern ones in relation to the above processes, i.e. they subjected to the principle "follow the actor." But the COVID-19 and its destructive consequences in all spheres of a society activity clearly showed that such approach is insufficient. A close interdependence of the political, economic, social, climatic and biological processes as well as the metabolic transformations between them is clearly demonstrated that a mono-disciplinary method of global studies has now become not only insufficient but risky. The globalization should be investigated as an interdisciplinary phenomenon which is developing in the space-time parameters. Besides, if recently a certain biological challenge came to the forefront but tomorrow it may be replaced by the economy, social, geopolitical or climatic CSs.

A mighty destructive force of the COVID-19 pandemics has signified that the relationships between the scientific institution and ongoing changes in the "behavior" of the global SBT-system should be radically restructured under the guidance of interdisciplinary of the scientific knowledge. Under current conditions the scientific forecasting should outstrip the ongoing global processes. *At all forms and stages of their development the scientific forecasting should come to the forefront.*

This principle is related to the decision-making processes as well. Recently, the role of scientific expertise in these processes is necessary but insufficient. The sooner the better the science as the social institution will have a right to control over all stages of the decision-making processes. In any case the scientific knowledge (forecasting, modelling, games, experiment, etc.) should precede the decision-making and construction processes.

It doesn't mean that I reject the studies of already ongoing processes at all. They are necessary nowadays as the forecasting or modelling. But if humanity wants to survive, he should realize that the life according the principle of removing or mitigation of the side-effects of already happened events has not only ended but such mode of humanity existence is very uncertain and dangerous.

The changes in the education processes should follow the abovementioned principles. The model of a human development firstly to accumulate necessary knowledge and only then to begin to make prognoses has now become obsolescent.

But in the near future the knowledge about a coming future will come to the forefront. It's very indicative that the further the more modern youth begin to gain knowledge not from the Internet and the text-books but from his/her own life experience and mass communications.

As to the humanity concern in relation to its common future, such concern is already existed.

The matter here isn't in this concern as such but in an insufficient notification of people in relation both about the ongoing processes and a possible future of the planet and the threats to its population. Nowadays, there are a lot of well-informed people across the world but the institution of popularizing the knowledge about our common future isn't practically existed.

Unfortunately, our youth is usually supplied with a kind of a "white noise" like the clips and advertising and not with the knowledge about our possible common future. I fully realize that the outstripping of the forecasting in relation to the emergence of a particular CS is not the easy task. But if the scientific forecasting will not take the leading positions in relation to the all kinds of social practice the world will fall into an endless chain of the CSs.

5. The Timing of the CSs Is a Key Matter

The politicians, scientists and ordinary people have already well understood that the knowledge about the timing of the emergence and spread of a certain CS are extremely important. Nevertheless, there are still no workable models of such timing. One of the most possible explanations of this phenomenon is rooted in a variety of the times of the particular CS emergence, development and its impact on other spheres of global SBT-system. So it's once more confirmation that any CS has the systemic character.

Then, let me remind that the timing and tempo-rhythms of the particular CS are both related to the emergence of a particular CS and its mitigation. But simultaneously there is a reverse side of the same coin. I mean the wastes of industrial and people's activity which have to be deactivated and then buried at the inaccessible to ordinary people places. That is why humanity is looking for the means of direct transformation of solar energy into electricity. It's much more efficient but in the final analysis it's a closing circle as well because the solar batteries have to be utilized, and that process requires additional energy.

Unfortunately, the V.I. Vernadsky's idea of the autotrophy of humanity isn't still realized (Vernadsky, 1980). But the spectrum of its use will be restricted by the construction of such transformer batteries, on the one hand, and by the oscillating ultimate flow of solar energy coming to the earth surface, on the other hand. Besides, the very flow of solar energy isn't constant, etc.

6. What Will Be after the Pandemics Ends?

It seems to me that it will be the most uncertain period, and it will be the oscillation between the attempts to restore the previous social order and mode of liv-

ing, and the search of a more “sustainable” mode of living relied upon a leading role of a systemic approach and interdisciplinary methodology. In other words, it will be an overt conflict and competition between the well-known past and a desired future of humanity wellbeing. For the first glance, it appears that the global community will chose the well-known past mode of living with all its pluses and minuses. It’s quite natural to try to restore a well-known social order with some minor corrections.

But here I’m on the side of Antonio Guterres because a set of global problems mentioned him hasn’t disappeared. On the contrary, they are already existed in parallel with the pandemics, and after its end all of them will come to the forefront. Besides, they will draw more attention because they have continued to develop and expand as forest fires, the World Ocean contamination with plastics, the global issue of wastes, a growing lack of drinking water and many others. I’d to underlie the issue of the techno-science and replacement of working people by the robots, etc. In sum, the burden of unresolved problems will grow.

The problem of a digitalization of human community deserves special attention. On the one hand, the digitalization of various systems of online medical help and life-support has allowed to save the thousands of human lives. But on the other hand, the people do not want to turn into the servants in the world-embracing of robot-technics digital machine. Neither the science nor the practices have developed an optimal proportion between the above two.

The problem of an individual’s behavior in that period deserves special attention. I consider the pandemics as a kind of a social experiment. In principle, the individual is an adaptive social being. At the same time the type of adaptive behavior is depended on the individual’s attitude towards the particular CS. All people are tired from the regime of self-isolation and the sense of anxiety. To overcome these negative factors of his/her unusual living environment the individuals should create an ecosystem of the socially-significant relationships aimed at the making something necessary for the others. Only such personal ecosystem created by the individual himself alone or with close relatives and friends will allow them to adapt to the particular critical situation.

7. Conclusion

The self-isolation regime is the one-sided, i.e. administrative approach to struggle against such multisided CSs. In some respects, such regime presents the return to the preindustrial times. For example, in a moment the administrative margins took are capable to take over the global networks. Therefore recently, the modern science as a social institution should make double qualitative turn. Namely, it’s the time to enhance the work on the development of more complex i.e. systemic and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of any global and local CSs and the forecasting of multiplicity of their direct and postponed consequences and feedbacks.

The coming post-pandemics period will be burdened with growing uncertainty because some social institutions will be demolished while the new ones

will be only in the processes of construction and testing. But it couldn't be labelled as new post-modernity. Rather it should be named as an all-embracing and all-penetrating state of uncertainty with the small and temporary islands of a certainty and calm way of life. The times of specific historical periods with long-term definite features and quality of life came to the end. Besides, the problems of the pre-pandemics past as the climate changes, lack of some life-support resources, the wastes accumulation, wars and unresolved conflicts are still remained.

Finally, one should keep in mind that such global CSs may be repeated in various scales of time duration and spatial distribution. It's one more reason for the enhancing of the efforts in scientific pre-vision work and the development of nonlinear but very complex scenarios of the post-pandemics development of the world. In our uncertain world the potential of scientific foreseeing came to the forefront.

In any case, to overcome the negative factors of the pandemics, the individuals should create an ecosystem of the socially-significant relationships aimed at the making something necessary for themselves and others. Only such ecosystem created by the individuals or with close relatives and friends will allow them to adapt to the post-pandemics critical situation.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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