



Covid-19, Risk and the Global Society of Mask

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Abstract

Proximity has become our Achilles heel. We live in a global, tightly networked world whose keyword is "safety gap"! Individuals, families, communities, cities, states, and countries will keep their distance from each other. The use of masks has become a kind of metaphor to depict a wide range of hazards and our human insecurity in the middle of this global chaos. Not in vain: a loss of 3 million human lives and 30 trillion USD financial loss only in 2020 is merely part of the Covid-19 pandemic cost calculation. We face the most fundamental questions of sociology: Trust, which is the cornerstone of our social life, is threatened. The epidemic has roots in human lifestyles and choices as well as in decision-making. Thus, the concepts of risk and risk society have become more relevant. This paper discusses this reality against the risk society literature background and utilizes facts related to the pandemic in a global sphere. The purpose is to perceive how a global risk society is formed around the pandemic and how normative choices, reasonable measures, and expert solutions will lead to an additional sense of insecurity. The content analysis method is applied to this research. The theoretical discussion of the study is supported by material consisting of online press material, expert comments, interviews, video, etc. Research shows that with the pandemic, the function of modern institutions in societies has become both emphasized and criticized. Also, confidence in the expert

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system has been on a collision course. In parallel, these processes have increased uncertainty, which contributes to improving social reflexivity in the face of global challenges.

Keywords: Covid-19, Pandemic, Risk, Risk society, Trust, Nation-State, Abstract Systems

1. Introduction

In late May 2020, the current author had to return to Finland, from India, due to the outbreak of Covid-19. At that point, the pandemic situation in India was still, in terms of circumstance, better than in many European countries. At the transit in Paris, the sight of empty runways of the Charles de Gaulle Airport, which was once one of the most crowded transit airports in the world, would suggest that a sad new normal for the world was looming on the horizon. However, what struck the author as a surprise happened when the long journey ended at the final destination, Helsinki, and the author joined the friends who had come to the airport to welcome the newcomer: their eyes would reveal fear and avoidance despite remaining hidden behind their verbal sweetness.

Fear mixed with greetings, as if they were facing a Covid-19 patient for the first time! Of course, the newcomer was not ill. The only thing distinguishing him from the welcomers was that the newcomer was wearing a mask while they were not. Ironically, having a mask on was interpreted by the author's friends as being a sign of sickness, while the friends themselves could have been the target of avoidance for not wearing a mask. It seemed that the codes for normal social interaction and reunion were missing. After two days of meeting with suspecting faces on the streets of Helsinki (in one instance, not having a mask on, an older woman, who would typically have been part of the risk group, was strangely staring), led to the pledge to stop wearing a mask, just as the others did. For the author, June 2020 marks the date of abstinence from wearing the mask, amid the escalation of the pandemic, and of leaving the assumed Covid-19 risk group, and enjoying the normal looks, again.

It took a while to realize that due to the decline in the number of people infected with the virus in Finland, at that time, people had made an implicit assumption that individuals with a mask are likely to be diseased. As such, the first memory of return to Finland in 2020 was the experience of a socially constructed "threatening subject" in a new normal masked society, which provoked doubts and concerns, even when wearing a mask.

For the first time in the Helsinki Airport, confronting friends represented an instance of a striking phenomenon: Fearing the known! Before that, people used to fear the unknown, hence the term Xenophobia. However, Covid-19 made people fear the familiar, the known. Indeed, the friends' reservation of meeting with a newcomer at the airport emanated from a misunderstanding concerning the use of a mask; however, it is equally true that using a mask represented a shift in the codes for the social interactions: while wearing the mask was "normally" serving to protect the individual from the outside world threats (even in a religious context), in the new normal, it primarily serves to protect the outside world from a (virus) threat, the wearing of which could itself be potentially a source of threat. Mask represents a global threat, the user of which may himself be one of its sources; the mask protects the world from the threat of its user!

As a matter of fact, there are several phenomena at personal, national, and international levels (ranging from self-protection to the lockdown of societies internally and externally) that constitute a strike to trust; trust at all levels. In this regard, it should be noted that this study is not limited to an investigation of aspects related to the use of the mask. The mask has a largely metaphorical position. In the opinion of the author, in the current new normal situation, conflicting functions related to the mask and the associated uncertainty will be produced and re-introduced through various protection mechanisms; in the form of various safeguards and containment mechanisms also at the macro-level (e.g., internal barriers of societies; national borders and their associated inconsistent exercise of authority; antibody as an intrinsically produced mask and suspicions related to vaccination, etc.). The use of a mask is therefore not intended to be taken literally.

The study presents examples from different societies, although a comparison of countries' experiences regarding the face of a pandemic has not been the purpose of this study. The research topic is related to a global pandemic, so the author has tried to present a sample of countries, each representing a different kind of story in the face of a pandemic globally. The purpose of the samples is to serve to illuminate the theoretical discussion of the paper and not the actual statement on country-specific situations related to Covid-19.

This debate is initiated by taking advantage of the concept of risk society in the way Ulrich Beck has developed, and Anthony Giddens has further deepened in her reflection on modernity. It is patently evident that the pandemic as a risk-inducing phenomenon has obscured the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity of risk at a global level. Interest in this subject from a sociological perspective lies in the fact that Covid-19 as a comprehensive global risk represents, on the one hand, what Beck calls "the end of others"; a situation in which the risk is no longer discriminating between territories or between the rich and the poor (Giddens, 1990, p.125). On the other hand, given the staggering number of Covid-19 victims, it represents a new normal; a situation in which the other (in this context, the infectious virus) can even penetrate people's intimate social relationships, family, and loved ones, and cause a tragic surprise. The phenomenon also reinforces Beck's (1987) and Giddens' skillful assessment that, as globalization accelerates, the connections between the personal life of the most intimate kind and disembedding mechanisms have intensified (Giddens, 1990, p. 121)

The following will first elucidate the concepts of risk and risk society. The features of the pandemic are then sought to be characterized in terms of the characteristics with which a risk society is identified. Given that risk is intricately intertwined with the concept of security, the purpose is to analyze the outcomes of the Covid-19 outbreak, as a characteristic of the risk society, at global, national, and individual levels. In this way, the aim is to shed light on the diverse aspects of the mistrust engendered by the pandemic. Assuming that Beck's and Giddens's insights into the concept of risk in modern society are comparable and

complementary, the conceptual framework of the analysis will be designed based on these two figures' insights.

2. From Risk to the Risk Society

Risk is a term used to refer to the possibility that an unfavorable outcome may follow a desired course of action. From the security perspective, risk denotes the likelihood of adversity and repercussions thereof. Risk has long been a recurrent theme in sociological inquiries (Kamppinen et al., 1995). Ulrich Beck put the concept of risk into perspective by introducing *the risk society* concept. The importance of Beck's undertaking was to subject the concept of risk to a comprehensive synchronic analysis (Jokkinen, 2008). Risk society refers to the way in which the management and prevention of risks generated by society itself have become increasingly central to modern society (Beck, 1992). The concept of risk society also marks the beginning of a transition from a *consumer society* and the concomitant departure from the western capitalist modernity and welfare norms (Kemshall, 2002).

(Giddens, 1990), however, believes that the advent of the concept of risk society does not imply the transition from modernity; but rather quite the opposite, it means the acceleration of modernity, in which the risk supersedes the distribution of wealth conflict. In other words, while the primary problem for the development of welfare was traditionally lack of goods and weakness of quality, the trouble-making culprit, nowadays, is the risk. Thus construed, the risk society denotes a situation where the escalation of risks impacts all the constructions and functions of the society. The overriding idea behind the concept of risk society is the fact that the negative repercussions of growth overtake the welfare and security with which the development is identified (Beck, 1990; 1992). It justifies the fact that the late industrial society manufactured risk rather than capital. Consequently, the preoccupation of the risk society would become the reduction and distribution of the risk. Both Beck and Giddens subscribe to the view that the specific feature of risks, which the modern individual faces, is that the modern society and its institutions pose them. That is why modern society is associated with what Beck calls *risk culture* or what Giddens calls *manufactured uncertainty*.

To analyze the risk factors that threaten the modern world, Giddens presents the following risk-related features: 1) Globalisation of risk in the sense of intensity. 2) Globalisation of risk in the sense of the expanding number of contingent events. 3) Risk stemming from the created environment or socialized nature. 4) Institutionalized risk environments have evolved. 5) Awareness of risk as risk: religious or magical knowledge cannot convert the *knowledge gap* in risks. 6) Awareness of the risks is widespread. 7) Awareness of the limitations of expertise. (Giddens, 1990, pp.124 - 125)

3. A New Normal Risk Society

(Ulrich Beck, 1992) enumerates three characteristics that serve to distinguish an industrial society from a risk society. In what follows, we explore the Covid-19 pandemic against the background provided by those three features proposed by Beck.

First, confronting risks requires a resolution to be made by the knowledge of experts and the will of scientists. In the industrial era, income and livelihood were at stake. The class-based nature of the distribution of work had resulted in the underclass dissenters organizing themselves and changing the political arena in their favor. Material wealth and achievements, which represent welfare, are tangible. In contrast, risks cannot be seen. The radioactive emission of atomic reactors or holes in the ozone layer, which is widely discussed and challenging life on the earth, cannot be seen with naked eyes. Accordingly, confronting such threats and risks requires technical calculations and expertise. In addition, the legitimacy of risk confrontation and change resolution rests on the existence of corroborated knowledge on the different dimensions of risk. Concerning the Covid-19 pandemic, a similar situation develops: the diversity in the structural makeup of the virus and the rapid mutations of its variants and the concomitant high contagiousness has given rise to a problem in which no one knows for sure how the scenarios of a world after Covid-19 would be like. Covid-19 has caused global concern, not only because of its deadly nature but also because appropriate mechanisms for confronting the virus have not yet been fully identified. The widespread concern over the virus and huge amounts of disinformation about

vaccination instantiate the evidence for the fact thus described. That is why the world is now looking at the pharmaceutical companies to know about the recent advances in the production of effective treatments or vaccines and also about the way pharmaceutical companies and their governmental sponsors deal with the discovered facts. One of the most recent comments on the status quo has been made by Shi Zengli, a virologist in the Virology Institute in Wuhan, China, calling on researchers to focus their research on wildlife as a preemptory measure to give early warning concerning the new generation of viruses. As mentioned earlier, the virologist, also known as China's "bat woman," believes that the viruses discovered so far represent only the tip of an iceberg of viruses (Bloomberg, 2020).

The *second* characteristic is that risks do not discriminate about their targets, and protecting against them is no easy task. Money indeed brings some degree of welfare: one can buy a faster car or well-furnished house or relocate to a peaceful neighborhood; however, climate change, environmental pollution or nuclear catastrophes cannot be evaded easily. The same situation is obtained with Covid-19. No one is spared. The virus may equally infect anybody, ranging from the president of the United States to an illegal Latin American migrant, from an old Japanese man to a new-born baby in Britain, from a rural Indian man to a university professor in Sweden, from a well-known actor to an athlete, from a bed-bound patient in a hospital to a specialist. The deputy minister of Health and Medical Education of the non-democratic government of Iran has correctly called Covid-19 a "democratic virus." Even local variations in the crisis management can be held responsible for the inclusive nature of the Covid-19 crisis. While the inequality of welfare in the pre-Covid-19 world is given less priority in the news, the extent to which different countries are challenged by risks and threats like famine or drug paucity is unequal (Giddens, 1990, p.125-126). It is worth noting that even in countries like the United States and England, the majority of the death toll due to the Covid-19 belonged to the lower socioeconomic class. In the United States, the Covid-19 kills Afro-Americans three times more than the whites (Pilkington, 2020).

The *third* characteristic concerns the causalistic nature of the risks. Global environment risks constitute a good showcase: excessive production, consumer culture, and optimization of material welfare have given rise to the emission of wasteful greenhouse gases. The greenhouse gases, produced mainly by the developed industrial countries, cause the ozone layer to become thinner. Ozone depletion gives rise to global warming. Giant Western companies destroy a substantial portion of the jungles of Amazon or Southeast Asia for commercial purposes. The destruction of the jungles poses a massive threat to the ozone layer, which amounts to a massive threat to the security and welfare of all human beings globally.

It should be noted that the manipulation of the ecosystem would likely give rise to a new phenomenon of *environmental immigration*, whereby immigrants from the arid lands of Africa, Asia, and Latin America would start heading towards the West in the hope of fleeing famine and starvation and taking refuge in the environmentally desired lands of the West. This way, floods in Bangladesh and the Sahara famines would lead to a new immigration crisis at the coasts of the western countries. Before 2020, it could have been improbable for an individual to appreciate the connection between the carbon dioxide produced by tourist airplanes and the change in the earth's ecosystem. However, the outbreak of the pandemic from a local market in Wuhan to every corner of the world, which affected directly or indirectly every single person on the earth, would not have been possible without globalization. The change in the form of time and place due to globalization, and the advent of fast transportation vehicles, and the concomitant increase in global tourism (Giddens, 1994). This phenomenon opens our eyes to the fact that with increasing ties between the local and global, our actions and behavior will have consequences for others, and the world's problems will have consequences for us (Giddens, 2004).

Thus, described in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, the distinctive characteristics of the risk society suggest that we are facing a *global risk society*. The pandemic opens our eyes to the recursivity of human practice in the global world and the risks facing those practices. Amid the worldwide need for access to vaccination, the developed industrial countries have pre-ordered a

more significant number of the manufactured vaccines than they need. However, the outbreak from a local market in China – as assessed by the WHO – (Doucleff, 2021) to the whole world suggests that technological advances may not prevent the northern countries from being affected by the pandemic. More importantly, while the unequal distribution of vaccines according to the egoistic mentality of the pre-Covid-19 era, and not according to territorial necessity, might have protected the developed and rich countries from current variants of the Covid-19, there is the likelihood that a quick outbreak of a new mutation of a variant of the virus in a poor less-developed country would pose a threat to the security zone of the rich countries. As mentioned before, this is the essential idea of a risk society that the negative repercussions of the decisions of the modern world revert to the modern world.

4. Chaos Caused by Covid-19 and the Challenge of Tackling the Crisis

Does it make sense to include the Covid-19 pandemic in the set of contemporary threats such as nuclear industry and ozone depletion? Ulrich Beck does not categorize pandemics as risks (Lahti, 2000); notwithstanding, the Covid-19 pandemic highlights all the characteristic features of the globalized risk society. Perhaps, the most conspicuous feature of the Covid-19 pandemic is the concerns it will leave behind and not the severity of the pandemic itself. (Ulrich Beck, 1990) holds that one of the defining features of threats facing the modern world is that those threats might be reduced to their minimum thanks to technological devices; however, they cannot be eliminated (pp.17-18). The warnings issued by the virologists about other potential pandemics in the future provide evidence for this stance.

On the other hand, there is no confirmed information about the consequences and side effects a patient infected and recovered might sustain in the future. Equally, it is not clear why the DNA of individuals responds differently to the virus. Another problem is posed by the non-stop mutations and variants of the virus, undermining the attempts to confront the pandemic. Of course, attempts made to manage the crisis have given rise to a new challenge: the challenge of the side effects of vaccination and the

long-term effects it will have on the bodies of the individuals vaccinated. The health challenges aside, there is always the ethical dilemma of personal concerns over the side effects of vaccination and the need for collective responsibility to create herd safety.

The doubts surrounding the quality of the vaccines are precisely the embodiment of what Giddens (1990) describes as *mistrust in the efficiency of the abstract systems* (p. 99), which has had dramatic consequences for the increase in the uncertainty of individuals.

Acknowledging that risks will not be eliminated in the risk society has a worrying societal dimension, which manifests itself in constant surveillance and control. For instance, governments that are rationally concerned about the pandemic have transferred the risk of Covid-19 into the use of artificial-intelligence surveillance technology of the citizens. Harari (2020) believes that human societies in the Covid-19 era *serve as guinea pigs in large-scale social experiments* for the governments to use sophisticated technologies to track, monitor, and manipulate people. Those technologies may help track and interrupt the chain of the infected people in the short term; however, *the risk of resurgence of Covid-19* can serve as a legitimate reason for continued under-skin control of the citizens and their potential abuse. Harari contends that the pandemic era signifies a dramatic transition from *over the skin* to *under the skin* surveillance.

Apparently, the question that has a bearing on the current issue, concerns the nation-state-centric hysterical behavior facing a Covid-19 pandemic. The closure of borders and some sort of *nationalist isolation* was especially conspicuous in the case of European Union countries. According to the Schengen Agreement, nationals of the EU members are permitted to travel freely within that transnational union. To this, one can add some domestic agreements and treaties that hold EU members responsible for cooperating with each other in areas such as civil or military crisis management. The shock of a widespread pandemic like Covid-19 made the nation-states in the world, and even within the legally coherent territory of the EU as if spontaneously, resort to the Westphalian state system. On the one hand, this situation signifies the robustness of the nation-state-based international system, and

on the other hand, what Ulrich Beck, speaking about the risk society, calls "the century mistake in the crisis management."

Beck (1990) maintains that the dangers that threaten us and the security promised that apply to them belong to different eras (pp. 17-18). He believes that concepts and directives with which we are trying to meet the challenges of the nuclear industry and genetic technology era in the third millennium belong to the early industrial society. Nationalist interpretation can explain in part the inappropriate behavior of the countries in tackling the global pandemic. Moreover, the self-centered behavior of the states may be explained in terms of the connection between chaos and social order in the modern world. Zygmunt Bauman (2019) believes that concern with order, and fear that without intervention it would descend into chaos is a characteristic feature of the modern world. In these circumstances, chaos emerges as the perceived outcome of a failure to order things. What makes it so disorderly is the observers' inability to control the flow of events, obtain the desired response from the environment, and prevent or eliminate happenings that were not planned. Chaos becomes uncertainty, and only the vigilant technicians of human affairs appear to stand between it and the achievement of orderly conduct and affairs. (Bauman, 2019, pp. 114-115)

In this sense, one can understand the tendency of the state, as a modern form of the political community, to use its own sovereignty to face the chaotic situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in the anarchy prevailing in the international system. It is also indisputable that the case-by-case failure of governments to curb a pandemic, for example, within their national borders, cannot be entirely attributed to a nation-state-centered system. In discussing order and chaos, Bauman (2000), however, immediately adds that, given the interdependent global network, a focus on the control of partial order is inevitably imperfect, far from perfect - and it remains so. We can only speak of the islands of a temporary and fragile order scattered around the vast sea of chaos. (p. 227)

Bauman's conclusion can be taken to imply that a state-nation-central resolution cannot be efficient and sustainable in dealing with globally common problems, regardless of the ontological nature of states. Thus construed, the ultimate tenable approach

might be appreciating and complying with requirements of the fact, as described by Beck, that humanity faces common problems with no counterpart. There are no "others," but humanity faces global threats together. (Giddens, 1991, p. 131) According to Giddens (1991), *it is this lack of "other" that I would blame and complain about that causes concern* (p. 131). With this background in mind, we can better understand the set of religious explanations, conspiracy theories, and unconfirmed hypotheses developed to assess the underlying cause of the Covid-19.

In this state of uncertainty caused by the Covid-19, dis- and misinformation are quickly developed and disseminated by resorting to unconfirmed arguments on social media. Thus, uncertainty is reproduced progressively. The situation has been dramatized by the adaptation of political authorities to this process. An eye-catching example was the suspicion regarding the spread of the Covid-19 from the laboratories of the Chinese city of Wuhan. Although the claim – at least as far as these words are written – has not been confirmed objectively, it led to an apparent conflict between the WHO and the White House in 2020. As a result, the former US president decided to suspend his country's funding for the WHO. The U.S. is the WHO's largest donor, so implementing that decision could have jeopardized the organization's operations in a state where the WHO was responsible for coordinating a global effort to manage a pandemic. Experiences of this type show that in the face of global threats, a self-centered approach by states leads primarily to uncertainty and increases risk and not vice versa.

Its connection to decision-making makes risk precisely a modern concept, and risk also includes the idea of control. Risk does not mean a catastrophe but its anticipation - when a risk becomes tangible, it ceases to be a risk and becomes a catastrophe (Beck, 2009, p.188). Failure to promote a national vaccination program in India (instead of promoting vaccine diplomacy) - along with the government's negligence in overseeing the implementation of health protocols - helps to understand how government policy can turn risk into disaster. Delta, the Indian variant that is the most contagious Covid-19 variant, is a risk with roots in politics.

5. Covid-19 and Challenge of the Abstract Systems

Alongside the inefficiencies of large organizations like the state, another challenge for risk societies relates to the issue of trust in abstract systems: "the nature of modern institutions is deeply bound up with the mechanisms of trust in abstract systems, especially trust in the expert systems" (Giddens, 1990, p.83).

Giddens reasonably highlights the problems of contemporary expertise. The level of expertise is often assessed by the expert's ability to define things as precisely as possible, which in turn leads to greater specialization of experts and expertise. But the more closely one looks at a given problem, the more the areas of knowledge surrounding that problem are blurred by experts, and the more difficult it is for them to see what the effects of the problem are outside their specialty.

However, practical necessities during the pandemic have brought the political, economic, and health sectors closer together than ever before, forcing them to work together (Lahti, 2020). What is interesting about this blockade of the risk environment is the unprecedented increase in public awareness or at least the longing of citizens for *reliable information*; whether it is pragmatic information related to the personal way to face the challenges of a pandemic in everyday life or abstract knowledge about the virus, vaccines, etc.

Here, however, the widespread nonprofessional knowledge of modern risk environments leads to awareness of the limits of expertise (Giddens, 1990, p.130). Awareness of Covid-19 during a pandemic has led to more uncertainty. The digital risk society and the unrestricted transfer of data have challenged the authority of expert sources. According to Giddens (1990), the faith that supports trust in expert systems involves blocking off the ignorance of the layperson when faced with the claims of expertise (p. 130)

But the pandemic and the infection rate of the virus surprised everyone, from experts to laypeople. Therefore, expert assessments of the phenomenon were largely based on preconceived notions of their expertise rather than scientific facts. However, the reality became even sadder when the experts' recommendations were not

in line with the interests of policymakers - for example, the financial consequences of lockdown. However, there have also been cases where the disaster has been based purely on expert recommendations. For example, Finland and Sweden, which are both Scandinavian democratic welfare states and both have set the so-called *Covid-19 policy* based on an independent expert organization's recommendations, have received a very different result from their tackling the pandemic. This was due to opposite assessments by expert organizations and different recommendations to the political leadership in these countries.

The resources of expertise in the risk society, which were supposed to create a sense of security, have themselves effectively created insecurity. Due to the production and presentation of sometimes contradictory scientific and professional results, expert resources are themselves a significant factor in creating a sense of uncertainty for the public. This is a significant factor in confusing laypeople on, for example, what is good or bad for their health. The Covid-19 epidemic dramatically exemplified this phenomenon. Perhaps a good example is this Swedish experience. In Stockholm, the Swedish capital, two health centers are the European Center for Disease Control and Prevention (EECDC) and The Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten), which were only four kilometers apart. The first recommended the use of masks, but the latter, which was, of course, also the source of the Swedish government's pandemic policy expertise, argued that "evidence that masks are effective is not particularly robust." (Iltalehti, 2020). As a result, contrary to the recommendations of the WHO and the norm used by 130 countries, the Swedish government neither forced nor even recommended the use of masks in public places until January 2021, regardless of the infection, as well as the number of victims, being manifestly higher in Sweden compared to other Scandinavian neighboring countries.

The challenge of the epidemic era was not limited to the policy of governments. Due to the digital risk society, laypeople have also taken on the role of active agents and have been actively involved in reproducing risks. Although much of the abstract system of the society remains unknown to ordinary citizens (Giddens, 1990), the continuing uncertainty surrounded by virtual networks has

motivated people to not only monitor conflicting information about the Covid-19 and vaccination but also to participate in producing and disseminating information/misinformation. Participating in the redistribution (reproduction) of different types of information is a layman's normative way of being involved in the reflexive process during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ulrich Beck hoped for the democratization of science. He challenged the scientific community and experts out of the chambers and to actively participate in the societal debate. (Korpiola and Poutanen, 2021) This hope of Beck has been fulfilled in abundance during the pandemic. Although there has been little "scientific knowledge," subjective views have been widely expressed through social media. The phenomenon has been particularly challenging, especially when these "social media prophets" have brought divergent opinions or questioned security measures. Information has been widely disseminated, e.g., the disadvantages of using a mask or the adverse consequences of vaccines. A recent example at the time of writing this text is of an Iranian "benevolent doctor" whose audio file was widely distributed through social media, warning against the use of existing vaccines because *the superpowers are behind the production of vaccines that produce magnetic proteins in the body. The plasma waves emitted by 5G Telecommunication Towers can track these magnetic systems and manage vaccinated ones with artificial intelligence by changing body temperature and protein tissue!* (Fahimi, 2021) He contends this is related to the *Chinese Silk Road project*, although the most popular vaccines have been developed in the West! Apparently, one of the characteristics of the pandemic is the blurring of the line between moral panic and risk assessment.

Exploring how ordinary people worldwide are responding to the expert system or the risk of a pandemic, in general, goes beyond the scope of this paper. However, it can be said that during the Covid-19 epidemic, in general, risk-oriented and fate-oriented behavioral strategies, characteristic of modern and pre-modern worldviews, have influenced the behavior of individuals and groups on a case-by-case but parallel basis. To my understanding, much of the observable "normal" and "abnormal" behavior of humans can be classified under these two categories. Despite the

explanatory models, however, what unites people is their concern and feeling of insecurity. This, too, may be a characteristic of the Covid-19 Age that, unlike other global concerns (nuclear war, climate change, etc.) for which much of the human experience was still imaginative, most individuals worldwide were in some way, directly or indirectly, subject to that global threat. Will this "common pain" create a basis for global citizen values, as Giddens has dreamed of?

Related to the risk society, however, a striking phenomenon is that *trust*, as an inherent element of modern specialized systems (Giddens, 1990), faces the challenge of "faith." For example, belief/disbelief in vaccine efficiency and possible long-term side effects (not to mention claims like the one mentioned above about the vaccine's detrimental impact on intent) challenges trust in specialized systems.

The situation is by no means comforting. On the one hand, there is a harsh reality: an unjust international system, undemocratic political institutions, unreliable expert organizations, and states that use all challenges as opportunities to develop a system of control further. On the other hand, we need blind faith, i.e., thinking like fatalism in the conditions of modernity, to live with and according to experts' decisions because even the decisions of experts cannot be justified with absolute certainty (Lahti, 2020). Amid the uncertainty of the risk society, however, there is a state of reflexive thinking. Uncertainty is a resource in this sense because, as Bauman (1993) has stated, it is a sign of awareness of the great and complex problems of the postmodern age. The consideration of risks requires recognizing uncertainty, which in turn is the basis of social self-criticism. After all, Ulrich Beck emphasized that a sociological understanding of environmental problems requires, among other things, a critical examination of science, technology, expert systems, and the relationship between citizens.

6. Conclusion

Modern society is increasingly exposed to its dynamics and is unable to control the risks it produces itself. This is a feature of the risk society that has become even more relevant with the Covid-19

pandemic. The Covid-19 can be seen as a man-made risk (when humans enter the living space of nature, it has the anticipated consequence).

Relying on the disembedding of time/space (in Giddens' words), the Covid-19 has been able to spread the pandemic in a global sphere. The new normal caused by Covid-19 has formed a global risk society. With this new normal, insecurity is a worldwide reality both individually and collectively. At the heart of the risk environment created by Covid-19 is a crisis of trust as a whole.

The crisis of trust can be observed at least at two levels: interpersonal and institutional. The interpersonal level refers to the tragic reality that trusting relationships and relatives' contact has become an environment of risk. Due to Covid-19, an intimate relationship can become a life-threatening risk factor. On the other hand, large institutions, the state, and expert organizations at the forefront of the fight against pandemics are themselves producing additional risks. The way these institutions are managing the pandemic is causing distrust among the laypeople. Uncertain citizens, on the other hand, are involved in reproducing risks.

However, the global risk society caused by the Covid-19 pandemic inevitably opened people's eyes to a new reality, a new normal. It remains to be seen if / when the dust falls, Will humanity learn anything from this precious experience? At least Giddens sees that it would now be possible for universal values to emerge because now, humanity is facing a common threat in an era of globalized modernity.

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