Introduction. Special issue 'Ethnographies of the coronavirus pandemic'

Ethnographies of the coronavirus pandemic: Empirical emergency and social resignification

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Abstract

This text introduces a special issue dedicated to compiling ethnographic accounts of the first months of the pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the consequent isolation and social distancing measures. Based on empirical materials collected between March and May of 2020, the ethnographic texts vividly show the uniqueness of this period. It has been portrayed as a hiatus or a pause in the flow of normal society given the threat to the collapsed public healthcare system and the multiple side effects of the lockdown. However, this issue proposes an alternative view of this supposed lull entailing physical and geographic immobility by analysing the events from the standpoint of the major social resignification of daily life that took place. Therefore, we contend that social life has not stopped; on the contrary, it has accelerated, moving in unforeseen directions and resignifying spaces, times and relationships that may have changed forever.

Keywords: COVID-19; pandemic; ethnography; anthropology; resignification.

Resumen: *Etnografías de la pandemia por coronavirus: emergencia empírica y resignificación social*

Este texto presenta un número especial dedicado a etnografiar los primeros meses de la pandemia provocada por el virus SARS-CoV-2 y las consecuentes medidas de aislamiento y distancia social. Basados en materiales empíricos recogidos entre marzo y mayo del año 2020, los textos etnográficos muestran con viveza la enorme singularidad de este período. Este momento se ha querido designar como *parón* o *pausa* de la sociedad ante la amenaza de una salud pública colapsada y los múltiples efectos del confinamiento. Sin embargo, este número propone una mirada alternativa a este supuesto paréntesis de inmovilidad física y geográfica, analizando lo ocurrido desde la fuerte resignificación social que se ha producido en la vida diaria. Por tanto, defendemos que la vida social no se ha parado, al contrario, se ha acelerado moviéndose en direcciones imprevistas y resignificando espacios, tiempos y relaciones que pueden haber cambiado para siempre.

Palabras clave: Covid-19; pandemia; etnografía; antropología; resignificación.

Introduction

The global emergency of the coronavirus pandemic and its transnational connections can only be understood with a close look at the social and cultural contexts fuelling it. This text introduces a special, urgent issue in which we analyse the first few months of the global pandemic caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus in 2019-2020 (COVID-19).[6] To do so, the volume brings together ethnographic texts based on primary empirical materials collected between March and May 2020, one of the peaks in the unexpected pandemic.

A week after the state of alarm and lockdown were declared in Spain, the authors of this text issued an open, public call for a special section that would collect brief ethnographies (at most 3,000 words) on social life during the pandemic.[7] At that time, there were no other open calls for texts in Spanish (and only a handful in English) which set out to empirically study what was happening from the social sciences. Our goal was to portray the here and now of a crisis which was suddenly changing the world with extraordinary policies, extreme reactions and daily lives lived in quarantine. The response was extraordinary: dozens of people expressed their interest, and a few days later we concluded that we could make a special issue instead of just a section within a regular issue of the journal.

The submission deadline was 22 May, which allowed studies to be conducted in the more emergent phase of the pandemic, when after the experience in Wuhan and the lockdown in Italy and Spain in early March, the process of activating quarantines in many countries sped up until reaching a global scale. The next two months plunged us into the first pandemic of the 21st century; indeed, the *shut-down of the world* because of COVID-19 in early 2020 will be recalled because of its unexpected impact on public healthcare systems, the sudden changes it caused in the everyday lives of

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[6] This special issue has been registered in the "World Pandemic Research Network" (WPRN), a platform that serves research communities and maintains a global search directory of the scientific resources available on the social and human impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. https://wprn.org/item/464452

[7] The idea sprang from the classes in the course on "Instrumental Resources for Research in Anthropology" from the Bachelor's in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the UAB taught by the editors. In the shift to virtual teaching, the students made small group studies on the pandemic using digital tools. This idea led to a call for submissions to the journal *Perifèria* and the possibility that the students could write articles for it. Ultimately, two of these student groups have published their texts in this monograph.

the world's population and the uncertainty it has sown about the future of humanity and its hyperconnected social and cultural systems.

Without limiting ourselves to the context of any given country, we questioned what is happening based on the exceptional physical distancing, immobility and social lockdown measures taken (or not) locally, nationally and internationally, primarily with effects on social relations and spaces. The call for texts sought to collect the diverse manifestations from the field of anthropology which could provide basic knowledge on these questions and other related ones in order to: (1) document a dynamic process which will be reanalysed and reconstructed once it is over; (2) reveal emerging problems; and (3) provide an urgent analysis of exceptionally widespread situations which could minimally shed light on interventions at different levels (education, social support, public health, geographic mobility, social organisation, etc.).

To this end, we asked a series of specific questions which did not seek to be exhaustive but were able to minimally guide the urgent ethnographic studies. Three months after writing those questions, we see that we were not so off-course when addressing social phenomena which have been shown to be crucial in light of subsequent events:

   • How are different groups and population segments experiencing it, especially bearing in mind youths and the elderly and their intergenerational relationships?

   • What is emerging from the experience of relationships affected by the quarantine, the lockdown, the disease, death, grief, solitude, care and forced cohabitation?

   • What can we find among different family models?

   • How is it affecting gender relations?

   • How are the uses of private and public spaces changing?

   • What is happening with the transfer of activities to private spaces, such as home schooling, remote work and living-room sports?

   • How is it affecting discipline and control (or lack thereof) over our bodies?

• What old or new citizen initiatives have emerged?

• What is happening in situations with greater vulnerability such as the homeless or the elderly?

• How do we get, get exposed to and feed news, fake news, hoaxes and viral news?

• What economic consequences on different scales are affecting everyday life (e.g., layoffs, consumption habits, provisions or shortages, paralysis of economic sectors, nationalisation of strategic companies, etc.)?

• What pictures of the future are people imagining at this time of uncertainty?

The articles chosen have responded to this call. This introduction is organised as follows. First, we shall outline the theoretical framework to resituate both the texts in this special issue and future research on what has happened and what is yet to come, with an emphasis on anthropology as a discipline. Secondly, we will share notes on the different methods used in the texts we are introducing, framing ethnography as a hybrid, multifunctional, multimodal tool that can be combined with other methodologies. Third, we outline and relate the different contributions, which reveal the reality in different countries, while also delving into specific problems that shed light on a very dark moment in the human community. Finally, as a conclusion, we share thoughts on: (1) the pros and cons of researching during the pandemic; and (2) what we have learning by compiling empirical materials that will stand as a unique, unrepeatable archive.

Theoretical notes: *Vademecum pandemium*

"Sopa de Wuhan" (Wuhan Soup) is the provocative, controversial name given to a compilation of articles written in February and March 2020 by a series of renowned humanists and translated into different languages (Agamben et al., 2020). These philosophical[8] essays preview many of the answerless questions and false certainties

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[8] There are other similar compilations, such as the "Coronavirus and philosophers" section in the *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*,
http://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/

that have been popping up in the social sciences in an attempt to understand and explain the pandemic. Over the course of the past few months, these questions have been addressed by disciplines like economics, psychology, sociology, geography, political science and history. All these fields have opened their blogs, platforms and academic journals to the production of *pandemic* materials. It would be difficult to find researchers who have not published a text (usually an essay) about the topic, even in scholarly forums that usually require exhaustive evaluation checks. In this sense, the health sciences seem to have experienced from a similar problem, urgently publishing pre-print studies, counter to its scientific philosophy and with shortcomings that would normally be objectionable (the lack of statistical representativeness, the impossibility of replication, etc.) but were forgotten for the sake of the health emergency. The massive need for knowledge on the pandemic and its effects has led to a bulimic production of *science* which is prompting a *vademecum pandemium* that just keeps swelling.[9]

One common concern in this corpus of literature is trying to explain the foundations and effects of the virus and its illness through the interdependence between nature and culture, a productive (and stale) discussion which social and cultural anthropology has been addressing since its inception as a discipline. Specifically, medical anthropology operates at this crossroads and has the theoretical experience to conduct emergency research, such as by having theoretical frameworks already in place and structural factors described. Furthermore, this area of anthropology has extensive experience in the field since it has worked directly in intervening in different outbreaks and epidemics in recent decades, as well as because of its role as an intermediator and interlocutor in domestic and international institutions (Sams et al., 2017). Thus, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, medical anthropology has produced numerous texts via blogs[10] and numerous special issues on the pandemic, such as in "Medical Anthropology" (Manderson, 2020), revealing the

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[9] Examples include: (1) the aforementioned World Pandemic Research Network https://wprn.org/#about-us and (2) an exhaustive *#coronavirussyllabus* which is being developed online, to which new cross-disciplinary publications are being added:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1dTkJmhWQ8NcxhmjeLp6ybT1_YOPhFLx9hZ43j1S7DjE/edit
[10] Non-exhaustive list of websites and blogs which have published from the field of medical anthropology: http://somatosphere.net/medical-anthropology-weekly-covid-19/;
http://www.medanthrotheory.org/; https://www.medizinethnologie.net/witnessing_corona/;
https://medanthucl.com/; http://medanthroquarterly.org/category/covid-19-responses/

previous work on the effects of future pandemics and the role of anthropology as a necessary discipline to understand them (e.g. Caduff, 2015; Lynteris, 2016, 2020).

As a general discipline, anthropology has also shared its viewpoint when analysing practices, itineraries and perceptions, beyond acritically labelling everything that is not understood as *sociocultural*. Several special issues on COVID-19 have been published in "Social Anthropology", with 100 brief articles containing reflections by anthropologists the world over (Soto Bermant & Ssorin-Chaikov, 2020), as well as in the journals "Anthropology Today" (Napier, 2020) and "Anthropology Now" (Higgins, Martins & Vesperi, 2020), among others. Furthermore, many anthropology blogs have responded quickly, such as "Allegra Lab", the "Cultural Anthropology" blog and more interdisciplinary blogs with a strong anthropological bent like the Corona Times. This represents the tip of the vast iceberg just among the blogs written in English. In Spanish we can find publications like one devoted to confined ethnographies by the Galician Anthropology Association (AGANTRO)[11] or collaborative experimental groups which have used some networks to debate and share to produce podcasts,[12] and which have published their work in critical frameworks to highlight socially-conscious responses.[13]

The special issue we are introducing is distinct, as it is primarily based on empirical work exploring emerging sociocultural patterns and practices, given the speed with which the people experiencing it are explaining it. Obviously, the empirical materials produced without financing[14] and within the span of two months are limited in their scope, depth and theoretical elaborateness. However, we can say that they show a resignification of social spaces and times at all scales: from online masses and rituals to turning balconies and rooftops into parks, bars or scenarios in new *communitas*; from spontaneous group events to household spaces turned into schools, gyms or offices; from hoarding over a fear of shortages to food as creation, care and shared

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[11] http://agantro.org/etnografias-confinadas/

[12] At the end of this text is a group of podcasts in Spanish which the group made collaboratively:https://www.solidarityandcare.org/stories/essays/the-method-of-telegrammatic-correspondence-a-digital-mode-of-inquiry-during-lockdown

[13] The journal *Sociological Review* has opened this space to collect socially-conscious proposals https://www.solidarityandcare.org/stories/essays/the-method-of-telegrammatic-correspondence-a-digital-mode-of-inquiry-during-lockdown

[14] The financing for social research projects on the COVID-19 pandemic has been very limited during these first few months. For example, in Spain the financing was primarily concentrated in the health sciences: https://www.isciii.es/QueHacemos/Financiacion/Paginas/SolicitudExpresionesInteresCoVid19.aspx

learning; from illness of the other to the self as a transmitter; and from earning a living in the informal economy to dying of hunger because of the quarantine.

This resignification and redefinition of social life contrasts with the almost complete cessation of global human mobility, which has been conceptualised as an *anthropause* by some natural scientists within the context of ecology (Rutz et al., 2020) and as a *full stop* in anthropology (Caduff, 2020). Despite these terms' connotations of deceleration, the texts in this special issue report on a lively dailiness which shows us that we are witnessing a possible in-depth, "liminal" change (cf. Van Gennep, 2008), which theories on risk (Beck, 1992), biopolitics (Foucault, 2007), the role of the state in the globalised era (Trouillot, 1991) and accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2001), among others, help us begin to understand yet fall short given the magnitude and swiftness of the phenomena that have transpired this year. For this reason, viewing this liminal step as a *hiatus* in human activities globally, no matter how accurate it may be within the context of ecology or medicine, limits us to a static analysis of the social and cultural production of new meanings. This text suggests an alternative view of this supposed lull in human physical and geographic immobility (in fact, objects, knowledge and capital have continued to circulate), analysing how society has defended itself from the multiple consequences of the disease and the lockdown through a social resignification of daily life. In short, we assert that social life has not stopped; to the contrary, it has accelerated, moving in unforeseen directions and resignifying spaces, times and relations that may never be the same again.

Methods: Anthropology and the challenge of confined ethnography

Conducting research during the lockdown poses a host of difficulties, ranging from the impossibility of physical presence to limitations on movement. However, the advent of the pandemic led to numerous open, collective initiatives, including an exhaustive list of materials on "remote" methodologies grouped together in an open document called "Doing Fieldwork in a Pandemic", edited by Lupton (2020). The methods range from eliciting photos or videos to interviews by letter or apps and portable cameras. For this special issue, data were collected using videoconference interviews, online focus groups, web surveys and digital ethnographies, among other methods, supported with photographs, drawings, maps or other audiovisual

materials. However, our interest here is not to compile a selection of tools but to assess their use in light of the articles that employed them.

The first thing worth highlighting is that several authors have used mixed methods; that is, they collected and analysed qualitative and quantitative data within the same study (see the texts by Fontana, Serrano-Martínez, Blades et al. and Albos et al.). Several of them used an *exploratory* strategy (Creswell & Plano-Clarke, 2011), which consists in conducting semi-structured remote interviews to explore a topic and later developing a questionnaire on the most significant aspects of the interviews, followed by a web survey to enlarge the number of responses. Other authors have chosen an *explanatory* design, where they conduct informal semi-structured interviews once the survey has been launched to further explore certain aspects of it or to collect the discourse on these aspects. One problem with web surveys or studies with scant time and funds is the difficulty of getting a representative sample, so the authors in this monograph chose surveys to expand the number of responses and gain a more comprehensive view of the heterogeneity of practices or individual responses, more than to faithfully represent the population.

Furthermore, we can also highlight the transformation of ethnographic tools like participant observation. This has been useful both online, to analyse new events, rituals and performativities (see the texts by Mateo, Meaza and Montejano and Rojas) and in person,[15] using outings during the lockdown and informal encounters with people on the street to learn firsthand what was happening with vulnerable populations (see Trujillo). Likewise, some texts reflect the shift from in-person participant observation during their extensive research to virtual (and sometimes also participant) observation with the arrival of the lockdown, which helps reveal new practices among the same populations (see Saulesleja and Pena). Finally, the call for articles was also a prime opportunity to develop autoethnography, even though we have limited it in this publication to texts that used it creatively, such as by contrasting the stories of different people (see the texts by Gerbaudo Suárez, Carla Golé and Camila Pérez, as well as by Martínez and Meléndez).

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[15] In the call for submissions, we made it clear that no text based on fieldwork that could endanger the health of the participants or the researchers would be considered.

In summary, mixed methods were successfully used, with remote interviews being conducted through videoconferencing and online surveys; online or virtual ethnography used in heterogeneous ways; participant observation, both in-person and virtual, complemented other methodologies; and fruitful comparative autoethnography. For all these reasons, we conclude that in this situation of geographic immobility and social distancing, a creative, emergent, multimodal ethnography has been possible which has adaptively and flexibly lost neither its rigorousness nor its proximity to the people and groups studied.

Ethnographies of the pandemic: Empire of resignification

This group of ethnographic texts begins with an article that reminds us that there is no universal way of coping with the pandemic. The text by Andrea Bravo is entitled "**Amazonian notes on the pandemic, the Waorani case in Ecuador**". It reveals that even before the pandemic, the Waorani used strategies that helped them deal with previous crises stemming from contagious diseases arising from contact. These strategies are orally transmitted and include fleeing from the jungle and using traditional remedies from the environs, thus challenging the supposed medical superiority of the "whites", which is glaringly questioned. These medicinal plants nourish the principle of *vitality*, which in the Waorani cosmology is associated with health and body strength, a cultural revitalisation which reaches down to the youths of today.

This revitalisation leads to the field of religion, with two texts that address it lucidly. First, Josep Lluis Mateo wrote "**The coronavirus in Moroccan religion: Invocations of Allah on the night of 21 March in northern Morocco**", which shows how in the midst of the lockdown, an innocuous religious celebration in one city spread like wildfire around the social media and simultaneously took on a political dimension and became an affirmation of identity, undermining the status quo of the state. It is a fascinating emerging, unplanned phenomenon so little theorised by the paradigms of rational action and methodological individuals, which reaffirms the need for the anthropological perspective in the world today.

Next, Diego Meza takes us to Colombia, where mass has gone virtual. His text "'**Mamita: Protect us from the pandemic. Mass via Facebook, a digital ethnography in southwest Colombia**" is a digital ethnography on the Facebook page of the sanctuary in Lajas Ipiales in southwest Colombia. Using this method, he analyses the adaptation of the religious rite, as well as the participants in these events, on the website of this social media due to the quarantine and social distancing measures enacted because of COVID-19. Throughout the text, he reflects on religious reconstruction; changes in times, places and uses; and individualisation processes from the perspective of religious studies.

The redefinition of social practices has been very important in food, as shown by Maria Clara Gaspar, Marta Ruiz, Arantza Begueria, Sarah Anadon, Amanda Barba and Cristina Larrea-Killinger in their text "**Eating in times of lockdown: Managing food, discipline and pleasure**". The article addresses the redefinition of food and social and corporeal relations in everyday life during confinement. Through in-depth interviews with women, the authors analyse the paradoxes of food practices which intensified during the lockdown. The new uses of time allow routines to be reshaped which resignified the act of eating, changing the sociability (in person or remotely), deepening the gender roles and allowing children to participate more.

This leads to the ways childrearing has changed during the lockdown. This is examined by Cecilia Serrano Martinez in her article "**Emotional impact and childrearing of children under the age of 4 during COVID-19**". The text analyses 682 responses to an online survey conducted with families with children under the age of four during the lockdown in Spain. The lack of socialisation and contact with the outside world is offset by the possibility of spending more time with little children who, because of their age, quickly adapt to new everyday routines. Indeed, routines emerge as a key factor in reorganising care, childrearing and the work-life balance from home.

The next text, "**Medical confusion and social uncertainty: Ethnographic notes on the construction of risk during the COVID-19 pandemic in Catalonia**", is an examination of the perceived risk of COVID-19 by Gemma Domènech, Irene Iglesias and Blai Taberner. By means of 17 in-depth interviews, the authors analyse the perception of risk in health and at work, as well as the social and economic uncertainties of exposure to risk. They conclude by asking questions for future

research in these same fields, while expanding the uses and meanings of spaces and reshaping household units and social media.

Changes in our locked-down socialisation are analysed by Laura Fontana in her text ""**Pandemic and rearticulation of social relations**". This article uses 16 brief interviews conducted online (in writing, phone calls or video calls), 125 online surveys and non-participant observation of a courtyard in a residential building in Barcelona to analyse the changes and continuities in social relations and different people's experiences based on the exceptional social distancing, immobility and lockdown measures imposed due to COVID-19. The text draws preliminary conclusions and engages in an exercise of imagination on the future of our social relations after the pandemic.

In cases of emergency, social relations are crucial for subsistence. In their absence, solidarity and voluntarism seek to occupy their place. The text by Àfrica Blades, Ainhoa Concustell, Ada Duran, Rebeca Pérez and Flor De Maria Portilla is entitled "**Solidarity and voluntarism during the COVID-19 crisis**", and it examines the surge in solidarity during the lockdown (in Spain and in Catalonia in particular), primarily by the working classes who heeded the call from organisations that were already working on the ground. The assistance focused on both immediate (humanitarian) aid for people with urgent needs at home (care for the elderly or bringing/delivering food) and the production of personal protective equipment for medical staff and essential workers.

One issue yet to be addressed is learning more about the people who need these charitable initiatives. One answer comes from Sofía Saulesleja and María Jesús in their text "**I'm not afraid of the virus, I'm afraid of the police. Migrant women in situations of vulnerability during the state of alarm in Spain**". After an ethnographic study lasting a year and a half, during the lockdown the authors kept in touch with the group of women they had been studying. The structural vulnerability of these women is due to their irregular status, poverty and the mere fact of being women. This situation was amplified by the pandemic, which also extinguished their chances of mobility and informal work given the risk of being stopped by the police.

The impact of the pandemic and the lockdown on people who depend on the different forms of informal work has often forced them to ignore the lockdown in order to

subsist. The text by Joel Trujillo entitled "**Social life in COVIF-19: An ethnography of scepticism and denialism in 'informal' sectors in Mexico City**" explores the mutual mistrust between the state and populations who have informal legal, political and labour relations with it. Through participant observation, the author reveals how *los informales* have resignified the pandemic by denying (or questioning) its existence, thus generating an opposition to a state that not only puts up obstacles or takes advantage of their activities but also directly attacks their ways of life by trying to imprison them.

Work and its spaces have been radically changed. The text by Yolanda Montejano and Gabriel Rojas, entitled "**Virtual stage for musicians in the middle of the COVID-19**", tells us the story of three Mexican musicians who disseminate their productions and musical performances via the Internet. Based on a virtual ethnography conducted by monitoring social media and personal websites, coupled with semi-structured online interviews, the text shows the musicians' adaptations and strategies to deal with the lockdown measures and the cancellation of public events and concerts due to COVID-19.

Autoethnography also has its space in this special issue, with two texts that use the comparison between their authors' experiences to conduct their ethnographic analysis. The first text is entitled "**Ethnographic diary of three scholarship students in quarantine: Between isolation and collective intimacy**", and its authors, Debora Gerbaudo, Carla Golé and Camila Pérez, carry out an ethnographic study guided by the following questions: How were we going to put the body into our studies in this context? What ethnographic discourses could be produced? What would we do to address the situations of extreme need that would probably get worse, in the regions where we work, in the health emergency? Through these questions, the authors describe and analyse the different ways of being in the lockdown, the different professional junctures in the lockdown and the changes in the everyday lives of the interlocutors in the field and their relationship with them.

The second autoethnographic text is by Pedro Martínez and Fátima Meléndez. Entitled "**Vulnerability and perception: An anthropological approach to COVID-19 in El Salvador**", the manuscript uses two ethnographic vignettes to compare personal and family reactions to the pandemic. The text reveals how the pandemic amplified the vulnerabilities in the social structure and aggravated the mistrust of politics. This

ethnography of everyday scepticism provides a snapshot of the social and political moment in El Salvador, where informal networks of assistance and the resignification of the virus through religion (among other ways) allow times of scarcity, fear and violence to be overcome.

The text by Valentina Sbocchia entitled "**Sixty-five days: Practices of identity resignification during isolation**" uses yet another valuable ethnographic tool, the case study. She conducted in-depth interviews with Vincenzo, whose experience as a carrier of the virus shut inside his childhood home take us an introspective journey towards domestic spaces and the experience of the disease. Experiences like Vincenzo's show us the importance of new routines to structure everyday life, while also revealing a radical shift in the perception of time and space during the physical and social isolation. These factors are culturally redefined and bear a strong relationship with personal self-conception.

The text by Albos, Martí, Mac Millan, Gerez, Gaitán and Sistac is entitled "**Control in the times of the coronavirus**". Through a web survey and semi-structured interviews, it analyses the control exerted on four levels: police, neighbours, space and communication. Thus, it describes how the state controlled the lockdown without reinforcing police measures but instead supported by media that exacerbated the crisis and social control exerted in public spaces (sometimes from private vantage points, like balconies) to activate personal self-control and control *of the other* through everyday practices.

In a similar vein, the text by José-Luis Anta is entitled "**Event and social control. The lockdown regime during COVID-19**", and it serves as an epilogue to this special issue. The author reflects on the "lockdown technologies" deployed, which have entailed a general, planet-wide test of complete domination over life (indoors, confined, self-disciplined) and death, literally. Nonetheless, there is a glimmer of hope for this being who mechanically obeys, namely that the lockdown led us to live in unforeseen ways and allowed us to go back to living with a nature we had forgotten. As the author says… we shall see.

Conclusions

This text has introduced the special issue on the pandemic caused by the coronavirus between March and May 2020. Through an urgent call for submissions, we managed to assemble 16 ethnographic texts based on empirical materials that revolve around aspects like religion, education, food, work, gender, the lockdown, risk, informality and migrations. Using anthropological methodologies adapted to the situation, such as virtual ethnography, mixed methods combining online surveys and remote interviews, and autoethnographies with several voices, the texts show that despite the difficulties, urgent, remote anthropological research was able to be conducted. By putting together disparate studies, we have reached the conclusion that the intensity of the lockdown and the events that occurred have redefined the space we inhabit and our social relations and given them new meanings. What remains to be seen is to what extent the changes that have occurred remain. This contribution questions the assumption that time came to a halt and humanity was on hiatus mode during this period.

To conclude, we have to think about the world to come. To imagine futures, we can look back to philosophy. The philosopher Santiago Alba Rico (2020, not available) perfectly summarised our concern in an interview:

"(…) beyond these horrible differences, social, class, economic, there has been a shared life experience linked with the exceptional time. I'm not talking about the state of alarm, but *this exceptional anthropological state which all of us, even those living in the worst conditions, have shared*. All exceptional states, war, revolution or even a solar eclipse, tend to collectively shake us up emotionally. There is a shift in the framework of collective sensibility. I'm more concerned with the other, *the disproportion between this shared experience and the capacity to construct a collective subject based on it*". (our emphasis in italics)

Between these two extremes, a total and global social phenomenon on the one hand, and the ability to construct a new or different future on the other, is the analysis proposed in this special issue: shared experiences unquestionably open the possibility of defining proposals of change. Perhaps what cause political change are thousands

of individual, unarticulated and unorganised acts, what Scott calls *infrapolitics* (1990), or the emergence of new economic, political and social systems that respond to a public health crisis that now joins the identity, economic and climate crises (Eriksen, 2016). Or perhaps nothing will happen and everything will go back to an old (or new but similar) normal. In any event, empirically learning about the liminal phase in which we are now and exploring the resignification of social life through specific practices enable us to consider both the social effects of the pandemic and the opportunities that emerge in its wake.

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