Covid-19: magnifying pre-existing urban problems

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The effects of the transformations that have been experienced during the Covid-19 global crisis have the potential to endure beyond the frame of the pandemic. This could become a time when a new world order, which emerges out of this crisis, oscillates between socialism and authoritarianism. Meanwhile, cities are the first ground where transformations caused by a crisis find places to manifest. Pandemics, economic recessions, terrorist attacks, and other crises, all leave their traces on the socio-spatial organization of cities and related urban experiences. In this context, this study conducts a critical review of existing conflicting possibilities, where each has the potential to produce changes in urban space and to affect the ways urban space is experienced. The article critically reviews these concepts via the two major interlinked types of non-pharmaceutical mitigation strategies against the pandemic within urban contexts: first, those that restrict movement and interaction, and second, those that concern digital space. The review shows the potential for two alternatives, oscillating between new forms of authoritarianism and social solidarity around the world.

Keywords: post-pandemic transformations, emerging socio-spatial organizations, urban experience, alternative society

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Introduction

Following a crisis, measures addressing the state of emergency may last beyond the temporary circumstances that made them necessary (Finn & Kobayashi 2020). The emerging realities, following the state of emergency, could supersede or influence the previous norms. This is not necessarily negative in itself, but the extent to which the governing bodies expand or maintain these newly gained powers is a cause for concern (Haffajee *et al*. 2014; Kreuder-Sonnen & White 2021). During a pandemic, cities may become the focal points of transformation since they are defined intrinsically by qualities

of cohabitation, proximity, and exchange; therefore, they faced rapid change. The new measures potentially have impacts on the socio-spatial organization of cities and their long-term planning, design, and policymaking (Iranmanesh & Atun 2020; Sharifi & Khavarian-Garmsir 2020). Harvey (2010, 46) described the city as "a complex dynamic system in which spatial form and social process are in continuous interaction with each other." Social and spatial dimensions of urban forms are interconnected; spatial forms contain social processes and society has spatial manifestations (Soja 2009). Accordingly, when a change in the social process occurs, its manifestations can be seen in the spatial dimension and vice versa. Covid 19 mitigation strategies altered social, economic, and political landscapes (Kallio *et al*. 2020). The representations of these alterations can be directly observed in the urban spatial structure. Furthermore, interventions aimed at slowing down the spread of a pandemic transmitted via physical contact are fundamentally spatial and consequently urban related. Social distancing, restrictions on mobility, contact tracing, and digitalization have significant urban dimensions (Mishra *et al*. 2020). The changes that coevolved with the control measures for the pandemic have the potential to lead to restructuring of city life (Sharifi & Khavarian-Garmsir 2020). Such measures may be top-down or macro-political in nature, but their impact on the relationship between society and space manifests in the everyday life of cities (Canoy *et al*. 2022).

As Friedman (2009, 7) believed, "Only a crisis – actual or perceived – produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around." Changes produced during a time of crisis can be employed, developed, and introduced as alternatives to the former situation. A period of crisis, then, can be an opportunity to construct alternatives that may turn out to be beneficial or deconstructive for different social classes.

It is difficult to comprehend which mitigation practices, that have been exercised as the *new norm*, will endure, becoming intrinsic parts of everyday life. A crisis can create social solidarity via grassroots movements. On the other hand, governing bodies with authoritarian tendencies could take advantage in the aftermath and normalize the surveillance, repression, self-isolation, division, and nationalist fragmentation that was initially accepted to control the pandemic during the time of crisis. Thus, in a time that embodies opportunity and threat together, the task is to exit the crisis with alternatives that construct a better society.

The current review paper examines the different urban dimensions of socialist imagination and authoritarianism that emerged out of the pandemic and are evident in the literature. It builds a theoretical framework by cross-examining the seminal literature regarding society and space (namely: Smith 1984; Lefebvre 1996; Taylor 2004; Harvey 2001, 2010; van Dijk 2012; Jasanoff & Kim 2015). We explore these concepts through the lens of major pandemic mitigation strategies and show how they have influenced work, privacy, and the right to the city. Ultimately, we render possibilities that oscillate between socialist imagination and authoritarianism tendencies.

Glimpses of new social imaginaries

Throughout history, periods of crisis have produced change. Based on those changes, it was feasible to construct new alternative societies. Through those alternatives, visions of utopian or dystopian futures could be attained. More so than the consciousness of socialism and its ideals, difficulties experienced in everyday life during crises can provoke movements that imagine and create socialist alternatives. Jasanoff and Kim (2015, 19) articulated *social imaginaries* as "collectively held and performed visions of desirable features (or of resistance against the undesirable)." In this way, an imaginary can be considered a shared conception of an ideal society. For better or worse, it is evident that various visions of a new imaginary, albeit contextual, societies had been glimpsed during the Covid-19 pandemic (Kallio *et al*. 2020).

Social imaginaries are collective and their advantage resides in their performative dimension that has the potential to turn plans into actions (Jasanoff & Kim 2015). The rise of new wisdom amid the Covid-19 pandemic encourages collective action for producing more egalitarian everyday life experiences. Lefebvre's concept of *the right to the city*, as a collective right, also argued that socialist transformation could be brought about by possessing the right to co-organize the means of collective consumption in the city. Imaginaries, in this case, can be considered transformative forces

– motivated by social values and norms – that influence the manifestation of political and physical settings (Certomà 2021, 67).

Taylor (2004) indicated that social imaginaries are deeper and more complex than the individual's conception of the future. Rather, they are collective conceptions of interconnectedness and social existence; these imaginaries feature societal expectations for the future. Social imaginary, in Taylor's (2004, 23) analysis, is a "common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy." Therefore, considering that overcoming a crisis has often been possible by a collective response; the emerging new imaginary can manifest transformations in the physical setting of the everyday life of cities. For instance, following London's cholera pandemic of 1854, sanitary sewage facilities and ventilation were provided for all parts of the cities since it was not feasible to save the elite without protecting the less privileged (Brody *et al*. 2000; Halliday 2001). The Covid-19 pandemic brought the issue of overcoming a crisis through collective response to the fore again.

In the coronavirus crisis, the most vulnerable people were not necessarily being helped by the ruling powers but by other people (Barata *et al*. 2020; Kallio *et al*. 2020; Ortega & Orsini 2020; Wilkinson 2020; White *et al*. 2021). The emerging literature reveals numerous instances of this phenomenon. Ortega and Orsini (2020) showed that, in Brazil, the lack of coherent governmental action regarding the pandemic created solidarity among the lower socio-economic classes, forming effective bottom-up actions (also see Favilla & Pita 2020; Kallio *et al*. 2020). Córdoba, Peredo and Chaves (2021) showed how grassroots movements in the Andes softened the impact of very strict national lockdowns for the local population. Regarding South Africa, Jamieson and van Blerk (2021) showed the strengthening of social solidarity through civil society organizations and local community culture. As observed in Latin America, Leetoy and Gravante (2021) found that social capital generated via grassroots movements during the pandemic that have the potential to improve city and community resiliency. Moreover, Lorini and Marx Gómez (2021) related how local social approaches quickly adapted new technologies to their advantage in fighting the pandemic in the most socio-economically divided neighbourhoods of Cape Town. For example, the nature of social distancing – physical separation or minimization of human interactions – seems contradictory to social solidarity but may emerge as a form of collective consciousness when communities employ it as a technology for reaching their common goal (Mishra & Rath 2020).

In many cases, the pandemic created reforms in anti-authoritarian social movements. Ho, Fong and Wan (2020) reflected on the successful application of the bottom-up and self-disciplinary actions of citizens during the Hong Kong protests despite the strict top-down Covid-19 restrictions that targeted the protesters. Such bottom-up movements might look insignificant from the broadest perspective of the pandemic, but they motivated change in the nature of the anti-authoritarian social movement (Mendes 2020). As Harvey (2001, 188) wrote long before the pandemic:

> In some instances and places, loss of confidence in the state apparatus and political parties has resulted in the coalescence of political thinking around ideals of local and people-based action as the main means to humanize, ameliorate, transform or in some instances even to revolutionize the qualities of urban life.

It is undeniable that the spatial distribution of the pandemic has been focused on economically disadvantaged, minority, and segregated communities (Gozzi *et al*. 2021; Khanijahani & Tomassoni 2021; Torrats-Espinosa 2021; Yu *et al*. 2021). Nevertheless, the rise of a new wisdom that encourages collective action and produces more egalitarian everyday life experiences is conceivable. Accordingly, bottom-up community actions – as reflections of an intrinsic socialist agenda – have been shown to be significant contributors to mitigating the spread of the pandemic (Lasry *et al*. 2020; Lakew *et al*. 2021; Liu *et al*. 2021).

With a bottom-up perspective, problems are recognized along with possibilities. It could be argued that a social movement may have a transformative role in resolving problems by considering local strengths, manifesting improvements in the built environment, and thus improving quality of life. In a pandemic with spatial restrictions, quality of life depends on locational advantages and the characteristics of one's house, while livelihood depends on the options for maintaining a source of income despite restrictions. The pandemic served as a magnifying glass, allowing close review of pre-existing heterogeneities built into human settlements.

Emergence of new normalized authoritarianism

Crisis periods are pivotal moments since the measures and practices that emerge during the state of emergency can be normalised and start constituting everyday life. Such emergency powers have emerged during wars, natural disasters, pestilence, and more recently, terrorist attacks, with some measures and practices extending beyond the crisis itself (Kemp 2021). The outcomes of the September 11, 2001, attacks exemplify this. Various measures that arose in initial responses to those attacks continue to be employed and their application has spread around the world to prevent similar attacks; these leave their traces, particularly in public domains and related spatial experiences. Similarly, responses to vehicular terrorist attacks have left long-lasting marks on urban public spaces around the world with definition of borders and managed access (Jasiński 2018). Some consider that the Covid-19 pandemic may lead to a period of over adjustment regarding what regulations are considered appropriate during an emergency and what regulations should be maintained for the greater good in the future (Wiley 2020). Such applications and extensions have occurred in not only authoritarian states but also in democratic states that can shift toward authoritarianism during the state of emergency; the extent to which the latter will happen is uncertain (Parry *et al*. 2021). Thomson and Ip (2020, 32) argued that the extent to which emergency measures have been practised around the world is alarming, showing tendencies toward "authoritarianization in both democracies and non-democracies – a constitutional pandemic of devastating magnitude in its own right."

Government overreach used Covid-19 as a reason to encroach on civic space, and freedom of assembly became a concern early in the pandemic (Bethke & Wolff 2020). Zajak Stjepandić and Steinhilper (2021) argued that the suspension of the right of assembly was one of the first and most significant consequences of Covid-19 related regulations in Germany. Joaquin and Biana (2021) asserted that Covid-19 related legislation in the Philippines may have been targeting the freedom of assembly and free speech in disguise. For Australia, Mazerolle and Ransley (2021) expressed concerns about how the improper enforcement of these restrictions could infringe on civic rights and become institutional corruption.

In some cases, lack of attention to Covid-19 mitigation measures was used as a control measure against ongoing civil protest. In Iran, some governments took anti-governmental protests prior to the pandemic (November 2019) as excuses to push for more curfews and anti-assembly regulations during the pandemic, while also holding back information about the pandemic from the public (Dubowitz & Ghasseminejad 2020). San, Bastug and Basli (2021) contended that existing distrust between the people and the government made the implementation of Covid-19 mitigation measures less effective in Iran.

As Kallio and colleagues (2020) noted, the normalisation of control measures on two scales, both self- and state-control, are being adopted randomly and may diminish or bar against our capacity for resistance. Increasing surveillance, which led to self-isolation and reinforced nationalist fragmentation, has been exercised commonly during the coronavirus crisis and can help ruling powers legitimise utilization of this measure. Notably, all these examples were arising in a world that already was facilitating individuality and isolation (Putnam 2000; Wellman 2002).

Transformations of labour and city

Cities consist of a complex network of trades, exchanges, and services – in other words, non-farming labour. Accordingly, one of the major divisions in urban space is the labour sector. The pandemic divided the job market based on the possibility of remote work (Cetrulo *et al*. 2020). Those whose circumstances allowed them to continue to work from home via digital mediums were considered privileged (Blustein *et al*. 2020; Wang 2021). The practice of measures, such as social distancing and quarantine, most benefits those who can afford it. Indeed, the possibility of remote working for the middle-class is dependent on the physical presence of the working classes at their workplaces. For low-income workers, the more physical presence was required meant more exposure to potential harm; this becomes even more divisive for informal workers and minorities who might not receive equal access to healthcare (Câmara & Silva 2020). Therefore, the practice of quarantine and the risk of infection are not equal for all social classes (Kantamneni 2020). The perceived liberty of not being

spatially confined by one's work can become a desirable social imaginary, influencing many urban dimensions from the centralization or decentralization of office space and limits on public transportation to the routines of everyday life. Such crises are, in fact, the moments when extant class conflict is experienced more intensively.

Digital space requires capital and specialization of labour. Just like the city itself, digital space can cause segregation; those who have the means to be productive digital actors will have better chances of utilizing it to their advantage (Zheng & Walsham 2021). Different degrees of access to the digital web and to proper tools and education have the potential to widen the gaps between different social strata (Robinson *et al*. 2021). Even though everyday life for many classes in cities has been slowly subsidized with digital mediums over the past two decades, gaps were more apparent when mobility restrictions were applied during the pandemic. The global pandemic has inflated digital space allowing many activities to change form and become remote (Iranmanesh & Atun 2020). Those with access to digital means of production can take part in the economy without being physically present (Koloğlugil 2015).

It can be argued that the continuation of remote work can affect, in the long term, the monopolisation of high-profit districts of cities. A significant portion of the hierarchies intrinsic to urban form is caused by locational advantages that are the result of competition for capital. Widespread remote work has the tendency to desensitise the critical role of location. Smith (1984, 148) stated, "The mobility of capital brings about the development of areas with a high rate of profit and the underdevelopment of those areas where a low rate of profit pertains." Due to the mobility of capital towards high rates of profit, over-accumulation of capital can be observed in the business districts of cities. As long as the mobility of capital is the driving force that determines the course of development, uneven urban development will be reproduced. This uneven urban development can limit the spatial accessibility of city dwellers based on income levels; money facilitates mobility via means of transportation or locational advantage. This, in a feedback loop, makes it possible to generate more income. The more concentrated that capital is in urban business districts, the less likely it becomes for those urban spaces to be accessed by different social classes. Consequently, over-accumulation of capital in a specific urban space can be considered a mechanism that restricts city dwellers' freedom of access to the city, thus intensifying urban fragmentation, and leading to uneven development patterns. Scholar (2006, 98) wrote, "Unregulated free-market capitalism widens class divisions, exacerbates social inequality, and ensures that rich regions grow richer while the rest plunge deeper and deeper into the mire of poverty." Consequently, it can be argued that one of the potential outcomes of the emerging trend of remote work, which was accelerated by the pandemic, is the lessening of location as a defining factor in seeking opportunities in cities. The proliferation of remote work has the potential of encouraging localised activities (Zenkteler *et al*. 2019).

Conversely, it should be noted that integrating a specific space defined as a workplace into the home can bring about its own set of problems; the current practice of remote work needs adjustments in terms of particular psychological approaches or spatial organisation (Valizadeh & Iranmanesh 2021). Not every household has the luxury of sufficient indoor space to accommodate these emerging activities (Mestrum & Menon 2021). Even when remote work is possible, the mixture of household activities and work might create inequality on the basis of gender as Barbosa (2020) revealed. Nevertheless, the rapid integration of remote work has presented some professions with novel opportunities (Nascimento & Lopes 2020). Each new social imaginary arises with good and bad qualities, and one of the benefits of remote work is its potential to construct elements of a new society by changing the direction of flow of capital; the transposition of capital intrinsically constitutes heterogeneous access to sufficient means of production.

Smith (1984, 149) argued that the imbalance "is nowhere clearer than in the geographical contradiction between development and underdevelopment where the over-accumulation of capital at one pole is matched by the over-accumulation of labour at the other." By lessening the importance of urban business districts, diversion of capital flow away from these areas can be accomplished, and a shift in the disequilibrium can begin by diluting concentrations of capital or labour in disparate parts of the city and its periphery. Valizadeh (2020, 331) contended that transformation of everyday life during the pandemic could lead to the transformation of the socio-spatial structures of cities. Here, the social imaginary is the hope of producing means for socio-spatial equilibrium or the aim of

constructing a society that provides more humanised urban life experiences. According to Smith (1984, 159), "It is not that our goal is some rigidly conceived 'even development'. This would make little sense. Rather, the goal is to create socially determined patterns of differentiation and equalization which are driven not by the logic of capital but by genuine social choice."

Digital freedom/unfreedom: the rise of the surveillance state

Increased surveillance is one of the most significant actions that both capitalist and authoritarian states could take advantage of during the current pandemic, particularly digital tracking of citizens' behaviours in urban space. Contemporary society is becoming more and more dependent on the structure of the digital web. States use digital information for control and private companies trade information about people's choices as commodities. The current pandemic provided a preview of how extreme these practices could become. As urban space becomes intertwined with the digital web, the fight for the right to public space and public space's emerging identity must be addressed. New authoritarianism is no longer only a matter of the relationship between the state and the people; it is also a function of corporate or consumer control over the flow of capital (information) through the digital web.

The internet provides a platform for digital means of production. The internet has become an omnipresent entity in the practice of everyday life, and keeps a long-lasting record of the information produced by users. The era of web2.0 and digital mobile communication has created a new flow of information where people record and share traces of their everyday activities (Seeburger *et al*. 2012; Kitchin 2014). The ever-presence of digital media in the everyday life of cities has caused a shift that transforms the role of citizens from mere consumers of information to co-producers of it (Foth *et al*. 2015). The Covid-19 pandemic revealed the rights to interconnected semi-digital space.

Although this data can be used to expand our understanding of cities (Arribas-Bel 2014; Roberts *et al*. 2018) and it has been effective in developing situational strategies for addressing the pandemic (Li *et al*. 2020), it also can be misused to create new modes of control over everyday life or to affect the liberty and privacy of citizens (Strauß 2011; Smith *et al*. 2012). The use or misuse of digital information is not always performed by the state. In many cases, sharing of digital information is merely a volunteer process for self-protection and care (Menni *et al*. 2020). Additionally, concerns over privacy have been one of the reasons that contact-tracing applications were unpopular with the general population during the pandemic (Fox *et al*. 2021).

These measures of control for urban pandemics came in two major forms: the informal self-governed social distancing and the institutionally enforced state restrictions and surveillance. As Harari (2020, 4) stated, "In this time of crisis, we face two particularly important choices. The first is between totalitarian surveillance and citizen empowerment. The second is between nationalist isolation and global solidarity."

There have been successes in mitigating the spread of Covid-19 by utilising citizens' digital footprints (Hovestadt *et al*. 2021). In Taiwan, the digital tracking of high-risk individuals using traceable ID cards showed unprecedented results (Chen *et al*. 2021; Wang *et al*. 2020). Similar contact-tracing approaches were implemented in South Korea (Lee & Lee 2020), the United Kingdom (Drew *et al*. 2020), New Zealand (Cousins 2020), Iceland and many other countries with significant success (Dar *et al*. 2021). The successful implementation of digital tools in these cases could increase the acceptance of such data collection measures as a new normal (Ting *et al*. 2020). The new normal could be prone to abuse if the legitimacy of having access to geotagged mobile data by the state is observed as reasonable by the public. Such actions could potentially be used to increase the legitimacy of totalitarian surveillance as defence against upcoming waves of Covid-19 spread or future similar circumstances (Harari 2020). The critical importance of data privacy has become central to the discourse regarding the post-Covid-19 world (Cho *et al*. 2020; Dar *et al*. 2021; Park *et al*. 2020).

Accordingly, two main types of tracking have been observed: volunteer participation and involuntary remote surveillance by the state. In most cases, the state cannot mandate the use of these media at the individual level, but access to public facilities might be available only to those who declare their digital signature (Cho *et al*. 2020). If involuntary state surveillance extends beyond the emergency, it could be

considered a hidden form of totalitarianism under the guise of care and compassion. The dilemma over surveillance presents itself as both a survival measure and a threat to the freedom of citizens (Lapolla & Lee 2020; Rowe 2020). The limitations to urban spatial presence became opportunities for urban interactions to be subsidized by digital mediums. The utilisation of this transition, by the state or by private institutions, could affect the privacy of citizens; problems could also arise from the increasing value of digital footprints. Citizens' information, which is often shared voluntarily, has become a commodity that can be utilised for furthering economic or political agendas. Hence, the situation calls for a revised discourse regarding the right to the city.

The right to the (digital) city

The notion of the right to the city is a right to democratise urban space – a collective right to produce and transform the city in the face of dominating attempts to privatise or monopolise it. It is also an inclusive right that facilitates unity against exclusive or individualised rights. On the surface, digital space seems like a social utopia with endless possibilities and inherent rights, but the intrinsic structure of digital space might become a tool for authoritarianism or a new capitalist agenda that sees the citizens, once again, as the users, consumers, or subjects of the space. These agendas could threaten the right to the evolving future city. It can be argued that the right to the digital city reaches beyond freedom of access to information; it must include the rights to the structure of the system, including emerging forms of civic participation. The right to the city is not solely a present issue; rather, it is the collection of the past, present, and future rights of urban dwellers (Lefebvre 1996). As the past has shaped the right to the contemporary city, the current approach will shape the right to the future city.

The contemporary everyday life of the city is interconnected with the digital web (Halegoua 2020). The agglomeration of digital space and physical space forms the emerging space that is the new venue for everyday urban practice. The structure of this semi-digital space is a defining factor in what van Dijk (2012) called the networked society. The extent to which this space affects everyday life is still being established by ongoing events. In digital space, the actions that constitute right or wrong are decided by the people who have unprecedented access to the global digital network via a device in their pockets. The Covid 19 pandemic is part of this interconnected digital space and the life of the city. The revolt against face-identification technology during the Hong Kong protests challenged the omnipresence of government, the critical role of online interactions during the Arab Spring (Alsayyad & Guvenc 2013), and citizens' recordings of police misconduct, are all instances of effective social and political conversations in the digital city.

Increasing surveillance via the digital city to control the Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated that trust is a critical issue in state-citizen relations. The struggle between surveillance and privacy is dually problematic, simultaneously creating a new discourse about citizen empowerment and institutional control over everyday life. Digital space surveillance not only constitutes a form of control by the state; it also becomes a form of control by social peers.

Conclusion

Crisis often leads to change, including changes to cities and space. The impact of these changes is such that if they extend into post-crisis days, restructuring of some of the existing socio-spatial organisations should be expected in the long term. The dynamism of a capitalist society is derived from the logic of capital, but it can be refashioned by some of the measures that emerged from the crisis. While, this shift in the logic of capital can herald a kind of radical openness in the future, the current capitalist system, which rests upon authoritarianism, can also adapt to this change and raise a new authoritarianism (Fig. 1).

The current review has tried to critically examine the emerging literature regarding Covid-19 and urban form from the perspective of the rising new imaginary and authoritarianism. Moreover, it has taken an explicitly anti-authoritarian stance against non-pharmaceutical mitigation strategies such as socio-spatial restrictions and more surveillance, in particular. These actions are executed by authorities
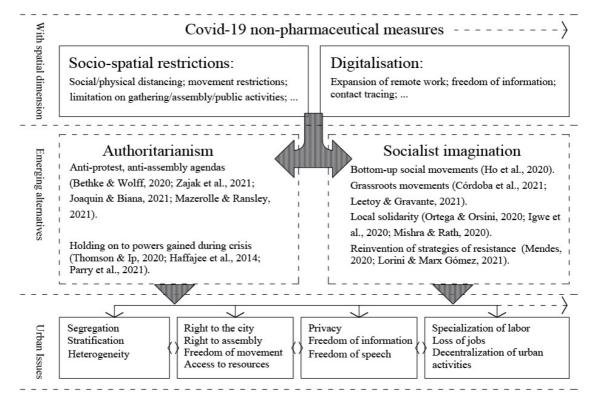
Fig.1. The framework of the review.

calling for an alternative system in the face of the uncertainties that came along with the pandemic. It cannot be denied that the pandemic has magnified many perennial urban issues. On one hand, the top-down mitigation approaches that have been employed during the state of emergency are effectively short-term solutions with potential long-term impacts on social liberties and the right to the city. On the other hand, there seems to be a strong precedent for bottom-up social movements that strengthen solidarity, resilience, and social cohesion. It could be argued that the new imaginaries that manifested in these processes could begin to define potential future directions for urban life.

Overall, the changes emerging from the pandemic should be used to make demands that lead to the democratization of urban space. As the pandemic unfolded, it has exposed socio-spatial injustices between the capitalist system and the working classes. There is the possibility of constructing a socialist democratic society upon the remnants of global capitalism, but it requires a collective whole not an agglomeration of fragmented individuals. Constructing a more humanized urbanism calls for a common consciousness that has already been acquired during the current pandemic. There remains an opportunity for reorganising existing socio-spatial structures. As such, the reconstruction of extant market relations, a return to use-value, collective forms of consumption, and communal ownership of resources can all bring about their utopias.

A part of these changes is manifested through the digital web. The flow of information creates new forms of capital constituting peoples' whereabouts and interests. In this perspective, once again, citizens are considered the consumers of the capital (information) though this is not the reality of everyday life. Urban dwellers are now co-producers of the digital space that is so intertwined with the spatial structure that it is no longer possible to imagine one without the other (Crang 2000). The rapid pace of digitalisation in urban space forms the structure on which the future right to the city and public space are being constructed. The Covid-19 pandemic, as a significant global moment, will have lasting effects on the relationship between the public and the state. The alternative

interpretation of the nexus between freedom and necessary control also can transform the very meaning of urban life. Undermining individuality and people's privacy, even for the greater good, could become a hidden authoritarian agenda, whereas self-governed social measures empower a more democratic approach. In either case, it should be considered how the period of crisis embodies opportunities and threats together.

The emerging post-pandemic world is uncertain and open to diverse alternatives that give rise to changes in systems. This uncertainty and transformative changes can be used for gradual transition to democracies that are more humane rather than toward new versions of authoritarianism. The practices of self-isolation, socio-spatial distancing, restricted access to public spaces, and restricted movement of people increased surveillance and repression. Normalising the exercise of these practices during the time of crisis can legitimise their continued utilisation in the period following the state of emergency. Then surveillance capitalism and new normalised authoritarianism can form and become established as the coronavirus crisis resolves. Throughout history, democracy and human rights have been abused during times of crisis and those abuses led to authoritarian surges. Nowadays, there is evidence of leaders around the world exploiting coronavirus conditions to consolidate their political power and secure their rule (Smith & Cheeseman 2020). This authoritarian agenda is a threat but is not inevitable; it requires democratic resistance. Change occurs, not by those who hold power, but by those resisting and pressuring from the bottom up. The unfolding pandemic has presented the opportunity to rise from the crisis as an alternative society with a more humane, democratic, and egalitarian outlook. The other alternative destines society for a dystopian future.

Acknowledgements

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