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SYMPOSIUM

SOCIAL WORLD AND PANDEMIC

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1. Sociologists and social scientists in general seem mobilized to interpret the social and political impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Is sociological theory up to the challenge of understanding and explaining the phenomenon?

Interesting question – a first in the vast number of interviews I have done on the subject. Sociological theory could not fully grasp the characteristics and the consequences of this virus. This requires specialized knowledge of a very particular type. Further, fully addressing the issue requires a mix of diverse specialized knowledges.

2. How can your research area contribute to examining different dimensions of the phenomenon?

Perhaps one element in this mix – it seems to me – is that the social sciences have the option of studying humans and hence tracing what works and what does not work for humans from a very broad perspective.

3. Is the pandemic provoking deep social, political and cultural changes? Or is it speeding up trends of change already underway? If so, is it possible to glimpse the contours of post-pandemic societies?



We humans have had the experience of several aggressive viruses... so in itself this is not new. But each virus is different. Further as we build more and more on ground that may once have been fields, or water holes, or land swept by continuous winds we are probably pushing more and more viruses (and other forms of life) into a narrower domain and then of course we humans become closer and closer to viruses that may be a s aggressive and as eager to access whatever it is we have in our blood which is of interest – because it enables survival for these viruses.

4. What work(s) of Sociology or Social Sciences can help us to comprehend and dialogue about the challenges underway?

I am sure that there is a growing number of social scientists that are interested in addressing some of these questions. As for me, I am interested in mapping and tracing our use/abuse/destruction of water bodies and fertile land. Many viruses are affected by our destruction of water and land. In many ways we have entered a new epoch in that we have grabbed more and more land for our purposes which has meant more and more viruses now are coming closer to us... for good or for blood!

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