

[Notebooks: The Journal for Studies on Power](#)

Call for Papers:

Anamnesis and Diagnosis of the State in the Age of COVID-19

To be published in the inaugural issue (June 2021)

[Notebooks: The Journal for Studies on Power](#) is a Gramscian-inspired editorial project that begins in a historical moment of great complexity expressed, albeit not exclusively, by the health emergency resulting from the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. Together with the economic, financial and ecological crises, in fact, pandemics seem to be marking the pace of global destiny. But can we really speak of "destiny" when it comes to human action?

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has set in motion profound changes on a global scale stepping and revealing the depth of the economic crisis already in place since 2008. This has created the conditions for an intensification of social conflict that manifests itself in forms of protest and contestation often characterized by spontaneity and limited organizational capacity. This trajectory, which makes clear the limits of neoliberal ideology (hegemony) and its ability to face current challenges, may create the conditions for a crisis of legitimacy of political power.

In order to understand the political dimension of the pandemic, what is necessary is a reflection that goes beyond a dichotomous analysis that separates economic issues from political ones and that by reflection observes the pandemic crisis as a crisis of its own. The way in which Antonio Gramsci had to conceive the state-society dichotomy, as a "purely methodical and not organic" distinction, meant that the same crises going on in the first half of the twentieth century were conceived by him as an organic whole. Social conflicts, the First World War, the pandemic (the Spanish Flu 1918-1920), the crisis of '29, the totalitarian trajectories of some states and the changes in the international division of labor, all came together, according to Gramsci, in a single large organic crisis that had its roots in the mode of production.

Since the current situation can be correlated, in some ways, to that observable in the first half of the twentieth century, the general theory of the crisis formulated by Antonio Gramsci as well as his theory of the integral state constitute an extraordinary tool for interpreting the current role of states in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. The crisis, according to the Italian philosopher, indeed reflected on the state in the sense that the state is "integral state" understood as "the whole complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class justifies and maintains its dominion not only but succeeds to obtain the active consent of the governed" (Q15 §10 p. 1765). The crisis of the state, which he also defines as the crisis of hegemony of the ruling class, "can take place", in fact, "because the ruling class has failed in some of its large political enterprises for which it has demanded or imposed by force the consent of the masses". The political enterprise to which Gramsci refers in his writings is the First World War, but in reality, the same reflection could probably be extended today to the 2020 pandemic and to its consequences, and with that to the economic crisis that the pandemic is likely to unbearably entail.

Starting from the theory of the integral / organic state and the general theory of the crisis, the call offers a space for reflection on the strategies of coercion and consent put in place by states both to face the current health crisis and to prevent the potential destabilizing effects of a possible failure in its prevention and management, as also to manage the escalation of the socio-economic crisis.

This call intends to solicit contributions focused in particular, but not exclusively, on the following topics:

- Intellectuals, science and communication: effects on common sense and / or on a *new* common sense
- Technology as a tool for restructuring power and social control
- Crisis as a space for the formation of hegemonic alternatives
- Crises, mobilization and conflict: where does social conflict go?

The following basic questions form the background to the themes indicated above:

Is a systemic crisis looming on the horizon, particularly on a hegemonic level? What does the pandemic reveal about political power and its relationship with economic power? How should the strengthening of mobilization and social conflict in different contexts be interpreted?

The submission deadline for draft articles is **31 December 2020**.

For all queries to the editors: notebooks@unica.it

Submissions at: <https://www.editorialmanager.com/POWR/default.aspx>

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