

## Surviving the pandemic

### Reflections on intimacy, care, inequalities, resistance and transnational solidarity

edited by Annalisa Oboe and Gaia Giuliani<sup>1</sup>

The aim of *Surviving the pandemic* is to address the urgent need to understand, from a variety of perspectives and critical angles, the social and cultural effects of what ‘we’ are going through locally and globally, because of an unprecedented pandemic that is changing the life of many.

In order to contribute to the current debate on Covid-19, *From the European South* elicited articles, creative pieces, and ongoing personal reflections that could offer interdisciplinary, multifaceted analyses and representations of the global crisis, asking how culture, the arts, society and politics are changing in this major shift, and how we are facing the fragility of the human. Issue 7 also begins to figure out what our lives will be like after the lockdowns in most parts of the world, and how we resist the inequalities that this pandemic is revealing and taking to their extreme. Can we imagine new paradigms for new beginnings?

The collected contributions reflect on the ‘we’ that is investigated. Coherently with a postcolonial approach, this special focus highlights the existence of many different ‘wes’, according to a politics of location and an attention to the uneven distribution of power across the globe, which acknowledge the working of disparities in the way the pandemic is experienced. If this pandemic has a global scope, its effects are not universally the same: if it is changing the life of those who were considered as untouched or untouchable – because of their geographical location and their racial, class and gender privileges – it is making its impact on common people all the more striking. As the collected articles show, the effects of the pandemic need to be investigated at the crossroads of race, gender, sexuality, class, age and health differences and divides. The lockdowns have had a very unequal impact on people according to their housing, work, and social conditions, and affected them personally and intimately very unevenly, within and across national borders. The pandemic and institutional responses to it increased the violent effects of gendered and racialised power relations and border regimes, leaving behind increasingly impoverished national and transnational social margins and people at-the-border. They gave way to border restrictions and ideas of the nation as an imagined community that-must-be-defended. In response to it, many forms of resistance and solidarity based on medical aid and care emerged locally and transnationally.

*Surviving the pandemic* opens with a visual art essay by Gaia Giuliani in collaboration with performer Paolo Gorgoni and photographer Fidelia Avanzato. In their “Pandemic: a six-handed study,” they venture on a journey into some of their ‘pandemic emotions’ through photography, and propose a political project for the time to come. In view of a future that will presumably re-experience global contagion, we need to promote care, self-care, responsibility and proximity as ethical and political principles structuring individual and collective life. In her “Feminist Intersectional Perspectives on Pandemic Narratives: Larissa Lai’s *The Tiger Flu*,” Chiara Xausa also reflects on the gendered nature of the current Coronavirus emergency, while imagining a new beginning that counteracts patriarchy, environmental change and capitalism’s consumptive force from the viewpoint of queer voices of colour from marginalized communities.

In “Israel/Palestine/Covid19: one more weapon in the siege?” Patrick Williams moves the focus to the specific historical and political scenario of Palestine, and analyses Israel’s behaviour in relation to Covid-19 and Gaza. Having closed off the access points to the Strip, Israel has ensured that no medicine or medical equipment can get in to prop up the shattered Palestinian healthcare system. At the same time, in the author’s view, closing the borders turns the pandemic into a potentially lethal form of coercion, the latest experiment, the newest weapon in the apparently never-ending siege. Melissa Tandiwe Myambo’s “schematic notes” also focus on borders, which she deems ‘unnatural’, and provides a first analysis of the central role that spatio-temporal border closures have played in the world since the emergence of Covid-19. Her question “Will Covid-19 break time and space?” warns against the dangers of narrating this crisis as a temporal break between a before and after. And as for closing off regional, national or continental spaces, Myambo forcefully argues that a global pandemic necessitates a global response. Layla Brown-Vincent’s “The Pandemic of Racial Capitalism: another world is possible” uses the Covid-19 pandemic to expose the deadly “anti-Blackness” attitude at work globally. She provocatively argues, by looking at the neoliberal socio-economic logics undergirding technologies of the disposability of life at play in the handling of Covid-19, that what the present crisis evidences is “racial Capitalism” as “the true pandemic”. Brown suggests, by exploring Cuban and Venezuelan medical systems’ international solidarity, that another world is indeed possible, if we can learn from the current crisis.

In the closing article of this special focus on Covid-19, Claudia Gualtieri appropriately offers a route through some of the most significant cultural and theoretical interventions that the global intellectual community has produced since the outbreak of the pandemic. “Keywords, again: provisional reflections from a situated perspective”, in line with a cultural studies analytical paradigm, observes the Covid-19 conversation through the lens of selected keywords as a constellation of relations that, from a situated perspective, provide indications of current drives of change and of future challenges that have emerged during the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Annalisa Oboe and Gaia Giuliani

**Note**

<sup>1</sup> In the case of Gaia Giuliani, this special issue is an outcome of the project “(De)Othering: Deconstructing Risk and Otherness: hegemonic scripts and counter-narratives on migrants/refugees and ‘internal Others’ in Portuguese and European mediascapes” (Reference: POCI-01-0145- FEDER-029997), funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology FCT (DL57/2016/CP1341/CT0025 and CES-SOC/UID/50012/2019) and by FEDER, the European Regional Development Fund, through the COMPETE 2020 Operational Programme for Competitiveness and Internationalization (POCI), and by other Portuguese institutions through the FCT.