At the same time as the writing of this book, the COVID-19 pandemic broke out across the world. The entire planet shook and the most important cities in the world radically changed their daily lives. From Shanghai to New York, from Madrid to Rome, from Berlin to London, from Buenos Aires to São Paulo, time/space twisted and the planet “entered” into a new band of the multiple Moebius strips that usually contain it.

We could not ignore the subject. We couldn’t keep quiet. We could not stop expressing what we are living, seeing and investigating in these contingent, indeterminate, complex and planetary contexts. That is why we decided to write this last chapter three-handed, under the figure of the kaleidoscope. A figure linked to metaphor, to play and also to beauty,
which allows us to write three chapters in one, from where the reader can
draw his or her conclusions and literally finish the book.

Kaleidoscope is an expression that refers to a tube that has various
mirrors inside, which are tilted. At one end of the kaleidoscope there are
two sheets of glass: between them, different irregular objects of different
colours. By rotating the tube and looking at the opposite end, the images
of these objects located between the sheets of glass multiply symmetrically.
These gadgets usually contain three mirrors, arranged like a prism, with a
triangular shape that reflects towards the internal sector.

In his work “The Kaleidoscope in Spanish Literature”, Dorde Cuvardic
García (2018) states:

The term to designate the kaleidoscope was proposed by David Brewster
himself. It is made up of the Greek words χαλός, bella, ειδος, form, image,
and σκοπέμ, see, observe, etymological provenance that is responsible for
reeling at the beginning of the book that he published on the subject—until
not translated into Spanish—entitled The Kaleidoscope. Its history, theory and
construction with its application to the fine and useful arts (Brewster, 1858,
1) 4. Etymologically, it means the action of “observing a beautiful image”
(Cuvardic García 2018, 66).

In this context, this final chapter is a three-part device that seeks to allow
the reader to capture some fragments of the sensibilities of cities in the
pandemic. It is an irregular look, diverse across each of the three elements,
which reflects the feelings of those who have looked through these three
mirrors, constituting them. It is a playful ending: the reader can start and
end with any of its parts and also borrow its metaphorical force from
the kaleidoscope to reach unknown terrain by known means. They are
reflections open to dialogue and multiple endings, to multiple images, to
multiple observations. It is a chapter where beauty will be a matter for
the reader, since it will be his or her eye that validates, denies or rewrites
the policies of the sensibilities of the cities today.

In this framework, the chapter has three sections that operate as three
“chapters”. The first, written by Margarita Camarena Luhrs, is “In the
face of the COVID-19 pandemic, emerging mutual aid practices inspired
by values of protection and care for life”. The second, “Cities in silence. A
global response to fear of the other”, is offered by Ana Lucía Cervio. And,
finally, “The Pandemic City: between lack and possibility”, is authored by
Adrián Scribano.
We have decided to claim authorship of each section separately, for having had the experience in different cities, for being impacted by dissimilar practices of being in the city, and for valuing how the collective does not eliminate the personal, hence the selection of the title of the chapter as a whole.

**IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: EMERGING MUTUAL AID PRACTICES INSPIRED BY VALUES OF PROTECTION AND CARE FOR LIFE**

As it is currently unknown how and when the COVID-19 pandemic will end, everyone experiences a different degree of risk, threat, even danger of death. Even so, the uncertainty that this causes is an unprecedented social force that moves us equally. Under these conditions, different valuations of life itself emerge. These can be seen from responses that range from indifferent indolence on the part of some authorities, to the most practical, massive and compassionate forms of mutual aid.

Inseparable practices of values emerge that exceed the economic priorities of the market: reciprocity and trust, bravery and courage, generosity. Above all, it is essential to protect life, to take care of oneself, which suddenly turns out to be everyone else. For this “I” that could no longer be known multiple, from the status quo the collective individualism that we felt as something so crystallized, immovable and safe, something suddenly happens: the pandemic and, once again, the feeling that We are lost.

Doubt, hesitation and indecision are seen everywhere. Something lurks behind immediate contact. The possibility of being infected dilates the encounter, it affects us passively. There is, again, that old known presence of fear; a catalyst that we had tried to forget. With the COVID-19 pandemic other emotions come into play, another state that mixes the imperative to “stop feeling” with “regain feeling (yourself) in others”.

The normalized amalgam of conflict networks before the pandemic cannot be rescued. It seems that it will no longer be possible to return to the former. What will change? It is not foreseeable, beyond the fact that they will try to endure the experience in the best possible way, with a grace that empowers women with much love for all people. For this reason, the situation that threatens world health opens up unprecedented opportunities that may shake capitalist structures through possible adaptations. It is
clear that previous needs emerge in full force, that there are newly affected in addition to those that already existed within the prevailing social order. Controversial dilemmas appear, and not all decisions in the face of events manage to leave behind well-known authoritarian and unsustainable ways.

“New Normal”

This crisis of certainties has been prolonged more and more. It seems that the world will face a “new normal” in response to COVID-19, as evidence shows that the majority of the population remains susceptible to the virus. As the situation stabilizes in Europe, the numbers begin to rise in Latin America where, according to experts, there is still time to avoid massive outbreaks (UN 2020, 1). Have there been in history or today more conflict networks materially and emotionally virulent than those now experienced with the spread of the coronavirus?

If they may have been longer in duration due to the outbreak of contagion, even with the tremendous hope (lessness) and fear shared today with other devastating historical episodes, there are emerging practices inspired by (re) appropriated values of unedited ways. So it can be alluded to that this pandemic is as virulent as the best known of antiquity.

It can be seen this way not only because it exposes structural historical conflicts that seemed immutable, but because it complicates them by adding to these conflicts multiplied by expressive networks of pain and suffering, of death that has no reparation, that is pure destruction. While what we are currently experiencing is a cathartic conjuncture of unprecedented consequences and difficult to measure, even so, we witness the over-institutionalized violence, too many attempts to maintain control of what had managed to be normalized in all areas of social life; trying, probably fruitless, to successfully instal a “new normal” everywhere.

Along this spectrum, other possibilities for structuring social reality are suggested. Although it would be too soon to confirm it, if the emergence of other practices related to the protection of life is not observed, other responses that go beyond the previous lines of possibility are beginning to be evident: the care of victims in different ways and in different measures; on this occasion we all live in anguish, in isolation, feeling helpless, unprotected, afraid, in the midst of a helplessness that even silence and weather cannot break.

Memories of fatal epidemics that transformed societies and states remain from the depths of history. Ravages of its consequences are still
expressed in the bodies/emotions of people everywhere. Alive, perhaps less fatal, are the traces of high-risk contagious diseases such as smallpox, measles, polio, malaria, tuberculosis, amoebiasis, cholera, dengue, viral hepatitis, typhoid, dysentery and other food poisoning infections. These and other diseases are present throughout the history of despair that has plagued the world with health crises at different times, as seen in the following Table 13.1.

This comparison between COVID-19 and other major historical health crises caused by previous pandemics helps us to remember how much they altered world history and, above all, to state that there may now be a possible lesser degree of devastation because it will end, to a great extent,

| Pandemic                         | Years               | Places                           | Deaths               |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Plague Antonina                  | AD 165–180         | Byzantium (current Istanbul City) | 5 million            |
| (by measles or smallpox)         |                     |                                  |                      |
| Justinian’s Plague               | Successive outbreaks lengthened the ailments from 165 to 750 AD | Byzantium, Mediterranean ports | 35 million           |
| Japanese smallpox                | 735–739             | Japan                            | 1 million            |
| Black plague or death            | 1347–1353           | Eurasia, Europe                  | Between 75 and 200 million |
| Smallpox                         | 1520                | Europe                           | 56 million           |
| Third plague pandemic            | 1855                | Europe                           | 12 million           |
| Cholera epidemics                | 1833–1834, 1855, 1863–1873 and 1885 | Spain                            | 800 thousand         |
| Spanish influenza                | 1918–1919           | Europe                           | 40–50 million        |
| Influenza                        | 1918–1920           | United States and the world      | 50 million           |
| H1N1virus (IAV)                  | 2002                | 29 countries                     | 770,000              |
| SARS                             | 2002                | World                            | 32 million           |
| HIV/AIDS                         | 1981–2020           | World                            | 11.3 miles           |
| Ebola                            | 2014–2016           | World                            | 850                  |
| MERS                             | 2015–2020           | World                            |                      |
| Swine flu H1N1                   | From 2009 to       | Mexico2010, world                | 12,469               |
| COVID-19                         | 2019 April 2020    | China, world                      | 160,000              |

Source: Own elaboration based on Carrión (2020), Garrido (2020), and Opazo Sáez (2020).
thanks to the fact “that modern science and medicine can be rationally used to stop it” (Opazo Sáez 2020, 4).

Still, the events of death remain part of the common denominators of all these epidemics. Like famines or wars, the COVID-19 pandemic makes evident correct measures or great failures experienced in each place and on each of the occasions mentioned. The truth is that measures implemented have not yet been sufficient to completely contain it. In fact, it is difficult to have sustainable public health programmes when priorities change according to what happens at any given time.

One difference with what happens with the COVID-19 outbreaks now is that public health measures are beginning to be effective in some way to control the “spikes” of maximum incidence, delay the spread of germs and thus reduce the level of deaths worldwide. Current epidemiological surveillance is an important historical difference in knowing who is affected and who is not. Knowledge about the spread of germs is decisive. However, it is massive physical distancing and voluntary quarantine measures that work the most.

**Emerging Mutual Aid Practices That Are Life-Inspired Values**

The need is known and felt to protect goods and services essential for social life (e.g. health, food, water, energy, work, housing, transportation, communication, education, etc.) as well as access to all this in economic conditions that, although not completely paralyzed, are necessarily restricted by sanitary measures that seek to selectively contain the contagion nuclei.

If income and payments should be equal for everyone simply by being alive, the reality is that they are not the same. Asymmetries in income, or depending on what is done in different jobs, generate very different profits and wages, and salaries do not correspond to profit margins. These differences in spending capacity, combined with the informality of 56% of the economy and unemployment, force jobs to be carried out in extremely unequal ways. So the information and protection resources to face the pandemic are also very different.

This is evident when we see that, for example, 17% of Parisians (Greater Paris) have left the city to take refuge in their temporary residences in the
countryside. That is something that the poor cannot afford. The Covid-19 drama in New York, a city with crowded morgues and field hospitals (Paredes 2020, 2).

Thus, we know that huge sectors of supermarket and warehouse employees, those who distribute basic products, cannot be quarantined, nor are those in charge of their transport, drivers and storekeepers, or hospital staff. As criticism of government actions around the world shows, very different perceptions emerge about what care and protection measures need to be put into practice. “People die because circumstances compel them to continue working. This generates fear and anger at the same time, because many feel abandoned. It is as if the life of the poor had no value” (Paredes 2020, 4). Thus, different perceptions also arise about what is considered urgent.

We are experiencing a cultural change that is not only worldwide, which, if it forces isolation, not only has with it very harsh introspective effects of an overwhelming silence. The normality that with all the difficulties and tensions of the day-to-day was already lived with difficulty until before November or December 2019, was left behind. When we felt more or less safe, this happens with COVID-19. And the feeling grows that we are lost again. Now, something else haunts us everywhere.

We are reaching this future very quickly, because in order to care for and protect life, the forces of society are mobilized and those of the State are questioned.1 “We have governments that do not know how to handle the crisis and who constantly change their minds. These actions have taken human lives” (Paredes 2020, 3). The causes are many: that if one acts well and for good or, on the contrary, that the action put in place corresponds to authoritarian and petty interests, that hospital medical capacities are not enough, that small groups cannot mobilize everything necessary, etc.

1 We certainly have to consider how our own reactions to COVID-19 exercise influence, because “deeper effects may have nothing to do with (the behavioral immune system), but more directly with the perception of how well government officials respond or not to the situation… Whether we express a conformist opinion, judge the behavior of another, or try to understand the value of different containment policies, we might ask ourselves whether our thoughts are really the result of rational reasoning, or whether they might have been molded by an ancient response that evolved millennia before the discovery of germ theory” (BBC 2020, 2).
Among the facts, opinions, and recommendations reported by serious mass media and authorized global health institutions, the need to protect life itself constantly emerges. At the same time, in order to achieve this, mutual aid is constantly breaking through. With this common value, support is organized within housing units, some prevention of contagion is being achieved, and there emerge even broader and more effective responses with support networks to stop the spread of the disease.

Realizing with COVID-19 that life itself is valuable is leading to the recognition of many other substantive values of social coexistence. What matters is the emerging solidarity practices of generosity and piety. Above all, practices that reintegrate doing with what has been done, saying consistent with acting. Practices that are showing that, with the emergence of the value of mutual aid, trust is also emerging as a common good. Between fear and these hopes, perhaps a better society will flourish.

To cope with the pandemic, errors or failures of state responses can be pointed out. It can also be seen that people are giving themselves a practical, compassionate response to the current crisis of world development. As the social values put into practice to take care of one’s life grow, because it depends on everyone’s life, another value is achieved that is quite far from the market.

**Taking Care of Life Is Essential for the Pandemic City**

Inside and with the other, something comes up that reconnects us. A particular connection emerges so as to be able to keep in touch in these abnormal conditions. Perhaps this is a peculiar experience of forced isolation to avoid infection. The fact is that it resizes the essential, makes it evident, leads to the choice, forces us to decide between different paths to take. If we never go back to the exact same place, these decisive practices taken at each moment of the pandemic, in each place and city, raise different meanings. The slightest choice made by and with others reverberates immediately across the entire planet.

The cultural change we are experiencing right now comes from many different experiences, places and influences that reiterate the need to reconnect with the earth. The pandemic declares a period of change not without violence and death in which unmentioned proposals emerge. It is possible that what we are experiencing heralds radically changing times of transition towards another order that is not patriarchal but, fundamentally egalitarian and free.
Realizing this multiple revaluation that we are implementing in favour of life and mutual aid is key for all of us because it comes from another ethic “that values care, life and democracy. The central political task at this time of crisis is to live and organize around those values” (Mair 2020, 12). Therefore, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will seek to encourage inseparable emerging practices of values inspired by the care of life.

**Cities in Silence. A Global Response to Fear of the Other**

Saint Peter’s Square without faithful or pilgrims on Easter Sunday; the Roman Colosseum without tourists; Tiananmen Square in Beijing empty; the Plaza de la Revolución deserted and without the traditional parade for Workers’ Day in Havana. A similar picture, of silence and stillness, is observed in the Obelisk in Buenos Aires, in the Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico, on the Copacabana beaches, in the centre of Beirut or on a Panamanian highway. These and other images of a world “without people” resignify to “silence” as part of the urban cartographies inaugurated by the global pandemic of 2020.

In the framework of hyperdigitalized societies, in which information and interconnection through technological innovations make up a good part of the macro and micro-social dynamics, silence is undervalued. It is hardly supported in a face-to-face interaction and is usually uncomfortable in a video call or in a conversation on WhatsApp. It is only admitted as a prayer and protest against death. At most, silence is considered as what “remains” after the passage of sound, or as a mere backdrop for noise.

Le Breton (2001) argues that observing the social situations in which silence appears constitutes a privileged analytical way to examine the social order. With this, the author defines the “transgressive” character that silence has in today’s societies. From our perspective, far from being a discursive abyss or a void between noise and noise, silence is an activity crossed by a body/emotion. As such, it constitutes an opportunity to initiate the active listening that is necessary for collective action. Understood as the starting point of any form of social interaction, silence opens worlds. Hence, in the connections between “knowing how to listen” and “making silence”, all possibilities of dialogue with the context and with others begin (Scribano 2019).
Silence. It is what prevails in the avenues, neighbourhoods, factories, schools, shopping centres, stadiums and monuments of most cities on the planet. Silence. This condition that seemed to be in danger of extinction in large cities is one of the great “miracles” that the COVID-19 pandemic has unexpectedly offered to billions of the world’s inhabitants. In the framework of the current confinement of populations, silence is not only a state that denotes an absence (of sound). Fundamentally, it points to the presence of new (and not so new) social relations drawn up to respond to the demands of capital that the virus brought with it. The home office, e-learning, e-commerce and even sexting are some of the trends that have spread massively with isolation, causing the world’s homes to become—overnight—exclusive areas for working, learning, consuming, loving and enjoying in times of Coronavirus.

Out of fear, starting in March 2020, the entire world had to slow down. For physics, deceleration is the negative variation of speed, that is, it expresses the passage of a body in motion from one speed X to another lower, always following the same path. In the current context, the irruption of this social, economic and affective “pause” that seeks to contain the spread of the virus means, as a derived effect, the establishment of a novel urban silence. In addition to the decrease in noise pollution that several cities have verified in recent months (Zambrano-Monserrate et al. 2020), which has favoured, among other aspects, the reappearance of sensations such as hearing the trill of the birds or that the people manage to improve their quality in rest, remembering Melucci (1996) we can affirm that this “new” silence is a “message” of structural social processes.

As such, the silence that accompanies the compulsory and/or voluntary confinement of populations as a result of COVID-19 testifies to the forms taken by the social relations of production—especially between capital and labor—and the functions that States assume in their articulations, with the global agendas and actors and, in particular, the pre-existing social inequalities that the pandemic illuminated and deepened in a virulent way. Indeed, there are millions of human beings who do not have adequate housing to “comply” with isolation; urban agglomerations that do not have sanitation services and lack basic facilities for hand washing; thousands of hospitals in the world without resources or basic supplies to care for those infected with COVID-19 (and other conditions); precarious health professionals with pictures of stress and emotional exhaustion linked to their working and salary conditions. These
and other snapshots are part of the silent urban postcard that materially and symbolically unfolds “outside” the interiors of our houses and that the passing of this health and economic crisis does nothing but aggravate.

In the framework of the race initiated by the health and executive authorities of the countries to “beat” the virus, seeking to “flatten” the curve of infections and deaths, a social experiment of unprecedented mass seclusion of people has been carried out, that not even the most visionary mind could ever have imagined. Taking care of yourself and confining yourself at “home” has been approved worldwide as the best “vaccine” to prevent the spread of the virus. In practice, this implies making the private, domestic and intimate environment a kind of “trench” to contribute to one’s own and the community’s health. In this scenario, the idea of the common has been resignified as a compulsive virtuality, with no escape: we are and, therefore, we contribute to the community by staying “inside”. Meanwhile “outside”, on the outside, the other (the unknown, but also the neighbor, friend or relative) is installed as a threat (Korstanje 2019). That is, as a suspected virus carrier and potential contagion agent, capable of breaking with the possibilities of a healthy future, outdoors and in freedom. It is precisely this fear of the other that has established silence as one of the most extraordinary consequences that cities exhibit today.

In this compulsion for life and health “entrenched” at home, the street has become—more than ever—a mere place of transit, moderate, limited and monitored by the security forces, and also by security practices assumed by the citizenship from their windows, balconies or terraces. All in all, social isolation has reinforced the erosion of the political and creative possibilities that the street houses as a place of information, social exchanges, entertainment and stimulation. In urban terms, the pandemic has further radicalized the “colonization” of public space historically undertaken by capital in its expansionist drive. In the streets, the place par excellence of the public, change and exchange value dominate over use and use value, limiting themselves to being reticules organized by and for consumption (Lefebvre 1991). For example, with the mandatory isolation imposed in several countries of the world to contain the spread of COVID-19, city streets have become solid passages that allow people to move around (on foot, or with the aid of the car or transportation) in public to local shops or hospitals and then return, rigorously, to “home”. This cadence makes public space not a collective product but rather the effect derived from the sum of individual body movements delimited
and monitored according to the guidelines that govern the extension of displacement and the length of stay abroad imposed by the authorities to control the contagion.

The abrupt change between density and emptiness, between noise and silence, has established a new social order that forces social sciences to reformulate the traditional approaches to the city and its dynamics. With the advance of the pandemic, the noises, sounds, music and voices begin to resignify in the great urban void. This supposes an evident alteration of routines and daily lives, as well as a drastic reformulation of the space-times of the interactions that originate new ways of conceiving the hours, the days, customs, public life and the spaces of intimacy. In particular, the generalized silence imposed by the pandemic has broken with the “previous urban normality” and has become a sign of suspicion and mistrust in the face of all things, people and relationships that are “outside” the personal area of confinement.

In this scenario, the virus is foreign. Its “invisible” presence involves risks, uncertainties and mistrust that are projected onto others, configuring them as latent threats. In this table, mass seclusion in the private sphere appears as the fastest and cheapest way for individual defence and protection. So, in the face of fear of the other, the answer is confinement and an expectant silence. Something like the scene that is repeated in any thriller where the hidden victim, in the dark and in silence, awaits the (inevitable?) stalking of his victimizer.

But just as silence is a necessary condition for interactions, urban mutism caused by the massive confinement of populations reveals the nullification of all possibility of listening to the other, of looking into their eyes and of opening other worlds. When the noise, the sounds and the voices are confined in the private space and the cities are silent, everything that happens outside the walls bears the exclusive mark of suspicion and threat. Thus, in the face of the individuation, differentiation and social fragmentation that accompany, as features, the current phase of capitalism—and that the fear of COVID-19 has deepened to the extreme—distrust is a feeling that permeates much of the experiences of the life, consuming, sharing and enjoyment that take place in cities day by day (Scribano and Cervio 2018). Immersed in a sanitary rhetoric that defines interpersonal distance and self-care as social responsibilities necessary to face the emergency, the aforementioned structural conditions are deepened still further, drawing limits and manufacturing (socio-sensible) borders that regulate the contacts that are “allowed” and
the “adequate” distances between bodies that are recognized as strange, dangerous, threatening.

In short, we are facing an uncertain social scenario, full of paradoxes and contradictions, haunted by the pain caused by deaths and infections, cornered by the collapse of health systems and by the collapse of world economies. In this context, mistrust expands as a bastion of urban social interactions. To distrust is instituted, then, in a sensation and form of socialization to which the subjects resort to continue acting in the world (in their world), hoping to find “there”, in the stubborn and routine construction of inter-individual borders, some opportunity to reduce the risks and uncertainty that inexorably accompany the spread of the pandemic.

The Pandemic City: Between Lack and Possibility

The City as Lack and Absence

The COVID-19 pandemic has produced an amplification effect on several of the most complex and negative edges of cities and, at the same time, has brought forth diverse potentialities. Here we want to refer to the city as a lack, trying to highlight the limits and deficiencies that quarantines and isolation have “emphasized”, and also as a possibility, pointing out the practices and sensibilities that appear increased under pandemic conditions.

I have named the set of spatial/temporal features of the cities affected by the spread of the virus and subjected to public policies to mitigate its effects as a “pandemic city”. This is not a different city, which brings with it the inheritance of what was discussed in Chapter 1, but it is a different time/space that is expressed in a feeling of “being suspended in the air”, “being in parentheses”, in a timeless way of being.

As faults that are increased and reproduced, we systematize the following: hunger, “roof”, education and distraction. As possibilities, we present the redefinition of the indispensable and the look on the next paragraph

Hunger

One of the aspects that the pandemic city reveals is that not all citizens, the neighbours, have enough to eat. One of the first sources of tension is in this new way of organizing the city around food procurement, not only
because shops are closed, not only because shops are concentrated (they are concentrated in the sense that they are the big chains), and those that are benefited, but also by the attention/tension that emerges with the “senses” of local businesses. This relationship is redefined between waiting in line, “keeping distance” in the supermarket and buying in the store (where the stores are) in the Chinese supermarket, in the smaller local supermarkets. A tension is redefined between waiting and patience, such as civic virtues, and food. In the neighbourhood there is a tension of what it means “not having to buy”, “not being able to buy” and “not being able to produce an activity to buy”.

The pandemic city is a city of lack. When productivity stops, when trade ceases, when transfers freeze, what appears is what is missing and the first thing that is missed is the possibility of constituting that triangle so difficult to capture between food, meal and satisfaction. The pandemic city demands that we keep in mind the regular satiety indices; the purchase is made between what it takes to feed, between food to fill up with, and the possibility of doing it.

The pandemic city shows very clearly that capitalism has constituted a social fantasy of what it means to be satisfied, what it means to be satiated, what it means to “be eaten”. This city of lack reveals that in front of the veneer of normality there is a large mirror that reflects that there were many human beings without food, hidden in a bazaar of frivolity of consumption, in the corners, on the margins, on the edges. Paradoxically, the city that provided everything was reduced to having the possibility and the disposition to acquire it; and it becomes more radical when those possibilities/provisions refer to food. That is why the structure of that dialectic, of that triangle between food, meal and satisfaction, is revealed, it is seen pornographically when the city empties, when silence occurs, when lack constitutes the structure of what was always bustlingly complete. It is very clear who eats every day in this city where food begins to be a central problem of the day-to-day for most of those who have to stay at home: it is already more clearly seen that it was not a city of all, that it was not a city for everyone, that everyone did not eat.

Roof
Another of the features of this city of lack, of the pandemic city, is to make present, to put under the magnifying glass, a problem that is structural for the capitalist city and which is precisely the lack of a house. When you look at a city what you see are houses, buildings, shopping
malls and, for that same reason, you cannot clearly perceive that there are thousands of people who are not included in the social fantasy of the house. They do not have a room to stay in, they do not have a house in which to isolate themselves because the roof is an object of dispute, not a given natural condition. There is no fantasized homogeneity of the public/private structure of a “type” of house in the spaces of these cities, understood as a room for a certain number of people, a place to eat for a set number of people, places for sanitizing for a specific number of people: the fantasy of “having a house” is collapsed in the pandemic city by the ghost of “not being able to stay at home”, due to the impossibility of being in a house. This is not only experienced by those who are on the streets, this is not only experienced by those who wander in the parks, but those thousands of people who literally live “outside the house”, who go to sleep in a small place that is constituted simply in a “place to arrive”, but they do not have the class conditions implied by the fantasy of being able to stay at home, they do not have the water to wash their hands, they do not have the conditions to have social distancing. If we add to this the sanitary measure called a “face cap” it is very interesting to observe its ineffectiveness because its effectiveness is related to the fact of “having” distance, proximity, the logic of being close together, implies the impossibility of defending against the pandemic. But also, there is no mask because there is no cash, because there is no money, because there is no work, because they have lived in informality for decades. So there is no way to mediate an instrument between the subject and the other subject. The device, the thing called a “face cap”, is the result of the uneven distribution of the possibilities of self-administering that device. In short, the pandemic city clearly states that not all of us have a place to stay, not all of us have shelter, not all of us have that “natural border” against the virus: house/roof.

**Education**

A third element that the pandemic city brings to the table is the unequal distribution of access to educational opportunities. If people are to stay at home and education is going to be virtual, they need, on the spot, at home, the internet connection and the device to connect with it. Beyond all the logic of the structuring that has resulted in the digitization of the world, beyond this continuum between digital/mobile/virtual that has occurred globally, the pandemic city puts inequality under the lens, the lack of that which you really should have access to: the plan to manage
gigabytes, to connect. Whether through WhatsApp or any other platform, connecting with the other involves spending money and there are multiple varieties of access. The pandemic city revealed that neither the material conditions of existence, nor the organizational forms of information distribution, nor the material structure of connectivity, are distributed more or less equally. The necessary consequence was then that educational inequality was reinforced by amplifying another lack of the city. To be able to watch a video on WhatsApp or Facebook, the person needs money and what stands out as a possibility of equality ends up being a new inequality. I cannot stay at home and I do not have internet access and, in that sense, I am condemned to not having an education precisely because the pandemic city reinforces the pre-existing faults. One of the most radically suggestive aspects of this absence of possibility and condition is that it is also experienced by teachers, those who have to teach, not only the children, young people and/or adults who receive these classes; which shows very clearly that this exposed lack, this exposed breakdown of education in the pandemic city, is the product of a structural movement prior to the pandemic itself. This is an exposed breakdown generated by the structural inequality of both students, teachers and those who have to receive education.

*Distraction/Enjoyment*

Finally, the pandemic city highlights the close link between the social fantasy of a city for all and the enjoyment of the means of entertainment and distraction that keeps people happy. The means of containment involve a contained citizen, that is, one who is not ready for conflict, who is prepared for collaboration with the city and its system. That is, precisely, a distracted citizen, that is, entertained. It is a distraction from that radically important thing that was hunger, which was the roof and education, and that is why the first three offences increase, grow, in pandemic conditions. Now these faults are seen because there is no longer organized enjoyment, because there is no longer organized distraction. The social magic stops, that is, producing an event with one hand while the other hand is the one that distracts the attention of the public. Magic involves the fact that people “relapse and repeat” what is seductive in fantasy: disconnection from the real world. At the end of football, at the end of the cinema, at the end of the walks, at the end of the bars, at the end of the theatres, at the end of everything that is ready to distract and provide enjoyment in the city, he asks himself once again what is essential: that
also brings with it the fact that there is another city, that there are other features of the pandemic city.

The City as a Possibility

Opening interstices between the structural flaws that the pandemic city makes visible and puts under the magnifying glass, we find other consequences that deny the value of totality that the regime of truth pretends to have: the indispensable and what is next.

The Indispensable

The pandemic city lets us see the other side of social organization because it challenges us, and once we have found ourselves facing hunger, homelessness and lack of options, in a context of non-distraction we begin to think the indispensable. We begin to reflect on what we really cannot stop doing; we begin to think about what it would be impossible to continue living without, and in this context, the pandemic city confronts us with the decision to continue immediate enjoyment through consumption slowed by the closure and emptiness of the pandemic city. As a consequence of the measures of confinement, of the same measures of defense against the virus, conditions are structured to decide “another way”, and not just to continue wildly in consumption. The pandemic city confronts us with the possibility of selecting those things that seem important to us, that are indispensable, that without which we could not produce the coordination of action, the reproduction of life and the elaboration of the fabric of the social. The pandemic city puts us in the predicament of having to re-decide just what indispensable means.

For the coordination of the action what is indispensable is that which has no aggregate, that does not depend on any fiction, that which is not only set for the other to see me, that which is above the purely instrumental. In this sense, what is indispensable is not an “as if”: it is that for which the coordination of the action is not possible. That is why the pandemic city, has written on its frontispieces: it leaves out everything that is a weight, that is a ballast, that will not serve to meet the other, to relate to others. The pandemic city opens the door to concentrate on that without which action is impossible. But what is essential is also what allows us to reproduce: to sleep, eat, breathe, walk, “be in the world”, last, relate the present with the future, take advantage of what we learned in the past. All these things are indispensable, that is, they cannot be absent,
we cannot stop doing them, because they have to do directly with our own reproduction. In the pandemic city, the urban fabric is rewoven, the set of threads that weave the urban structure, new networks, new paths, are knotted again: because those indispensable paths appear.

The Proximity
This pandemic city leads us, once again, to think about what otherness means and with this gives us another possibility for that which is shared. Who is the other? Who is my neighbour? Who am I with? These are all questions that in the context of uncertainty, fear and the slowdown in life, the pandemic city allows us to ask. It allows us to configure these dimensions as radical questions.

The pandemic city allows us to think about proximity, the distance that differentiates us from each other, what separates, what connects, what is at a time-space that allows to be easily found others persons and that allows to be identified as similar person.. The pandemic city gives us the possibility to stop thinking about the abject, to stop thinking about the discriminating, to stop thinking about domination in the face of the different, because the other, the proximity and the distance are redefined according to silence and emptiness of these threatened cities rebuilt and rearmed by the violence of a humanity that crossed all limits with other species, with itself and with the entire planet. The pandemic city allows us to think the other and the Other with a capital letter, allows us to think again that taking care of myself I take care of the other, that taking care of the Others I take care of myself. The self is not defined by its capacity for isolation but for its ability to care for the other, to meet another at a distance, to allow that which redefines who I am isolated constitutes the starting point of the common, of the communal.

The spatial temporal unpinning that allows a city to be lived at a distance leaves the doors open to radically think of the other as someone who is necessary and indispensable to me in order to narrate myself in an individual and community history. The one next to it becomes this one that allows me, when taking a distance, to take it into account; the crowding is radically transformed into the possibility of seeing the other. Those two metres allow us to identify faces, not in the mass that walks disoriented in search of a consumption that allows self-centred enjoyment. The next one at a distance recovers the possibilities of redefining what is next, who is my neighbour, who are our next ones.
Thus, if we connect the indispensable with the next, we can draw a new geometry of the bodies; we can rethink the new normality that does not throw us into the emptiness of being mere objects of enjoyment for others. In the pandemic city, others are indispensable, neither luxuries, nor fantasies, nor phantoms. What is indispensable is the common that can only be produced by and with others.

**Conclusions**

By the reader.

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