

Protecting people's lives against life-threatening COVID 19 disease has changed everything in our days all over the world. Patterns of life, including working conditions, self isolation and lockdown and many of the established restrictions have changed our lives. Situation is absolutely exceptional, with a new situation and a new reality.

People have changed their consumption, travel and lifestyle patterns. Cities have stopped their activity and consequently, pollution has decreased. The points are: what does the future hold? is the current pandemic different from earlier disruptions? what would make it a major game-changer? It is necessary to know about recent disruptive situations and compare them with current situation. For a few years now, the climate change and the need for energy transition for its mitigation has been one of the main issues.

The pandemic has added to a situation in which climate change was recognized as one of the most important challenges that require action. Spain declared a climate emergency in January 2020. The need to move towards another energy model is the consequence. In recent months (Lanza, 2020) many things have been called into question: appeal to reason as the basis of actions, trust in scientific-technical knowledge and, above all, the position of the citizen. The disturbance has been very great. Citizens and cities have suffered serious effects. Many concepts are in crisis: reason, certainty, fragility, economy, solidarity, order, autonomy, community ... Cities are in crisis, especially the largest ones, in which transport conditions must change. In cities, it is suggested that two issues should be worked on: promoting the city of proximity and changing mobility.

### **What are we dealing with?**

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We knew different disruption definitions. As defined by Merriam-Webster disruption is "*a break or interruption in the normal course or continuation of some activity or process*". And consequently, in a way it gets a negative connotation, changes of the status quo: a break from the usual, at least a distraction or a deadly threat at worst. In some cases, disruption is perceived and creates opportunities, for instance, to entrepreneurs. Nowadays, in economics disruption is essential, critical to economic growth and social advancement. Only by creating new technologies, products and services that replace the old, can we advance society and improve the human condition, it is said. But it is true there is also a reaction

against.

In addition of the advantages observed in technological disruption, disruption is also needed as absolutely necessary in many industries and human activities if we are to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. Since some weeks ago we all are in a exceptional situation. We face extraordinarily difficult circumstances, with many people ill, shielding or self-isolating. If I had to choose the main keywords I would say they are: UNCERTAINTY, RISK and VULNERABILITY, and in that order precisely.

## Recent Changes

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In a nutshell, Friedman (2017) believes the world to be flat due to the following ten factors in the last decades: 11/9/89 (fall of the Berlin wall), 8/9/95 (Netscape IPO), work flow software, open-sourcing, outsourcing, offshoring, supply-chaining, insourcing, in-forming and the steroids. All these things flattened the world conducting us to the globalization. Many of these ten items, as can be seen, are part of what is recently known as the disruption of technology.

COVID-19 sanitary crisis has broken everything. It is obvious current situation is a disruption, a disruption unlike any we have seen in decades, but what kind of disruption? We have got restrictions, national strategies against global approaches for example in the European Union, mobility and pollution has decreased in cities all over the world. What things are properly working? Work from home? Supply chains? Priority to medical supplies, postal services, international e-commerce, parcel delivering and need to think long term have increased. In any case difficulties are greater for large cities, densely populated zones and metropolitan areas. In large cities is estimated that cycling could increase 10-fold and walking five-fold post-lockdown. Private car use will also increase in large cities despite the fact they are not equipped for it. Current and political dilemma is balancing health vs. economy reducing vulnerability of some social groups and ensure protection them from health and economic point of view. Maritime transport also faces new necessities, routes and there are many associated challenges. A decrease of traffics is expected in ports for at least two years. Cruise tourism, like the rest of tourism, will suffer a recent unprecedented fall. Marinas and nautical navigation activities are also decreasing.



*The seafront “Paseo marítimo de la Malvarrosa” in Valencia. (Photo: Vicent Esteban).*

## **What can provide a better relationship between urban and port needs?**

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Changes in the port-city relations are needed? Does exist any opportunity? In my opinion the most important short, medium and long term effects are those that occur on people, especially unemployment. Inequalities grow in our societies and countries. Business destruction is a reality. The recession will occur at various speeds in Europe, according to forecasts by the European Commission (European Commission, 2020a). Mediterranean countries will experience a slower recovery than Poland, Austria or Germany. Brussels foresees an unknown collapse of the economy since the Second World War in Europe. A decrease of 7,7% in 2020 is expected. In Spain the prediction is that crisis will be one of the

deepest in the eurozone: GDP will fall by 9,4% in 2020 and will rebound to 7% in 2021 and the public deficit will soar to 10,1 % this year. The uneven recovery is explained by the different rhythm of misconduct and the economic weight of tourism, which 2020 summer, and probably the whole year, has operated under very hard restrictions.

First of all, we need to recover employment and economic conditions. Protection and recovery must be ensured. Thinking, first, of the needy and, in general, of all. Political viruses must be avoided: demagoguery, populism and nationalism. We need to identify strategic issues and work together. And the same is true to the case of ports and cities.

The European Green Deal (European Commission, 2020b) will mobilize research and innovation to foster a just and sustainable societal transition aiming at 'leaving nobody behind'. One of the eleven areas defined in it is that of sustainable and smart mobility. Transport is a major contributor of global greenhouse gas emissions. The European Green Deal seeks to address this. In order to achieve the EU's goal of climate neutrality by 2050, transport emissions will have to drastically reduce by 90%. Much more needs to be done in aviation and shipping to achieve the EU decarbonisation goals. Airports and ports have a major role to play since, as hubs, they can have a significant and immediate impact on the modes of transport using them.

### **Valencia post-COVID-19 port city scenarios**

The effects of COVID-19 on shipping are and will be undoubtedly great. For the moment there has been a significant reduction in freight traffic. The metropolitan area of Valencia and its port can use the COVID-19 crisis as an opportunity. Valencia is the third-largest city of Spain in terms of population and produces 11% of the Spanish GDP. Valenciaport represents almost 2.3% of socioeconomic impact in the region (in income, added value, taxes, jobs, etc), Port and metropolitan area have long faced territorial-environmental and socioeconomic challenges. Valenciaport's plans for an extension towards the North led to the construction of maritime infrastructure that were finished in 2012, albeit without the construction of a terminal. In 2019, a research evaluated the environmental and socioeconomic impact of the maritime infrastructure, including the effects of a new terminal planned in the Northern terminal (Esteban *et. al.*, 2020). The assessment found that

Valenciaport and its nearest hinterland share problems, notably a lack of infrastructure—railway facilities, connectivity in city and port and logistics areas— and need environmental improvement. A commitment to the energy transition must be also established.

Ports can ultimately adapt to whatever patterns of trade eventually emerge, but that cannot be done overnight. Valenciaport has analyzed different scenarios to understand how the COVID-19 crisis can serve as a development opportunity following on the environmental assessment made earlier. All the scenarios anticipate delays in recovering from COVID-19. In the meantime, Valenciaport and Valencia city must act as facilitators, bringing together a consortium including metropolitan area municipalities, regional government, maritime agents, business associations, collaboration with universities, and others. Most importantly, we need to recover employment and economic conditions for all citizens and especially for needy. We need to identify strategic issues and work together: this is particularly true in the case of ports and cities that will be strongly touched by climate change and sea level rise. Circular economy practices should be favored, collaborative city-port agreements should be established in the energy area, or waste management, seeking joint solutions and, of course, involving citizens.

Valenciaport and Valencia city is a good example that the relationship between them must improve and urgently. Valenciaport does not do enough pedagogy of its functions and importance. There are not communication and information channels between Valenciaport and citizens. Political confrontation permeates all relationships and there are no common goals and joint work to go ahead together. The governance system is not properly working and engagement, information and collaboration are needed.

## **Acknowledgement**

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*Valencia*" - on the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus PortCityFutures Blog (<https://www.portcityfutures.nl/news/disruptions-and-the-effects-of-covid-19-on-city-and-port-plans-valencia>; 25 Jun 2020). Special thanks for comments and reviews to Carola Hein, Hilde Sennema and Maurice Jansen.

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*Head image: Panoramic view of the Port of Valencia and city. (Photo: Autoridad Portuaria Valencia).*