

THE CHALLENGES OF A PANDEMIC EMERGENCY

Is COVID-19 a contingent emergency, a so-called “natural disasters,” in which humans are innocent victims of a cruel nature that in its becoming is killing and destroying countless lives? Or is COVID-19 yet another example of a natural hazard to which Homo sapiens unwisely exposed itself? The underlining assumption for this doctoral research project is the later and tries to investigate how the diffusion of this last epidemic could have been averted through emergency planning and preparation.

Preparing for pandemic emergencies needs to consider a number of particular aspects, including: the massive increase in demand for health services and products; the reaction of the public to the risk; the closure of schools, businesses, shops and public places; quarantine and the imposition of restrictions on the movement of the population, to cite a few. There are four objectives that a planner for this kind of emergencies must aim at: i) limit the number of sick and dead, ii) maintain continuity of basic services, iii) minimize the disruption of society and economic losses, and iv) strengthen health services.

Pandemic emergency plans are needed at all levels of public administration and in other places, such as factories, universities, offices. What COVID-19 has taught us, or better reinforced what expert already knew, is the necessity to create an integrated system of monitoring and health checks. We need to develop a capacity for decisive and effective action, distinct from transparency and good communication and the broad involvement of public and private sectors.



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