

Editor's Note

Globalisation, Risk and Pandemic: exploring the limits of modernity

COVID-19 has emerged as the first global health crisis that has ever been experienced by human society. It has changed our lives in such profound ways that we are yet to grasp all its facets. What kind of crisis is this natural or manmade? What are the existing knowledge forms that inform our understanding of this pandemic? How does it affect people's lives? Diverse questions of this kind have gone into the mind of researchers struggling to theorise on the totality of this disease while assessing its possible impacts on human society.

From the journalistic explorations to theoretical and empirical engagements in social sciences, this pandemic is largely projected as a crisis, a shock to human society fitting perfectly to the framework of 'Risk Society' -an idea coined by Ulrich Beck during the 1990s. Even though there is no single mention of any pandemics in the late Ulrich Beck's account of the global risk society, his ideas bear profound connotations to understand pandemic as an outburst of modern society. Countering the view that pandemics is a primitive threat which has existed since the times of primitive history, I argue that COVID-19 pandemic is a modern event caused by the predatory nature of global capitalist expansion. Putting in the frame of Beck's understanding this virus is a byproduct of hyper globality and social acceleration arising out of a mis-managed modernity. The speed at which the coronavirus spread took the shape of a pandemic is certainly a consequence of dense interconnection that binds national territories together that came to us as an offshoot of modernity. Many social science scholars call it collateral damage of hyper globality. Beck's theory offers insights to wide-ranging problems associated with the modernisation process in which he argues progress can turn

into self-destruction and one kind of modernisation can be a threat to another creating a zone of risks, fear and uncertainty. Embedded in this theory is the question as to how a global pandemic, where ‘risk’ is theoretically democratic meaning the virus can affect anyone anywhere, is experienced differently by different groups. This understanding is strengthened by the political economy perspective on COVID-19.

Central to the discussion on the pandemic is the political economy of COVID-19 centering the discussion between health versus the wealth (efforts in the form of physical distancing and shutting down public places to avoid congregation but these efforts have an economic impact through closed business, reduced spending, increased unemployment, etc.). In the current issue our contributors have posed critical deliberations on the political economy of Covid-19 pandemic by highlighting issues of labour market crisis, plights of disadvantaged groups such as the invisible workers, informal migrant labourers, showcasing the health versus wealth tussle.

Within these broader frames of social science discourses the current issue of Akademos on the theme “ Covid-19 and Society: a transdisciplinary perspective” aims to provide an intriguing discussion on covid-19 pandemic from across interdisciplinary studies. The theme of the current issue is guided by the belief that interdisciplinary studies generate a better understanding of the world as it brings together researchers and experts from various disciplines to work collectively towards tackling complex problems of the society.

I thank our contributors for sharing their research and keeping up with the demands and deadlines. I also extend my gratitude to our editorial board members and board of reviewers for their valuable feedback, which goes a long way in ensuring the academic rigour and quality of the journal. I also thank on behalf of our editorial board our principal, Dr Kalpana Bhakuni, for her advice and support in the publication of this issue.

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