


THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE LIFESTYLE OF BRAZILIAN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN LIGHT OF THE 2030 AGENDA

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ABSTRACT

In Brazil, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the sustainability of society has been put to the test and human fragility has been exposed, especially that of indigenous peoples. This study analyzes the impact of COVID-19 on the indigenous peoples of Brazil, in light of the five critical elements of the 2030 Agenda: people, prosperity, planet, partnership and peace. This is an applied study with a qualitative, descriptive and explanatory approach. The data was collected through bibliography, using official documents and publications and academic literature, with emphasis on the award-winning indigenous author Ailton Krenak. The results show that the COVID-19 pandemic can be understood as a warning about the vulnerability of the human species, with special emphasis on indigenous peoples. The conclusion is that a substantial and applicable knowledge of the critical dimensions of the 2030 Agenda involves environmental education, which must be inserted into the daily lives of society and the constituted authorities.

Keywords: 2030 Agenda. COVID-19. Lessons from the pandemic. Indigenous peoples. Environmental education.

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INTRODUCTION

Society's way of functioning underwent significant crisis during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to global consensus, general activities should be suspended to mitigate contamination risks; therefore, social isolation was the method most widely adopted to maximize human survival capacity. The world went through a global-scale deceleration process that put human species' sustainability to the test. The human condition fragility was exposed, and modernity and technology capacity was questioned, for several months, due to challenges faced by society. Despite scientific and technological advancements, the response to the pandemic issue was far from being known.

Accordingly, the premise that human survival depends on economy's full functioning was also challenged. Concepts like continuous progress were put on the back burner at that critical time, since surviving the pandemic was priority.

After a history of major pandemics in the 20th century, society has already experienced two pandemic outbreaks in the 21st century. The first one was caused by the H1N1 influenza virus in 2009, whereas the second one was triggered by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, in 2020. According to information provided by the Pan American Health Organization [PAHO] (OPAS, 2020), on January 30th, 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was declared Public Health Emergency of International Concern, which is the highest alert level defined by this organization under International Health Regulations. On March 11th, 2020, the COVID-19 disease was classified as pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). PAHO reported 775,293,630 COVID-19 cases and 7,044,637 death cases, at global level, up to April 7th, 2024. The number of reported disease cases in the Americas was close to 193 million individuals and approximately 3 million death cases were recorded (OPAS, 2023a).

Despite the implemented global efforts, only 67% of the world's population was vaccinated in compliance with full-immunization recommendations. On May 5th, 2023, WHO Director, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, declared the end of the COVID-19 disease as global public health emergency, although he stressed that it remains a global threat (OPAS, 2023b).

Relevant reflections emerged from this post-pandemic and post-vaccination scenario, which still faces variants of this virus: have we really fully emerged from this crisis? And, most importantly, what lessons have we learned about sustainability and are we

implementing them in our daily lives? Are we prepared to face a new pandemic crisis in the future?

The aim of the current study was to reflect about the COVID-19 pandemic, which was one of the worst threats to the sustainability of the human species, as shown by an analysis applied to a vulnerable group during this critical time, namely: indigenous peoples. It was done to help better understanding how this health crisis affected these communities, mainly in Brazil, by identifying the threats and challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the lessons learned that can help improving our performance in future crises and the lessons incorporated to our post-COVID-19 way of life.

The option made for using indigenous peoples in this analysis was strategic, since the impact of the COVID-19 disease on these populations was disproportionately described during the pandemic. According to the report issued by the COVID-19 Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (also known as CPI - *Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito* - in Portuguese language), which was approved by the Brazilian Federal Senate on October 26th, 2021 “The impact of COVID-19 disease on indigenous peoples was severe and disproportionate. Critical mitigation measures were deliberately withheld or neglected, despite the assistance provided through health services, food, medical relief missions and sanitary barriers, in some cases” (Senado Federal, 2021, p. 634).

Brazil endorsed the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, but the country appears to have left indigenous peoples aside and to have forgotten that the Agenda was launched to benefit the entire population, without leaving anyone behind.

All five critical elements in the 2030 Agenda, known as 5Ps – People, Prosperity, Planet, Partnership and Peace (Nações Unidas Brasil, 2015) – were analyzed from the perspective of their prevalent dimensions, namely: social, environmental, economic, political and institutional dimensions. It was done to investigate how each of these elements manifested itself in its respective dimensions during the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly in indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the current study identified the main lessons learned about sustainability, which were closely related to the 2030 Agenda and to indigenous peoples, in order to integrate them to our daily lives, as well as to use them in similar future crises.

METHODOLOGY

The herein adopted methodology followed guidelines introduced by Gerhardt and Silveira (2009). Based on its methodological approach, the current study can be classified as qualitative research focused on better understanding and explaining the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic among indigenous peoples, by taking into consideration the 2030 Agenda and its 5Ps. The first concern was to emphasize the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic time.

The current study presents applied research nature and aims at generating knowledge with potential for practical application to tackle a specific issue (Gil, 2019), i.e., lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic in the process to form a more conscious citizenship. The study followed a documental, exploratory, descriptive and explanatory design (Richardson, 2017). Its documental research profile derives from its focus on legislative data, based on the analysis applied to the Brazilian Constitution and to documents issued by UN committees. Its exploratory nature is explained by its pursuit of increasing familiarity with COVID-19 effects, as well as of understanding what can be learned to solidify citizenship and the communities we live in, in order to, at least, partly change our ways of acting and thinking. This research is also explanatory, since it focuses on identifying the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on worsening the environmental risks surrounding us.

The current research is also a bibliographic study based on the search for theoretical references already analyzed and published in printed and electronic media. Data collection strategy followed three complementary fronts, given the complexity of the investigated topic, namely: i) academic literature, ii) reports issued by official bodies, and iii) using the work “*A Vida Não é Útil*” [Life is Not Useful] by writer, environmental activist and indigenous leader Ailton Krenak as reference to help better understanding the investigated phenomenon from a theoretical and philosophical perspective.

Articles relevant to the current study were consulted at different times. Search for articles was carried out on Capes Journal Portal, at the early stages of the research, on March 12th, 2024. The search strategy comprised two descriptors and keywords: “COVID” and “indigenous”. This search enabled identifying 83 articles associated with COVID-19 and with the indigenous population. Subsequently, the number of articles was reduced to ten, based on their association with both the 2030 Agenda and the 5Ps, which were the focus of the current research.

The following reports issued by official bodies were used as source: i) reports and publications by the United Nations (UN), ii) documents and publications by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), iii) reports by the National Congress's COVID CPI, from 2021, iv) the 2022 Government Transition Report – Final Report, and v) the report by the National Council of Health Secretaries (CONASS), titled “*Novo Federalismo no Brasil: Tensões e Inovações em Tempos de Pandemia de COVID-19*” [New Federalism in Brazil: Tensions and Innovations in COVID-19 Pandemic Times], which was organized by Assis Mafort Ouveney and Sonia Fleury in 2023, among other documents relevant to the investigated topic.

The herein adopted theoretical framework was based on Ailton Krenak, due to his relevance as thinker and environmentalist, and most of all, as indigenous leader. His work highlights the destructive trends featuring the so-called contemporary “civilizations” and denounces the exclusionary vision permeating the concept of “humanity”, which, in its turn, is misaligned with principles in the 2030 Agenda. In addition, the current research used the Master’s Degree thesis by Xavante leader Cristóvão Tsereroodi Tsoropre, titled “*Pandemia da COVID-19 para o Povo Xavante da Aldeia de São Marcos (MT): Relatos de uma Liderança Indígena*” [COVID-19 Pandemic, according to Xavante People from São Marcos Village (MT): Reports by an Indigenous Leader], which was approved by State University of Goiás, Brazil, in 2022.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS

According to the 2022 IBGE Census, Brazil is home to approximately 1,700,000 indigenous individuals. The largest concentration of these groups (867.9 thousand) lives in the Legal Amazon, which covers all Brazilian Northern states, as well as Mato Grosso State and part of Maranhão State, Brazil. Despite the recurrent linguistic attempt to unify all these cultures under a single name, it is essential acknowledging that these indigenous peoples comprise 305 different communities and 274 languages, a fact that highlights their multi-diversity and multiculturalism. Indigenous peoples only account for 0.83% of the total Brazilian population (Cabral & Gomes, 2023).

Examples of groups investigated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which are assumingly applicable to all indigenous and non-indigenous peoples, will be herein presented, based on the premise that, by mentioning indigenous peoples, we actually seek to universalize a plural and multicultural reality. However, we acknowledge the theoretical

and practical implications of this attempt to generalize conclusions. We respect the Brazilian life diversity and the existing differences, although it was not the main object of the current research. We aim at promoting universal learning, since one of the 2030 Agenda goals is to have global reach and to contribute with collective effort towards sustainable development.

The current analysis starts through reasoning on lessons learned during the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly on the important role played by peace and partnership in this process.

2030 AGENDA: PEACE AND PARTNERSHIPS – POLITICS AND INSTITUTIONALITY AS PREVALENT DIMENSIONS

If one analyzes the 2030 Agenda and its respective Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), “one can identify two elements of great importance in the Political and Institutional dimensions, namely: Peace and Partnership” (Barbieri, 2020, p. 138). The following SDGs are relevant to this discussion: SDG 16) Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies to enable sustainable development in order to ensure access to justice for all and to build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, at all levels; and SDG 17) Partnership: Strengthening the means to implement and revitalize global partnership for sustainable development purposes.

The following item introduces a detailed analysis of each of the aforementioned SDGs, based on bibliographic material selected during the current research.

Sdg 16: The importance of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies

Cristóvão Tsereroodi Tsoropre (leader and educator of the Xavante people) provided significant account of his ethnographic research during the COVID-19 pandemic in his Master’s Degree thesis titled “Pandemia da COVID-19 para o povo Xavante da Aldeia de São Marcos (MT): Relatos de uma liderança indígena” [The COVID-19 Pandemic from the perspective of the Xavante People from São Marcos Village (MT): Reports by an Indigenous Leader], which was defended at State University of Goiás, in 2022. Tsoropre (2022) reflected on how the pandemic, which has claimed thousands of lives worldwide, has affected his village (São Marcos - MT), since people who were considered “knowledge masters” (elders and senior citizens) were also victims of this health crisis.

One of the main lessons learned by Tsoropre (2022) concerns the relevance of vaccination and community work in indigenous villages to convince everyone to be

vaccinated. Initially, his mother and many elders hesitated to be vaccinated due to fear of facing mutations - turning into “alligators”, as the belief driven by the political stance of former president Jair Bolsonaro, which was widely publicized in Tsoropre’s village.

This scenario shines light on the ethical and moral importance authorities embody at the time to discuss or address some issues, even those they have no knowledge or wisdom about. From the perspective of the political and institutional dimensions mentioned in the UN 2030 Agenda, the main responsibility of political and institutional leaders lies on developing effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Unfortunately, it was not the reality experienced by the investigated population. The first lesson to be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic lies on understanding that not all political and institutional representatives were prepared to face a crisis situation in a responsible and inclusive manner, even when it is necessary. Therefore, any opinion abruptly or ideologically expressed should be carefully considered before being outspread.

Another lesson to be learned lies on the fact that our elected representatives should be able to acknowledge their limitations and try to pacify an environment featured by chaos, rather than boosting turmoil, when they face specific issues like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Xavante people initially resorted to use medicinal herbs as attempt to fight the infection, due to lack of knowledge about the COVID-19 disease. However, this herb-based approach was not effective in treating severe COVID-19 symptoms like shortness of breath, high fever, body aches, headaches, dizziness and weakness. According to Tsoropre (2022), the COVID-19 disease, which these people initially believed would not reach their community, got there fast and devastated them. After two months and a few death cases, the National Indian Foundation (*Funai - Fundação Nacional do Índio*) issued a formal warning to all villages and started visiting them to provide guidance and to request the chiefs’ authorization to close their territories.

According to Tsoropre (2022), death cases resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic were undoubtedly the most impactful consequence for the Xavante people. The death of elders brought to light lack of leadership and the performance of rituals that were compromised due to loss of qualified individuals. Another gap identified within this time of pandemic lied on the care provided to families whose parents died from COVID-19. Based on the Xavante tradition, relatives take the responsibility for caring for young children who have lost their parents. If the orphans have no relatives in the community, they are taken to

other villages where they can have kinship ties, a fact that inevitably changes the meaning of their lives.

The indigenous community has shown strong commitment to support other families and relatives during the COVID-19 pandemic: “The entire community was committed to help in every way” (Tsoropre, 2022, p. 56). Visits, conversations and task sharing were extended to everyone, both inside and outside their villages, and it renewed the sense of community, as recalled by surviving elders. According to Tsoropre (2022), this is a valuable lesson that leaders must pass on to youngsters in their communities and that echoes on the entire village.

It is imperative acknowledging the possibility of promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, even in communities with few resources, like the Xavante community, by developing effective formal or informal accountable and inclusive institutions, at all levels. The lesson learned by the Xavante people can, and should, be an inspiration to all of us, since their community was committed to help in every way, and it featured a universal and timeless lesson.

Another example highlighting the importance of building peaceful and inclusive societies comes from an interinstitutional project developed by researchers at Fiocruz, under Assis Mafort Ouverney and Sonia Fleury’s coordination, in partnership with researchers from different Brazilian institutions. Result of their study was published in the electronic book titled “*Novo Federalismo no Brasil: tensões e inovações em tempo de pandemia da COVID-19*” [New Federalism in Brazil: tensions and innovations in COVID-19 pandemic times] (Ouverney & Fleury, 2023).

They highlighted the challenges faced by health systems worldwide, given the magnitude of the health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The denialist stance shown by the government towards science and technological contributions to cope with this health crisis was the main challenge described in Brazil. This feature triggered a major political crisis that changed intergovernmental relationships and the action patterns adopted by other governmental branches, such as the Legislative and Judiciary ones.

The universal reach of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS - Sistema Único de Saúde), in its decentralized and cooperative form, suffered severe consequences due to lack of effective national coordination. New health-system arrangements emerged in this scenario, since state and municipal governments took the lead in defining health regulations and in organizing service networks. The National Congress accounted for

formulating national policies associated with employment and income, public finances, and support for states and municipalities, whereas the Federal Supreme Court (*STF - Supremo Tribunal Federal*) acted in resolving conflicts to preserve the prerogatives of subnational entities. Conass, together with regional development consortiums, played fundamental role in coordinating the state governments' network, whereas *Frente pela Vida (FPV)* movement reinforced the activism of the Health Reform Movement and the COVID-19 Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry provided new perspectives on the federal government's omission during the pandemic (Ouverney & Fleury, 2023, p. 18).

According to Ouverney and Fleury (2023), the reconfiguration process regarding these federative relations also opened room for new reflections that have warned us about the stress to be faced by new governments, given the imbalance established in relationships between republican powers and the huge ideological polarization.

Political intolerance was amplified by the massive use of information technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it impaired the development of effective, accountable and inclusive institutions, at all levels — which is one of the guidelines in SDG 16. One of the likely solutions suggested by researchers to such an issue lied on adopting “a new political aesthetics, according to which, achieving progressive consensus is a core political action strategy” (Ouverney & Fleury, 2023, p. 462). This progressive consensus must follow a collectively managed dialogical space aimed at valuing heterogeneous ideas and political diversity.

It is important emphasizing that, although the process to reach consensus is challenging, it enables dialogue between different actors based on common goals and respect for differences. Yet, it can be a peaceful and effective path for politics and institutions. Actually, this construction process must take into account both the diversity and plurality of actors in the public sphere. Furthermore, a nation divided by ideological thoughts, as observed during this pandemic crisis, clearly marginalizes the most vulnerable groups, such as indigenous peoples, who are often politically invisible.

Sdg 17: Strengthening the means to implement and revitalize global partnerships for sustainable development

According to Harari et al. (2023), one can find a quite diverse ecosystem of organizations that comprise government agencies, as well as indigenous, indigenist and religious associations, at the time to address national indigenous health policies. This

diversity of regional and ethnic realities makes it hard to guarantee the health rights of indigenous peoples if actions are not coordinated.

Harari et al. (2023) highlighted the important role played by partnerships in the public policies field, as well as emphasized the relevance of understanding public action processes in intercultural contexts. They analyzed two cases regarding experiences lived by agents and organizations focused on indigenous people's health in São Paulo (SP) and São Gabriel da Cachoeira (AM) municipalities. These cases made it clear that networks created by agents who advocate for indigenous causes were essential to face the COVID-19 crisis, since they enable building an indigenous rights-protection network. Investigations conducted in indigenous lands in Jaraguá (SP) and Alto Rio Negro (AM) municipalities have evidenced that, despite their differences, the process to strengthen both institutionalized and informal partnerships played fundamental role in coping with the health crisis. In other words, "the role played by regional and national indigenous organizations that, in association with allied organizations, built self-organization forms, integrated solidarity actions, as well as collections and donations of organic food, basic food baskets and hygiene materials for indigenous peoples" (Harari et al., 2023, p. 11-12).

Harari et al. (2023) have emphasized that, despite political threats and the institutional disarticulation of federal agencies, such as FUNAI and the Secretariat of Indigenous Health, the network of agents acting in solidarity with indigenous issues managed to develop a security network by guiding public actions. It was done by strengthening the means to implement and revitalize local partnerships that played essential role in these peoples' survival during the COVID-19 pandemic. Multicentric perspectives enable understanding the relevance of interfaces set among different actors in civil society and different State spheres that have effectively contributed to implement some public policies.

Thus, when it comes to the 2030 Agenda, SDGs and their prevalent dimensions, mainly the political and institutional ones, highlight the importance of strengthening solidarity networks in the communities we live in to help creating peaceful and inclusive societies. Both Tsoropre (2022) and Harari et al. (2023) emphasized this crucial lesson, since it complies with SDG 16 and SDG 17 principles, in pursuit of peaceful and inclusive societies.

After analyzing the first two "Gs", the current study provides an analysis of the third "P", which refers to "People" and to its prevalent dimension, namely: the social dimension.

THE 2030 AGENDA: PEOPLE – THE SOCIAL ASPECT SEEN AS PREVALENT DIMENSION

With respect to the “P for People”, Barbieri (2020) highlighted the social dimension as the prevalent one, since it groups eight SDGs, namely: SDG 1) No poverty; SDG 2) Zero hunger and sustainable agriculture; SDG 3) Good health and well-being; SDG 4) Quality education; SDG 5) Gender equality; SDG 6) Clean water and sanitation; SDG 7) Affordable and clean energy; and SDG 11) Sustainable cities and communities.

The initial focus of the current analysis lied on SDG 3) Good health and well-being, which was the number one goal during the pandemic. Below, we introduce our understanding of the present research findings.

Castro et al. (2021) analyzed the epidemiological situation and the governmental actions focused on fighting the coronavirus in indigenous peoples' villages in Mato Grosso State, from March 2020 to March 2021. Their findings have evidenced 150 death cases; many of them presented incomplete information (no information) on gender and/or village data. This factor highlighted failures correlated to SDG 1, which deals with “Poverty Eradication”, and to SDG 5, which is related to “Gender Equality” in these villages. Castro et al. (2021) have emphasized the need for greater rigor and transparency by the Special Secretariat for Indigenous Health (SESAI - Secretaria Especial de Saúde Indígena) at the time to collect and generate records during the pandemic, a fact that made it hard to carry out in-depth analyses and to identify acquired knowledge to be applied in future pandemics or disasters.

Another relevant point addressed by Castro et al. (2021) concerns indigenous peoples' community culture and lifestyle. Most Xingu villages live in community, in communal houses that shelter many people. This particular feature did not allow adopting social isolation as mitigation strategy during the pandemic. Precarious sanitation conditions (SDG 6) have also worsened the SARS-CoV-2 outspread.

A third aspect in the study by Castro et al. (2021) deserves to be highlighted, namely: the “urgency of complying with safety protocols to prevent the new pathogen from outspreading and [to implement] mandatory social distancing for collectively-living populations, mainly for indigenous peoples” (Castro et al., 2021, p. 56). According to the aforementioned researchers, these actions intensified indigenous peoples' vulnerabilities and made it hard to control the pandemic in their villages. Based on French philosopher Bruno Latour, these authors concluded their analysis by emphasizing that political

circumstances featured by governance deregulation and State neglect resulted in multiple social inequalities (Latour, 2018).

Given this scenario, lack of data collection criteria during the pandemic, as well as insufficient transparency and lack of equitable approaches to intercultural realities have worsened social inequalities. The attempt to isolate indigenous peoples could be interpreted as fully abandoning unprotected populations and leaving them to their own devices. Therefore, the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic must be taken into account in future planning to face new crises. Are we just forgetting about indigenous peoples? What about peripheral communities?

The next section is an analysis of the fourth “P”, which refers to the “Planet” and its environmental dimension.

THE 2030 AGENDA: PLANET – THE ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE SEEN AS PREVALENT DIMENSION

When it comes to the “Planet”, Barbieri (2020) highlighted the environmental dimension as the prevalent one. He opened room for four SDGs within this category, namely: SDG 12) Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns; SDG 13) Taking urgent action to fight climate change and its impacts; SDG 14) Conserving and sustainably using the oceans, the seas and marine resources for sustainable development purposes; and SDG 15) Protecting, restoring and promoting the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems by sustainably managing forests, fighting desertification, halting and reversing land degradation, and by stopping biodiversity loss.

Based on the aim of the current study, the most relevant document to be analyzed was prepared by the Indigenous Missionary Council (CIMI - Conselho Indigenista Missionário) in October, 2021. CIMI, which works with indigenous peoples and is coordinated by the National Conference of Brazil’s Bishops (CNBB), reported that land invasions and indigenous people’s murders were recorded during the pandemic. The report issued by CIMI (2021) highlighted land invasion, illegal exploitation of resources and damage-to-property cases, with emphasis on 263 occurrences registered in 2020 alone, which represented increase by 137% in comparison to the number of cases registered in 2018. Land invasions and the exploitation of natural resources were often perpetrated by loggers, miners, hunters, illegal fishermen, farmers and land grabbers who invaded indigenous lands to steal timber, to devastate rivers to find gold, among other minerals, as

well as to deforest and burn vast vegetated areas for pasture growing purposes (CIMI, 2021).

According to the CIMI report “*Violências contra os Povos Indígenas – Dados de 2020*” [Violence against Indigenous Peoples – Data from 2020], invaders act based on certainty of authorities’ connivance, including that of the federal government. Other federal government initiatives considered contrary to indigenous interests during the COVID-19 pandemic comprised Bill n. 191/2020 - which provided on indigenous lands’ opening for mining, gas and oil exploitation, as well as for building hydroelectric plants; and Normative Instruction (NI) n. 09 (introduced to the National Congress in February 2020 and published by FUNAI in April 2020), which allowed certifying private properties on non-homologated indigenous lands, including those in advanced demarcation process and use-restriction areas where isolated indigenous peoples lived in (CIMI, 2021).

Although SDG 15 points towards the need to protect, restore and promote the use of ecosystems, and despite Brazil’s active participation in several intergovernmental environmental agreements, such as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (1994) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992), there is clear disconnection between discourse and practice, besides the violence against individuals, indigenous heritage and terrestrial ecosystems during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A valuable lesson emerging from this context lied on the fact that the individual interests of certain groups prevail over collective interests, even in critical moments like the one faced by humanity during the pandemic. The economic imperative of growth and foreign exchange generation, in association with governmental actions, still emerges from practices focused on serving private interests. Therefore, it is essential being attentive and building a new civic mindset by implementing an Environmental Education process capable of boosting individuals’ formation and transformation.

Another important point to be highlighted in the current research was found in the article “*Sobre Cocares e Máscaras: Estratégias das Lideranças Indígenas em Manaus no Enfrentamento à COVID-19*” [About Headdresses and Masks: Indigenous Leaders’ Strategies to Face the COVID-19 pandemic in Manaus City], by Cardenes and Montardo (2021), who reported the consequences faced by the indigenous population living in Manaus City (AM) and in its surroundings. According to the aforementioned authors, the unbalanced urban centers’ growth:forest ratio can have significant impact on the emergence of new epidemics, since urban expansion over forests increases human contact

with microorganisms, bacteria and new viruses. The origin of the COVID-19 disease is evidence of such an interconnection, based on the scientific community's consensus that this virus was vectored by human exposure to bats (horseshoe bats) in Chinese forests.

This same suggestion is supported by Lagrou (2020), according to whom "The fact that humans eat hunted animals is not the factor causing epidemics. Epidemics result from deforestation, as well as from the extinction of animals that previously act as their symbiotic hosts. They emerge on the fringes of threatened forests, in the interstices of interspecies friction, and they are quickly transported around the world by trucks, boats and planes. Hunting is not the only thing causing pandemics; other animals also suffer from, and generate, diseases. They are prisoners of an interstitial area between the forest and the city, i.e., the rural area of large-scale food agribusiness, which is notable for the emergence of new virulent flues that can lead to pandemics. Large agro-industrial poultry and pig [breeding] enterprises are the environments the so-called 'swine flu', among other diseases that were a harbinger of the virus we currently know, emerged from, a few years ago" (Lagrou, 2020, s.p.).

Cardenes and Montardo (2021) have emphasized the need for establishing a respectful and harmonious coexistence relationship with our planet, which is a core target of SDG 15, which, in its turn, advocates for the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems and for the interdependence between biodiversity preservation and humanity's sustainable development. Thus, it is clear that one of the main lessons to be learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is the need for fighting, halting and reversing planet Earth's degradation process.

It is important emphasizing that Brazil acknowledges Environmental Education (EE) through the Ecological Education provided on in law n. 9,795/99, which, in its turn, established the National Policy for Environmental Education (PNEA - Política Nacional de Educação Ambiental) (Brasil, 1999), as well as in Resolution n. 2/2012, which established the National Curricular Guidelines for Environmental Education (Brasil, 2012). According to the law and to the Resolution, EE is a tool to achieve citizenship. However, findings in the current study have shown that Environmental Education based on informative purposes, alone, seems to be an insufficient pedagogical practice. Jacobi (2003, p. 196) stated that the "challenge lies on formulating a critical and innovative Environmental Education at both formal and non-formal levels".

In short, the new process aimed at awareness formation involves the historical and cultural context we live in, which is permeated by a wide range of conflicts, such as the previously mentioned ones. This formation must also include new awareness about the need to fight the degradation of our ecosystems. The direct or indirect impacts caused by our actions generate tension in our daily lives. The lesson we have learned, at this point, is that critical and innovative Environmental Education is necessary to recognize conflicting situations experienced by us in our daily lives. Environmental Education cannot, and should not, be limited to its pedagogical role; it must be consistently and consciously integrated to our daily lives. Environmental Education, as Ecology representation, must acquire consistency and autonomy to effectively achieve its project. It is imperative opening room for a new environmental awareness to be applied in our daily actions in order to help protecting the ecosystems we depend on.

Finally, the next section provides an analysis about the last “P” of the current research, which corresponds to the final element of the 2030 Agenda, namely: Prosperity and its economic dimension.

THE 2030 AGENDA: PROSPERITY – ECONOMY SEEN AS PREVALENT DIMENSION

With respect to “Prosperity”, Barbieri (2020) also acknowledged the economic dimension as the prevalent one. It includes three SDGs: SDG 8) Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; SDG 9) Building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fostering innovation; and SDG 10) Reducing inequality within and between countries.

Philosopher, writer and environmental activist Ailton Krenak shared his reflections during the COVID-19 pandemic and social isolation process in the book “*A Vida Não é Útil*” [Life is Not Useful] (Krenak, 2020). This essay was a free exploration of the human life on the planet, based on a reflective and personal approach. The book’s ironic title can be interpreted as defiance to the utilitarian logic prevailing in contemporary society.

The life of each individual in a complex and intense world obsessed with productivity and efficiency only becomes valuable to the extent that it is useful to someone; yet, our actions acquire value when they are necessary, applicable and effective. According to Krenak (2020), life already has intrinsic value, just by existing. The aforementioned author

invited us to reflect on our relationships with life - this is the opportunity to seek a more humane and sustainable way of living.

The analysis suggested by Krenak (2020) also corroborates the herein investigated economic dimension. In his text “People don’t eat money”, he reflects on what humanity is and explains his proposal, as follows “When I talk about humanity, I am not only referring to Homo Sapiens; I am referring to a multitude of beings we have always excluded: we hunt whales, we extract shark fins, we kill lions and hang them on the wall to show that we are braver than them. In addition to the killings of all other humans we deem unnecessary, who are here just to provide us with clothing, food and shelter. We are the plague of the Planet, a kind of giant amoeba” (Krenak, 2020, p. 9).

Based on this reasoning, Krenak (2020) questioned several economic foundations that are actually fallacies and domination mechanisms created by those who consider themselves different and superior to all beings living on this planet. This mindset distances us from Earth, from the life found on it, besides creating “an exclusive club of humanity - which is found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in institutions’ protocols” (p. 10), a club that will devastate everything around it.

According to Krenak (2020), the prosperity we seek must exceed the utilitarian limits attributed by humans; it requires a new vision that sees the Earth as living organism formed by microbial beings, plants, among other organisms that play fundamental roles in the planet’s regulation and habitability. Krenak (2020) defined the COVID-19 pandemic as a challenge for us, humans, since it resulted from the erosion of life we are causing on Earth, an erosion that has our own species as its main cause, i.e., the “giant amoeba devouring the planet”. The aforementioned author advocated that the mindset leading us to move towards the so-called “technological progress”, and the need for “devouring” what exists on the planet, in order to achieve it, must be urgently rethought. The world inherited from our ancestors has been consumed and we are literally “eating” its parts. What we believe to be indispensable is, in fact, the recreation of the human mindset.

Krenak (2020) encouraged us to rethink our reality, as did Gilberto Gil in his song “*Refazenda*,” which was mentioned by Krenak: “Abacateiro/ acataremos o teu ato/ nós também somos do mato/ como o pato e o leão” [Avocado tree/ we will accept your act/ we also come from the forest/ like the duck and the lion] (Krenak, 2020, p. 22). As time went by, our homes got concentrated in cities, which turned into metropolises and, later on, into

megalopolises. This process, together with other anthropogenic actions, triggered the 'precarization' process the planet has been through.

Thus, according to Krenak (2020), true prosperity lies on life fluidity, on the search for, and maintenance of, balance, and on respect for organisms that play decisive roles in the planet's management and habitability. Prosperity must be perceived as continuous transformation process, based on which, the human species/biosphere relationship should be reinvented. The idea of interdependence is broken when humanity places itself in a position of domination over nature and decides to exploit it without planning. By acting to delegitimize any life classified as inferior, we end up boosting ecosystem destruction. The Earth does not belong to us in a strict sense; we belong to it.

CONCLUSIONS

The UN's 2030 Agenda established sustainable development and a significant transformation in the world we live in as its core proposals. According to the UN, this is an action plan focused on people, on the planet and on prosperity to help strengthening universal peace and ensuring greater freedom. The 2030 Agenda was launched in 2015 and it comprises a series of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that must be achieved by 2030 - notable progress was already observed in many of them.

The current study is an analysis of published texts about experiences lived during the COVID-19 pandemic, with emphasis on those lived by indigenous peoples, based on the five elements of the 2030 Agenda, also known as "5Ps" and their prevalent dimensions.

Far from exhausting the approached topics, our goal was to contribute to reflections and to interpret the lessons learned during the pandemic period, rather than exhausting likely interpretations of them.

One of the first lessons learned after analyzing the first two "Ps" – Peace and Partnerships – and their main dimensions (political and institutional) concerned the ethical and moral stance of our representatives during the COVID-19-associated health crisis. These representatives must bear in mind that their fundamental function lies on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, despite any ideological, political or institutional viewpoint. We must build effective and accountable institutions. Furthermore, individual reflection plays crucial role at the time to take into account our representatives' positions, regardless of the used communication channel (either formal or informal). The experience lived by young representatives of the Xavante people who managed to convince their elders to get

vaccinated, highlights the important role played by each one of us in building inclusive societies and in being committed to leave no one behind.

Another lesson to be highlighted lies on the relevance of partnerships set by local networks and their relationship with governmental agencies. It was clear in the analyzed cases, and in many other initiatives worldwide, that the solidarity and creative power of local communities played essential role in facing the challenge posed by a fast-outspreading health crisis of global proportions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, due to lack of responses from official bodies, both at regional and national levels.

At least two major lessons can be highlighted when it comes to the social dimension and to topic “People”. The first lesson is the relevance of accurate records on all experienced cases, mainly on death cases, at the time to analyze the impact of health crises on each community. The 2030 Agenda emphasizes the importance of setting measurable targets in all its 17 goals, so one can assess, analyze and implement necessary actions to minimize impacts and to monitor progress towards respective targets. Records made in several indigenous villages only comprised the number of death cases, without any additional detail, a fact that hindered the development of analytical plans and actions aimed at improving, indigenous people.

The second lesson has evidenced that, although we consider ourselves a single Brazilian nation, our nation is actually formed by several sociocultural realities, a fact that implies the fundamental awareness that pandemics do not affect everyone the same way. This interculturality forming our nation requires the participation of local communities in the process to elaborate action plans in crisis contexts, as well as flexibility at the time to understand that solutions applicable to certain groups are not universal - as observed in the case of the “home isolation” rule, which was not a viable option for communities living in a shared housing, food and space regime. Understanding how each community lives and what its limitations are enables fulfilling one of the fundamental goals of the 2030 Agenda, namely: leaving no one behind.

The fourth analyzed “P”, which refers to the “Planet” and to its environmental dimension, brought to light an important lesson linked to SDG 15, which concerns the protection, recovery and sustainable use of ecosystems. Based on the current findings, ecosystems’ predatory and illegal exploitation was not suspended, even during the time when several activities were halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They rather increased during this time. Despite Brazil’s active participation in intergovernmental environmental

agreements, the country has failed to implement effective measures to protect our ecosystems and populations that depend on them. It is essential, as learning experience, highlighting the importance of developing a new civic awareness based on respect for the environment. This process will only be possible through a critical, comprehensive and transformative Environmental Education integrated to our daily lives. Moreover, in order to overcome predatory individual interests, it is essential nurturing a new collective awareness focused on protecting our ecosystems, in the daily life of each citizen, as well as demanding responsibility from our legal representatives, regardless of the prevailing ideology.

The fifth analyzed “P” refers to “Prosperity” and to its economic dimension. This analysis was based on the thoughts by writer, philosopher and indigenous leader Ailton Krenak. He shared his reflections during the COVID-19 pandemic and pointed out the destructive trends of the so-called “civilization”, which often identifies humanity as ecosystem resources’ holder, besides denying the harmful outcomes deriving from anthropogenic actions. However, from Krenak’s perspective, prosperity is intrinsically linked to the transformation we impose on the planet, since he emphasizes that humanity’s insertion in our collective dream of world must happen in a different way.

Finally, it is necessary developing a new civic consciousness to fulfill the fundamental principles underpinning the 2030 Agenda and its five critical dimensions, namely: People, Prosperity, Planet, Partnership and Peace. The deep and applicable understanding of the structural dimensions found in the 2030 Agenda requires a new Environmental Education that, beyond its passive pedagogical function, must be critically incorporated to our daily lives. The main lesson we should draw from the COVID-19 pandemic is that the herein described positive lessons are associated with respect, rather than with conquest - respect for the environment, for planet Earth and for each other.

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