THE WORD *CRISIS* IN A WORLD OF CRISES: THE INTERRELATIONS AMONG SOME OF TODAY'S MOST URGENT GLOBAL ISSUES.

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ABSTRACT

At the end of 2019 the world was shocked by a severe pandemic that disrupted people's everyday life. Far from being just a health crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic has severe impacts on societies and economies, and it exacerbates existing human inequalities (UNSDG, 2020, p.3). It is forcing individuals and governments to reset priorities and to rethink how the new normal should look like. This critical moment in the history of humankind is characterized by the coexistence of multiple interconnected crises: a health crisis is complicated by an economic, a social, and last but not least, the environmental and climate ones. Scientifically, each crisis has its own unique specificities, but at the same time these crises are linked to each other by common factors. Some of them also originate from the same causes and provoke similar effects, having strong socio-economic repercussions on societal structures. While a dominant sentiment caused by the pandemic is the one of uncertaintly, we are certain, instead, that COVID-19 is leaving its mark on our existence as individuals and communities, and that it has been leading to transformative change, often also surprinsigny innovative. 2021 and the next few years are decisive for humanity to recognize the challenges posed by the global crises that we are facing and to take effective action accordingly. We, as individuals, social groups, businesses, institutions, governments, need to rethink the global social structure and the current economic development model, in order to rebuild a more inclusive socio-economic system that has at its heart people's basic needs, human rights and the regeneration of the environment. With this research, we aim to explore some of today's most urgent crises and deepen the understanding of some links that connect them. Finally, we'll provide a series of touchpoints that are fundamental to consider in order to solve today's most urgent global issues.

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INTRODUCTION

The following paper is primarily aimed at discussing the interconnections among those that we identified as the most urgent and important crises of the 21st Century, having as a *fil rouge*, the environmental crisis. On the one hand, the COVID-19 pandemic has been highlighting the existing weaknesses and inconsistencies of the current socio-economic system, which are slowly leading to its collapse; on the other hand, it has also been reminding us of the intimate relationship that exists between humans, animals and the environment (UNSDG, 2020, p.4). As the world is undergoing a phase of converging crises, it is crucial to understand the factors that led us to this dramatic stage.

We understand that in order to deal with the complexity of this plurality of crises, looking through one lens and employing one-size-fits-all solutions is inadequate. We need to deepen the analysis and broaden our perspective, connecting the dots among the crises themselves. We believe it is necessary to challenge the dominant narrative, often manipulated to present only a part of the picture, and to build a new one that is more critical and informed.

Addressing the causes and assessing the impact of the COVID-19 health crisis on our socio-economic structure and on vulnerable groups is the presupposition to tailor a future-oriented recovery, that combines human and environmental wellbeing and builds an inclusive economy. As secretary-general of the UN Antonio Guterres urges, our goal should be to build "more equal, inclusive and sustainable economies and societies, that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change and the many other global challenges we face" (GUTERRES, 2020).

In the first section of our work, we will clarify the etymology of the word "crisis" and provide a general definition. In the second section, we will conduct a literature review of today's most urgent global issues as discussed by other intellectuals and organisations. Then, we will shift our focus on those that we identified as the most challenging crises of our time, which we grouped into four macro areas — a heath, an environmental, a social and an economic one. Finally, in the third and last section, we will explore commonalities between the health and environmental crises, and we will provide an overview of the interconnections of these with other crises, shedding light on the importance to understand them as unique elements of the same complex ecosystem. Due to the limited length of this paper we were not able to cover all the literature available on these extremely complex and specific issues.

However, we hope that, by applying a holistic and critical approach to the research, we will be providing a new lens through which we can begin to understand our world in crisis and come up with effective solutions.

1. CLARIFYING THE TERMINOLOGY

The word "crisis" goes back to the ancient greek noun "κρίσις - krísis"[3], which means "separation". It derives, in fact, from the verb "κρίνω - krinō"[4], meaning "to separate", which was originally used to define the conclusive part of the harvest cycle, called *threshing*. Threshing consists in the separation of the grain from the straw or chaff of a cereal plant. So, the original meaning of the word "to separate" and, by extension, "to distinguish" and, then, "to choose", originated in the agricultural world. Later, the term "crisis" found application in different contexts, including the judicial one, and acquired other meanings, such as "to judge" or "to decide". In the Iliad, Homer used the verb "krino" referring to judicial rulings, whether just or unjust. Therefore, this expression on some occasion could assume a negative meaning – for example, when referred to a death sentence—. On other occasions, the discerning process could lead to the best outcome to the problem – such as the end of a war (CANTARELLA, 2012). In common usage, the term crisis began to have a negative connotation, especially since it started to be used in the medical context to indicate the critical stage of a disease. As reported by the ancient greek doctor Galeno (II-III sec. d.C.), in medicine, the term crisis was used by doctors to refer to a "rapid change in the course of a disease, that leads to either recovery or death (MALASPINA, 2013). In a very powerful image, the Italian Professor Ermanno Malaspina pointed out that a crisis is a phase of illness, for man as for society, when the ultimate existential crossroad appears: death or life (MALASPINA, 2013).

Furthermore, dictionary.com defines the word "crisis" as "a stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events, especially for better or for worse, is determined; turning point" and, secondly, as "a condition of instability or danger, as in social, economic, political, or international affairs, leading to a decisive change". The Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, instead, describes a crisis as "a time of great danger, difficulty or doubt when problems must be solved or important decisions must be made".

Therefore, if we reflect on the etymology and definition of the word "crisis", we can find a positive nuance. Crises are crucial moments of discernment and insight, when we are called to make a decisive choice, possibly a choice for life. This is the crisis' dynamic aspect:

[3] To pronounce kre'-ses
[4] To pronounce kre'-no

the opportunity to choose one alternative over the other. So, a crisis represents the necessary precondition to change and improvement.

In this context, we consider it appropriate to explore the meaning of the adjective *"systemic",* as it describes many of today's main crises. According to the definitions given by the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries and dictionary.com the adjective systemic means "of, relating to or involving the whole of a system, especially the human body or a society", or "relating to or noting a policy, practice, or set of beliefs that has been established as normative or customary throughout a political, social, or economic system". The expression is commonly used in relation to phenomena like *systemic poverty*, *systemic inequality* and *systemic racism*, which are embedded as common illnesses within the predominant social, economic and political systems.

Referring specifically to racism, the Cambridge Dictionary defines *systemic racism* as "policies and practices that exist throughout a whole society or organization, and that result in and support a continued unfair advantage to some people and unfair or harmful treatment of others based on race". Systemic racism, alternatively referred to as *institutional racism*, lies in "the existence of systematic policies or laws and practices that provide differential access to goods, services and opportunities of society by race" (MORGAN J. D. et al., 2018).

Finally, shifting our attention to the mass media coverage of the topic of climate change, in 2019 the Guardian changed its terminology and introduced in its style guide new terms that more accurately reflect the urgency and severity of the environmental crises that the world is facing. According to the Guardian editor-in-chief, Katharine Viner, the expression "climate change" could sound quite passive and soft and should be replaced by a stronger language, which better describes the catastrophic situation we are confronted with. The updated version of the Guardian and Observer style guide considered the terms "climate emergency, crisis or breakdown", as the most appropriate to show the seriousness and the amplitude of climate change impacts (CARRINGTON, 2019).

In the next chapter we will illustrate some references to other authors, institutions and projects, which have guided our identification of the object of the present research. We will see that some of these do not use the term "crises", preferring instead the words "issue" or "problem". This sheds light on the diversity of perspective and terminology that one can adopt.

2. IDENTIFYING TODAY'S MAIN GLOBAL CRISES

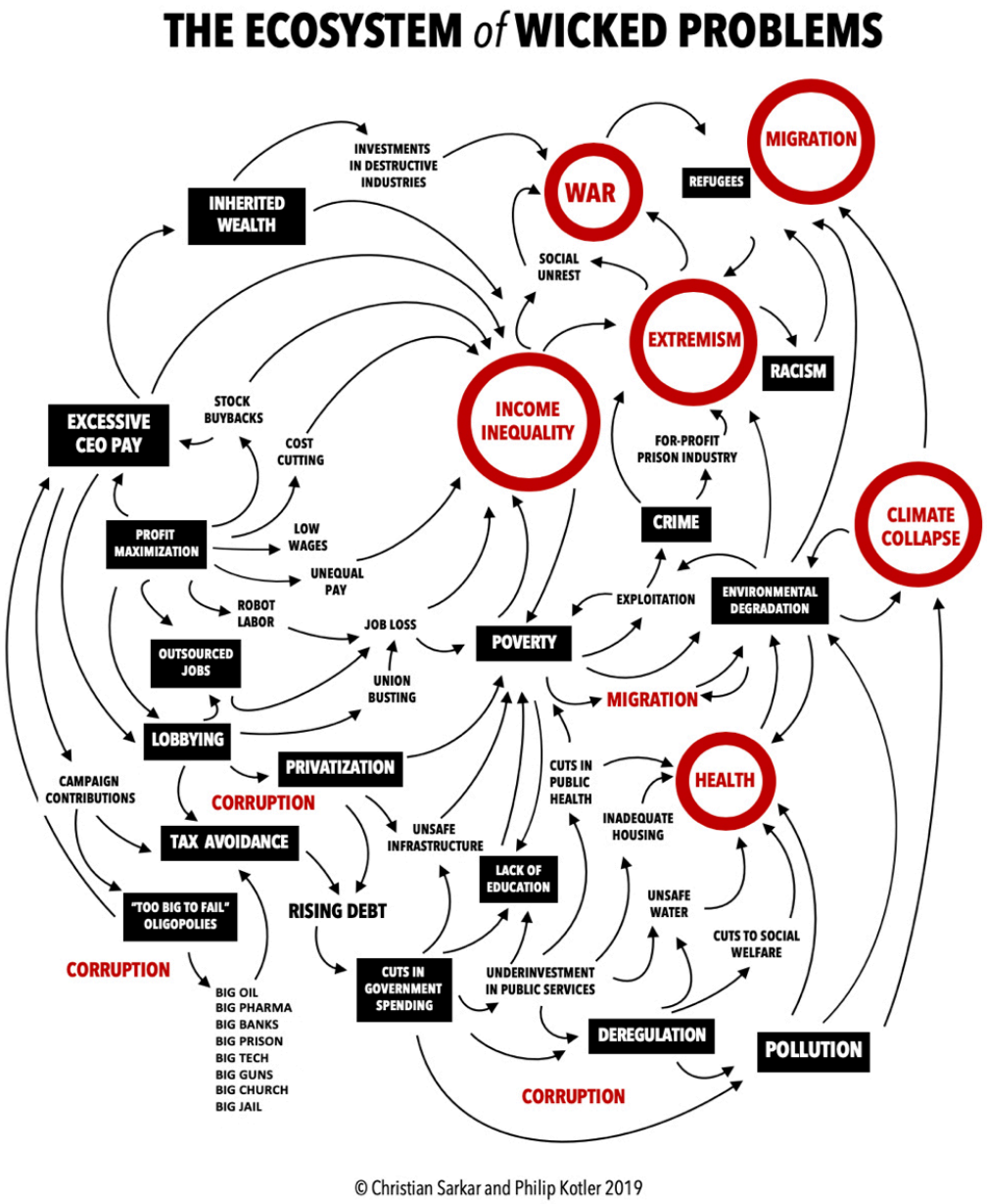
Many of the complex issues the world is facing have often been referred to as global issues. In their work on this subject, titled *Global Issues: An Introduction*, K. Hite and J. Seitz support the idea that the growing interdependence between nations has resulted in "new concerns and issues" that have increasingly been "recognized as global in nature". As the authors explain, it is impossible for a single nation to solve global issues alone and when not solved, this kind of issue "adversely affects the lives of many people on this planet" (HITE, SEITZ, 2016, p.1).

Similarly, the United Nations recently pointed out 22 "Global Issues", that "transcend national boundaries and cannot be resolved by any one country acting alone" (UN, 2020). The Global Issues overview, that is not intended to be exhaustive, is aimed at illustrating the major problems that all global citizens should be aware of. These represent at the same time the contextual ground for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework — which has been built with the ambition to tackle and solve those same urgent global challenges. The 17 SDGs are a new paradigm for global sustainable development to be achieved by 2030, set and made public by the United Nations in occasion of the Climate Paris Agreement in 2015.

Another interesting approach aiming at understanding the interconnections among global crises is that of *The Wicked7 Project,* created by Christian Sarkar – author, entrepreneur consultant and artist – and Philip Kotler – the father of modern marketing. The expression "wicked problem" was coined and explored for the first time by Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber in their paper "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning", where they illustrated the characteristics to identify this kind of problem. With the expression *wicked* problems they referred to cultural or social problems that are subjected to contradictory or incomplete

knowledge and that are connected to each other by intricate co-dependencies that make the resolution of the problem complex and never definitive (RITTEL, MELVIN, p. 160-161). So, as they are always ongoing, the process of resolution should be continuously reassessed and managed. Moreover, a wicked problem has innumerable causes and it often occurs in a social context, when constant changes or unprecedented challenges have to be faced (SARKAR, 2020). The Wicked 7 are: climate collapse, inequality, hate, war, corruption, health & livelihood, population & migration.

Mr. Sarkar stressed that these problems need to be worked on simultaneously, because they are all deeply interconnected, and have to be addressed through a "worldwide collaboration and cooperation". In fact, it is impossible for one single entity, be it an institution, a government or a business, to solve them alone. According to the authors of the project, the first step towards a solution is to recognize and understand their complexity, which they represent visually by mapping an Ecosystem of the Wicked7.



To solve a wicked problem there can only be multiple solutions, that must be based on the peculiarities of the problem itself and of the actors involved in it. It is extremely important to take these aspects into account because sometimes a measure, that is meant to positively impact one issue, can have unintended adverse consequences on another one. The Wicked7 project is aimed at building an open-collaboration platform that gathers the knowledge and the experience of scientists, intellectuals and experts in different areas and from different countries. This could help to create and implement “virtuous solutions”, first modeled on the theoretical and abstract plan and, then, tested in reality (SARKAR, 2020).

In this research, we systematized some of the the world most important crises in four thematic areas — health, environmental, social and economic. We believe that the same areas, by enclosing a plurality of crises, can be identified as ‘macro-crises’ themselves — hence why sometimes we will refer generally to the “health” or the “environmental” crisis.

As critical components of the health crisis, we focused on pandemics and air pollution. Between the 31st of December 2019 and the 14th of April, more than 136,5 million cases of COVID-19 have been reported, including almost 3 million deaths (ECDC, 2021). In 2016, 13.7 million people died as a result of living or working in an unhealthy environment (WHO, 2016), while in 2018 the burning of fossil fuels – such as coal and oil – was responsible for 8.7 million deaths globally (MILMAN, 2021).

As part of the environmental crisis we included climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss. As far as climate is concerned, the decade of 2010-2019 has been the warmest ever recorded in history and, last year, the concetration of carbon dioxine (CO^2) and other greenhouse gases in the athosphere reached all time records. Earth's energy imbalance is resulting in a climate breakdown, and its impact is experienced all over the globe and affects life and livelyhoods. Experts predict that if the current rate of warming persists, by 2050, one-half of all plant and animal species will be threatened with extinction (O' HAIRE, 2019). Moreover, unlimited exploitation of natural resources and the destruction of wild habitats are added reasons of why one million species are today at risk of extinction (UN, 2020).

Starting to build links with other issues, as components and causal effects of a social crisis, we add onto our argument racism, human mobility and gender inequality. Communities of color are generally victims of institutionally rooted racist policies and practices, such as police brutality and other systemic inequalities and injustices. They are also among the most vulnerable social groups, being exposed to higher rates of pollution and to a higher risk of contracting severe illnesses, such as COVID-19 (AL GORE, 2020).

To conclude our statement, we identified an economic crisis, represented by the economic inequality among countries and different groups of people, an obsolete capitalist system and an unsustainable dominant linear economy. In 2020 the world has been experiencing the worst financial and economic recession since The Great Depression, (GOPINATH, 2020) affecting severely small and medium enterprises, as well as workers of the informal economy and people with caring responsibilities, most of which are women (UNSDG, 2020, p.17). As Guterres states during the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture 2020, "inequality defines our time" (GUTERRES, 2020). An increasingly income and wealth inequality belongs to the reality of more than 70 percent of the world population, and as little as 26 individuals own as much wealth as half of the global population (GUTERRES, 2020).

3. CONNECTING THE CRISES: SIMILARITIES, DIFFERENCES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS

In this section we will, firstly, focus on exploring the similarities and differences between pandemics and climate change. Secondly, we will try to understand how some of the main crises influence each other.

In the context of two main crises — the health and the environmental one —, McKinsey provides an important and in-depth analysis that compares pandemics to climate change, demonstrating how these two global issues share far more analogies than differences. For instance, they both are *systemic*, as their direct and indirect effects spread quickly across the world, increasingly globalised and interconnected, and generate a combination of simultaneous disruptions – for example in relation to supply chains. (MCKINSEY, 2020) They also are both seen as *threat multipliers*, as they have the capacity to trigger multiple crises, with greater and potentially catastrophic consequences, for example aggravating specific vulnerabilities in the healthcare system and socio-economic fabric —as COVID-19 demonstrated in 2020. Pandemics and the climate emergency have severe negative effects on financial and economic systems, the cost of which is far more expensive than those of their prevention (MCKINSEY, 2020). In fact, the UNDP estimates that the average annual economic losses deriving from climate-related disasters account to hundreds of billions of dollars (UNDP, 2020). Since they affect the populations and subpopulations most exposed to risk disproportionally, they are referred to as *regressive*. Moreover, their *nonlinear trend* implies that once reached a certain point, socio-economic impacts grow disproportionally and even disastrously. Due to this, and especially to the fact they both are *non-stationary* — which means that the diffusion and probability of occurrences continuously and quickly changes — it is hard to predict their future trends. Importantly, both pandemics and climate change constitute *physical shocks*, which means that they can only be tackled by understanding and addressing their underlying physical causes, especially relying on scientific expertise. In fact, they require a *science-based approach* in order to set targets and policies able to build adaptation and ensure long-term societal resilience. Finally, these global issues both represent the *"tragedy of the commons"*, which means that individual actions, when driven by self-interest, may constitute a threat to the common good (MCKINSEY, 2020). For this reason, both pandemics and climate crisis can be overcome only through collective and global cooperation.

In relation to the way pandemics and climate change manifest, a difference among the two consists in the fact that, while the effects of the global health crisis are immediate and

evident in the short-term – days, weeks, months, years – those deriving from climate change are gradual and accumulate over time in the long-term – over years, decades, centuries.

We identified a few consequential relations of a different nature between the pandemic and the environment: on one hand, the drastic "lockdown" measures adopted by governments to ensure the safety of their citizens and contain the spread of coronavirus had a temporary positive environmental impact, despite causing a deep economic recession (MCKINSEY, 2020); conversely, climate change and environmental destruction are drivers to the rise of new infectious diseases (AL GORE, 2020).

With regard to the former, in fact, during the period in which governments enforced a local or national lockdown, social and mass media quickly exposed the positive impact that the pandemic was having on the environment. Clearly, this phenomenon further proves that ordinary human activities have a huge impact on the environment and on climate breakdown.

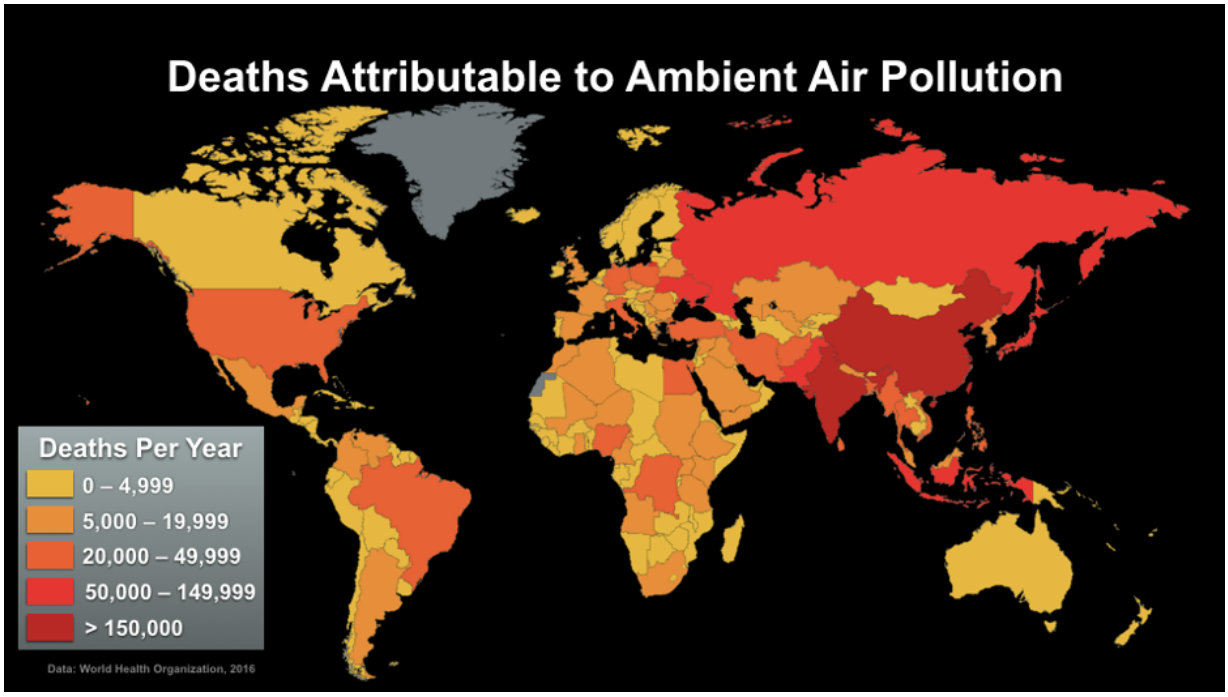
With respect to the latter, instead, the devastation of ecosystems is directly connected to the incidence of diseases passing from the non-human animals and plant kingdoms to humans, through the phenomenon known as spillover. The continued expansion of human settlements, accompanied by the exploitation of natural resources, leads to the distruction of wild natural habitats. As we destroy ecosystems, we facilitate the spreading of many viruses, that are normally in perfect equilibrium with the environment. These viruses are often unknown to us, therefore, we lack the knowledge and tools necessary to defend ourselves from them (QUAMMEN, 2020). For example, an extremely rich and complex ecosystem like the Amazonian forest concentrates thousands of viruses that provide its own balance. If humanity will keep destroying the Amazon and other natural habitats, new epidemics like the one caused by Coronavirus 19 are very likely to arise. (ARTAXO NETTO, 2020). Moreover, the rise in temperature has consequences on the incidence, transmission and spread of vector-borne diseases – such as malaria, dengue, chikungunya, zika and yellow fever – since many vectors need warm temperatures to proliferate and are, therefore, geographically limited by cooler ambient temperatures (ROCKLON, DUBROW, 2020).

Environmental degradation, wild habitats disruption and climate change are threatening not only people but also the existence of other living species all around the world. Experts warn us that if we maintain the current trend of global warming, by 2050 one-half of all plant and animal species could be extinguished (O'HARE, 2017).

Furthermore, the climate breakdown exacerbates other problems. The report issued in 2014 by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) pointed out that extreme weather and other climate-related hazards constitute a threat to global food stocks and human security (GOLDENBERG, 2014). In fact, the climate crisis could lead to food and water

shortages, infectious deseases and conflicts over natural resources. It represents “a catalyst for conflict” (UN75, 2020), since it drives socio-economic tensions and could also force millions of people to move from their homes, aggravating the migration crisis already underway. Moreover, the burning of fossil fuels, whilst causing global warming pollution and climate change, releases the toxic particulates that undermine air quality and lead to more diseases.

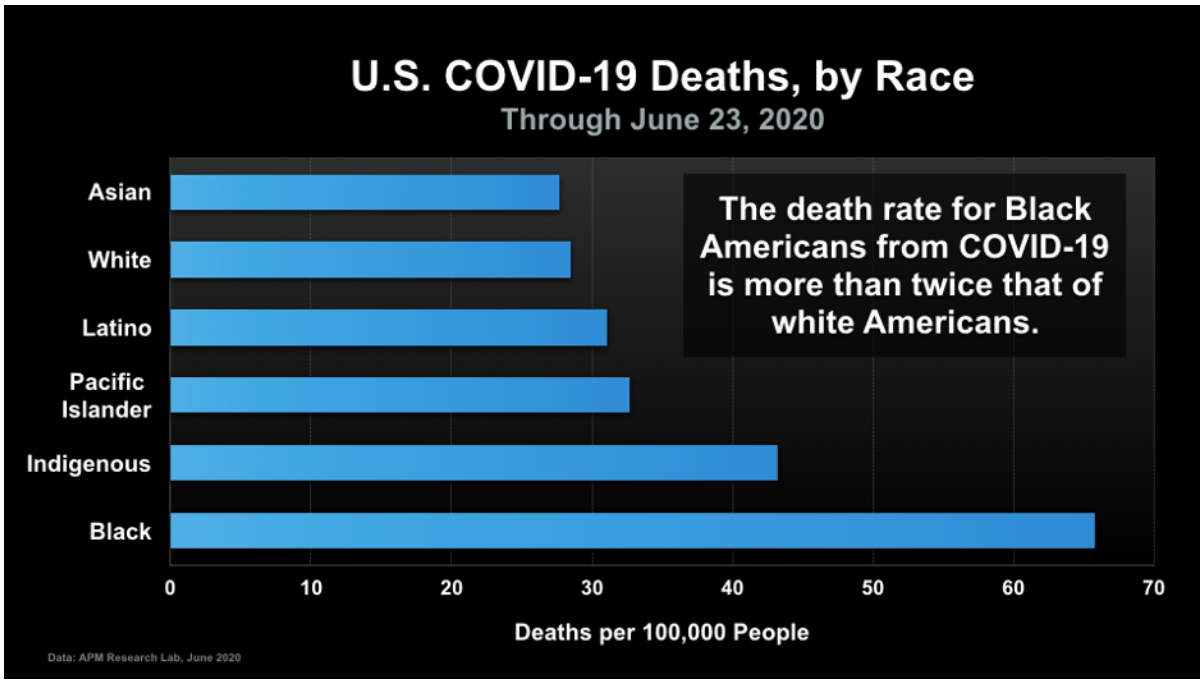
Addressing specifically the issue of air pollution in relation to the health crisis, Al Gore illustrated – in occasion of the Climate Reality Leadership Corps training 2020 – that air pollution kills about nine million people a year. That is why air pollution makes people more vulnerable to respiratory diseases, such as COVID-19.



After having analysed the connections between the health and environmental crises, we proceed to consider some social and economic links. To do this, we asked ourselves the following questions: who carries the main responsibility and who is more affected by the consequences of the reality that we presented so far? On one-side, despite being the minority, richest people have a large ecological footprint and cause far more damage than hundreds of millions of poor people (HARVEY, 2020). “The world’s richest nations are the most responsible for the climate crisis”, affirmed the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres (GUTERRES, 2020). On the other, the gravest consequences of the health, environmental and climatic crises are suffered by the poorest people. In fact, climate change-related health impacts affect low-income communities, communities of color, immigrants, the

elderly, children and people with mental illnesses and pre-existing medical conditions, among others, disproportionately (AL GORE, 2020).

The fact that the most vulnerable social groups – such as black and indigenous people and other minority ethnic groups – have to face several threats in their everyday life is not new. They have been facing racism over centuries. In its last report addressing the linkage between COVID-19, systemic racism and global protests, the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent pointed out that many developing and even developed countries responded to the pandemic disregarding race and the particular risks which people of African descent are exposed to. Black people are severely hit by the pandemic because of several factors that are a direct reflection of a system structured on racial discrimination, which manifests itself also by setting "racialized priorities" (UN, 2020). They are victims of heavy inequalities in terms of access to health care and treatment, which increases mortality and morbidity among them. Moreover, very often their poor living and economic conditions prevent them from respecting safe practices, such as quarantining, working from home or taking work breaks, distancing, wearing masks and washing hands frequently. In fact, the black community accounts for a large part of the "essential" workforce that must be available, enabling a larger proportion of the population to stay at home to reduce the desease transmission.



Another social group that needs special protection is the one of the "people on the move". In June 2020, on the occasion of the launch of a new policy brief on the impact of

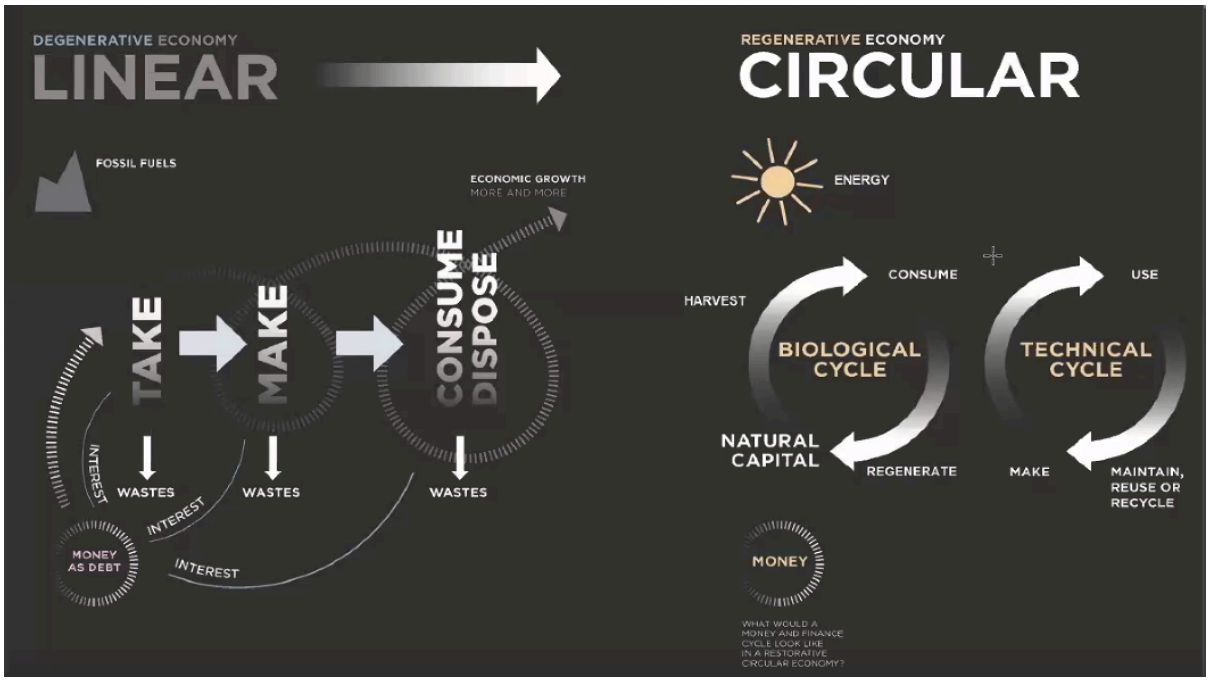
COVID-19 on Refugees, Idps and Migrants, Antonio Guterres stressed that there are "millions of people on the move" – such as refugees, internally displaced persons or migrants – who are facing "three crises rolled into one": in the first place the health crisis. These people are highly exposed to Coronavirus since they often live in crowded conditions, lacking basic services such as health care, water, sanitation and nutrition. Second, they are dealing with a socio-economic crisis. Most of them have no access to social protection because they work informally. Third, "people on the move face a protection crisis", Guterres added. As far as the virus is spreading around the world, many countries are closing their borders to limit contagion, regardless of the need for protection of asylum seekers.

Finally, on top of the already explored crises, we believe that the world is experiencing an economic crisis, this year accentuated by the spread of Coronavirus. However, the connection between the global economic regression and the pandemic is not the only one worth to mention. Capitalism as an economic system is proving increasingly problematic in its own nature – both because it is failing to support a sustainable economic growth and because it is worsening the social and economic inequality among countries. It is built by and for rich countries that exploit, not only the natural resources, but also the workforce of developing populations.

According to Mazzuccato and Jacobs, the capitalist system has different and profound flaws, which have, besides economic, also social and environmental implications. Firstly, it is no longer generating stable or strong growth — where the 2008 crisis, and the slow recovery following it are the main evidence to it (JACOBS, MAZZUCCATO, 2016). Secondly, rising inequality and stagnant living standards have been characterising it for the last four decades — with an increasing divergence between average incomes and overall economic growth even in the most advanced economies. Thirdly, capitalism's historical modes of production and consumption are a main cause of emission of greenhouse gases – in particular carbon dioxide – making climate change and environmental risk two important consequences and demonstrating factors of the dysfunctionalism of capitalism as a system (JACOBS, MAZZUCCATO, 2016).

Strongly related to this, and again highlighting the connection between the economy and the environment, today's dominant economic system — a linear economy — represents another component of the socio-economic crisis that the world is facing. This is characterised by a take (extraction of raw resources) - make (creation and consumption of goods) - dispose (disposal of obsolete or unfashionable goods) design, which is no longer serving societies in a way that can keep up with their transformation (SARIATLI, 2017). A linear economic system

is unsustainable because it fails to keep the pace with the demographic growth, especially due to the fact that the biosphere which humanity inhabits is exhausting its limited resources.



FINAL REMARKS

In this research paper, we analysed the concept of *crisis* and exposed some literature regarding the interrelations between the most urgent crises that the world is coping with today. We recognise that all that we mentioned above is saddening and perhaps discouraging — although necessary to learn, if one is to try to find a solution — especially considering that many governments are slow, unwilling or not ambitious enough to step foreward and revolutionise the way things are done.

We believe that the main way to lift one's spirit after acklowedging the critical status that the earth and the global population are in, is to take action on an individual, familiar, collective and business level but also on a local, national and global one. This is necessary in order to find and implement innovative and transformative solutions that start small, that are scalable, and that take into account not just individual interest or private corporate profit, but the ecosystem as a whole, with particular attention to the most disadvantaged realities. We understood that after analysing these global crises from a holistic perspective and assessing the interdependencies among them, the actions that need to be taken in order to address these problems must, instead, be highly targeted and trickled down to the everyday actions of citizens, businesses and governments.

It is essential that both public and private sectors invest consistently in building the capacities to anticipate change, to assess and manage risks and adapt to the deep transformations we are experiencing.

Governmental action is fundamental in order to incentivise and foster action in the private sector too. For example, the first step to tackle deep inequality is to redestribute wealth, which can be done by investing importantly in public services to enhance healthcare, education, urban mobility and transport, as well as through land reform. A redistribution of land ownership rights allows to shorten and localize the food supply chain, that, consequentially, become more socially and environmentally responsible and contributes to build resilient communities. Moreover, it is necessary to relocate and de-globalize economic activities, especially food production and other essential goods, and reconnect producers with consumers. The more activities we keep within the domestic boundaries and local communities, the more inclusive, fair and resilient our post-pandemic societies and economies will be.

In this context, it is worth highlighting the role that agriculture plays in this discourse. In fact, the agricultural sector is among the biggest emitters of CO_2, contributing to the climate emergency. Regenerative agriculture — based on farming principles and practices that seek to rehabilitate and enhance the entire ecosystem — can help us reverse the climate crisis by pulling carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in the soil. This system helps farmers to deal with the negative impact of climate change by making their farms more resilient and adaptive. Moreover, it helps them mitigating climate change through carbon sequestration, making them part of a wider solution to the crisis. (CLIMATE REALITY PROJECT, 2019).

On a private level, today's business can represent a force for good, where 'business as usual' must be transformed into a more resposible form of business that aims to accelerate sustainable impact and benefit society as a whole. For example, B Corporations — a community of businesses that balance profit with purpose, hence that benefits people and planet too — are rising, becoming a symbol of positive change in capitalism. Similarly, the linear economy can and should be gradually overtaken by a circular economy approach — aimed at maximising the lifecycle of products, minimizing waste, and preserving the environment. Organisations such as the Ellen MacArthur Foundation – the creators of the circular economy framework – provide free or paid resources and educational opportunities for individuals who want to understand how to make a transition from a linear to a circular economy.

In fact, on a community and individual level, education is key to encourage responsibility and awareness. The power of awareness is enourmous if accompanied by solidarity, that enables individuals to recognise their privilege, when they have it, and to put it at the service of those who are underprivileged and who need support, regardless of physical borders and citizenship. We believe that it is fundamental to learn to talk and to listen to everybody, in order to generate human connections that are deeper and more effective. It is essential to open as much as possible the debate in regard to all the above mentioned issues, giving the central stage not only to the academic, expert and scientific community, but also to that part of civil society that lives on its skin the direct negative effects of these crises.

In light of what we discussed in this paper, we identify the present moment as a turning point, *a crisis of crises*. It has become increasingly clear that all things are deeply interconnected. Once we have understood and acknowledged this, we might then realise that often when we advocate for a civil or political movement, we are actually unconsciously advocating or we should consciously advocate for others, too. At this point, we are being given the opportunity to make the right decisions. It is through cooperation and harmonized efforts that we must build more equal, fair, healthy and resilient societies and drive transformative changes that ensure a stable and prosperous life for all living beings.

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