

CSR Communication and Ethical Data Imperatives in Epidemic Crises: Insights from Algeria

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Summary

This article aims to understand how the ethical idea of “Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR) can contribute to the fight against precariousness during crises such as pandemics. In a transition to the digital age, the study focuses on the difficult working conditions in Algeria, where the crisis had an impact by disrupting local and international supply chains and by causing the closure of entire wilayas from the coast to the Great South. Public and private companies are expected to be ethically responsible with fast and efficient measures to contribute to help hospitals and more. However, CSR should not be a reactive measure only in times of crisis, when reputation is at stake. The pandemic has revealed the urgent need to address equity and equality at work, particularly as many workers, forming a digital proletariat, lack the technological resources needed to engage fully in online employment.

This study advocates for a framework that incorporates data-driven strategies and wealth redistribution, reducing digital disparities. Through the communication practices of citizens and entrepreneurs as reported in Algerian media and informed by international research from the 19th century to the post-COVID-19 era, we will delve into the ethical use of data assets. The goal aims to mitigate future epidemic

risks and create a more inclusive, through sustainable, ethics-based solutions, equitable work environment supported by responsible corporate contributions.

Key words

Epidemic Crisis, Crisis, Communication, Ethics, CSR, Data.

الملخص

يهدف هذا المقال إلى فهم كيفية مساهمة المنظور الأخلاقي "للمسؤولية الاجتماعية للمؤسسة (CSR)" في مكافحة الهشاشة خلال الأزمات مثل الأوبئة. في ظل الانتقال إلى العصر الرقمي، تركز الدراسة على ظروف العمل في الجزائر، أين أثرت أزمة كوفيد 19 على انتظام سلاسل التوريد المحلية والدولية وتسببت في إغلاق ولايات بأكملها من الساحل إلى الجنوب الكبير. في مثل هذه الظروف، يتوقع من المؤسسات الاقتصادية العمومية والخاصة أن تكون مسؤولة أخلاقياً تجاه المجتمع باتخاذ تدابير سريعة وفعالة للمساهمة في دعم المستشفيات وغيرها. ومع ذلك، لا ينبغي أن تكون المسؤولية الاجتماعية للمؤسسة مجرد إجراء رد فعلي أثناء الأزمات حيث تكون السمعة على المحك. فقد كشفت جائحة كوفيد 19 عن الحاجة الملحة لمعالجة قضايا الإنصاف والمساواة في العمل، لا سيما أن العديد من العمال، الذين يشكلون اليوم "البروليتاريا الرقمية"، يفتقدون إلى الموارد التكنولوجية اللازمة للمشاركة الكاملة في العمل عبر الإنترنت. تقترح هذه الدراسة إطار عمل يدمج الاستراتيجيات المبنية على البيانات وإعادة توزيع الثروة للحد من الفجوات الرقمية وذلك من خلال استقراء ممارسات الاتصال للمواطنين ورواد الأعمال كما وردت في وسائل الإعلام الجزائرية، ونتائج الأبحاث الدولية من القرن التاسع عشر إلى حقبة ما بعد كوفيد-19. كما ستناقش الدراسة الاستخدام الأخلاقي لأصول البيانات سعياً للوصول إلى حلول أخلاقية مستدامة تساهم في مواجهة مخاطر الأوبئة المستقبلية وخلق بيئة عمل أكثر شمولاً، وأكثر استناداً على المساهمة المسؤولة للمؤسسات الاقتصادية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أزمة وبائية، أزمة، الاتصال، الأخلاقيات، المسؤولية الاجتماعية للشركات، البيانات.

Introduction

In the beginning of 2020's, the unexpected crisis of the Covid pandemic brought a hardly controllable succession of unprecedented political and economic discontent. To prevent a social panic like those observed internationally via screens and various media outlets, urgent

and preventive state measures had to be put in place to quickly respond to major concerns of public health and people's well-being, when public and private companies' activities slowed down. The Working-Class had also to slow down and/or work online. Inequalities and inequities appear between state or private companies' employees, for whom working conditions can be different, below the material, time, or mobility requested in time of confinement. It is then a question of preventing disasters for companies to take diligent measures to improve the working conditions of their employees and customers. In times of "rise of the digital proletariat" (*In these times*, 2014), working remotely, i.e. online seems important to avoid contacts notwithstanding the duty to carry on their business as much as to keep an eye on the possible burnout symptoms due to small frontiers between private and professional life. In these times of health crisis coupled with other humanitarian and ecological crises, how can a company effectively assume social responsibility? If a company is responsible, its profitability, but also its environmental and social impacts, must be adapted for a social and solidarity-based economy.

"Think Global, Act Local." As Roland Robertson (1994) puts it, probing the world to optimize the local area becomes essential in the era of "glocalization". Used in various contexts, this expression can also be applied to communication in crisis ... especially when the calamity is widespread. Before dealing with Algeria, we will first expound on ethical considerations around Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) since the mid of the 19th century with Engels coverage of epidemic cases during the industrial revolution in Britain. We will then focus on the 21st century companies' communication challenges and the risk management notices during the Covid crisis in Algeria focusing on Algeria Press Service (APS) corpus and other articles from National Press published during the pandemic time. We also conducted semi-directed interviews with legal, IT and financial decision-makers, to finally propose recommendation axes about CSR

linked to a roundtable about General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) organized by Ameddias's research network, in December 2023, at the CNPD – The National Commission for Data Protection in Luxembourg¹. In addition to these research and discussions, we also focused on the notion of universal basic income, considered as actual tools to prevent future crises in a perpetually evolving digital.

1. From Ethical Principles to Corporate Social Responsibility Assessments

Understanding economic downturns needs a global and holistic approach, one that delves into the impacts on both individuals and corporations. For this, it is important to travel to the past to understand the stakes of an ethics for politics and companies' world in mutation (1.1.) before explaining the concept of CSR nowadays as perceived internationally, and more especially in Algeria (1.2.). CSR, that even became in 2024 a European Directive called CSRD.

1- The roundtable "GDPR from 1995 to nowadays: Legal, IT and Financial assessment", was organized by Ameddias at the CNPD – National Commission for Data Protection the 4th of December 2023, in Esch Belval, Luxembourg. Among the participants brought together experts in the legal field: Judge François Biltgen, one of the fourteen judges of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), promoter of the GDPR, Professor at the University of Luxembourg Herwig Hofmann, M^e Nour Hellal, M^e Jeff Braun, lawyers in Luxembourg; For the financial field, Pr. James Mulli, Director EBU (European Business Institute) Mr. Alex Hornung, Head of Cash Management at BIL (Banque Internationale de Luxembourg); For IT expertise: Dimitri Janczak, IT Engineer Dr Mustafa Kamal Salarzai. MD.MS General & GI Surgery. Were also present Ms. Tine Larsen and Mr. Arnaud Habran, respectively president and legal advisor at the CNPD. Damien Portonalo, Public Relation and Jessica Akka (Master in Law intern, University of Lorraine) completed the organization with Tom Zeimet and Linda Saadaoui respectively legal advisor and co-president Ameddias.

1. 1. Ethical Responsibility for Better Working Conditions in Times of Epidemy

Issues of working conditions in times of crisis have given rise to an abundant literature throughout history. From Montaigne who published his famous *Essais* (1586) about Bordeaux's plague to Kant's concern with poverty, illness, and premature death in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790); and up to Camus (*La peste*, 1947) who provided a description of Oran's contamination in the 40s, numerous are the authors who described the risks and crisis facing humanity during epidemics. Among those, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* by the German Friedrich Engels in 1845 is notable. The question of how to avoid the disastrous consequences of a mortal epidemic was already raised by him during the 19th century on industrial era transition in England, Ireland, and Scotland, when the kingdom had to face several pandemic situations of fever, cholera, typhus, varioles, and other diseases.

Indeed, just as Friedrich Engels stipulated, we note that each period of deprivation, trade crisis or bad harvest led to an epidemic, and that the burden of the plague fell exclusively on the working class. This reality can be perceived in times of epidemic such as that known as *The Great Stink* (1858), experienced by Engels and Marx in England, in which one can see shortcomings being taken into consideration throughout the crisis. Engels questions the poor conditions that affect these most disadvantaged classes in times of crisis: feverish and contagious workers sleeping in the same room, the same bed, in overcrowded dwellings (*ibid.*). High mortality could have been avoided by providing scientific medical aid and advice, including prophylaxis. For Engels, misery, deprivation, and lack of vital goods prepare the contagiousness framework and make the epidemic terrible. Engel's book leads, after discussing several mortal epidemics, to the implementation of changes aimed at ensuring better care of public health and better environmental conditions, at this time. Also,

the company responsive hears: the first demands for a reduction of working hours were put forward by the labor movement throughout the industrial world as early as the end of the 19th century. Translated in English in 1885, Engel's book resonated with many governments who, in the face of mortal epidemic crises, enacted measures that enabled the population to take care of its health and reduced its exposure to the daily risk of contagious illnesses due to unhygienic circumstances.

Great Britain was the first country to experience industrialisation and therefore the creation of Unions, with wage increases and improvements in working conditions conducted by the Labor Party. As early as 1911, the British *Trades Union Congress* introduced paid leave, a major social innovation and one of the important axes of their program. These approved breaks were partially the result of sanitary recommendations: to prevent ravages on health, for the working class operating in difficult physical conditions. This appears as a legitimate restitution in times of epidemic crisis. Starting from this crisis onwards, paid leave and other rights have been the hallmark of industrialisation across the globe within a minimum of ethical responsibility.

1. 2. From the Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (1953) to the Promotion of Values

The notion of "Corporate Social Responsibility" was verbalized late in the 1960s and has been redefined over time. It tends to make people think more than ever about the often-aggrieved calls to pass on profits to the working masses. Howard R. Bowen is regarded as the father of the CSR. In his book titled *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (1953), the economist operationalises the concept of CSR in terms of the obligation of businessmen to carry out policies, make decisions and follow courses of action that meet the objectives and values that are considered desirable in our society. In the era of international trade and globalisation, it had to be developed theoretically and practically, in response to the demands of ecological and humanitarian

organisations requiring better consideration of impacts in the activities of companies (Golli & Yahiaoui, 2009). CSR is then evoked from a perspective of results, by evaluating the performance of the company from three angles: environmental, social, and economic. In Algeria, it is considered as a moral culture that binds each civil and moral person, to contribute to the development of societies and the realisation of well-being (Nasri, Hajji 2024; Ramdani, 2012).

Defined as "the voluntary integration by companies of social and environmental concerns into their commercial activities and their relations with stakeholders" by the European Commission (2011), CSR should not be imposed but be the result of a dialogue. This concept has been adopted with various subsequent but different definitions, none of which appears to have established itself as the single, common, and universally accepted characterization of what CSR means.

Khaled Mecif, researcher in economics at the University of Oum El Bouaghi encourages CSR that he places in Algeria "between promises and achievements" by proposing a model for its realisation (2018). The researcher wonders:

"We should not base ourselves only on the law, we should rather take it from an ethical point of view, because the laws generally come after the damage, but it is necessary to prevent this damage and act even in the absence of laws. The question that arises is: Where have we arrived in the social responsibility of CSR companies in Algeria? Under this main question, several other questions arise: Are there socially responsible companies? Are there organisations that ensure its realisation? Can we design an organisational framework for this purpose?"

If the questions point to the lack of research activity on the Algerian field, it is because the actions seem rare. He highlights the fact that there are several CSR labels in the world given to companies. And while in Algeria no company has had any such label yet, it offers socio-

economic benefits. Therefore, Khaled Mecif recommends improvements in CSR practices as well as steps to emulate CSR standards found elsewhere. Among these are: transparency (not lying and propagandizing about programs just to show a nice image), loyalty (involving a neutral third party to talk about the company's CSR efforts), team spirit (valuing the entire staff and not just the managers), explaining the precise help provided for ecology or social issues in figures, and finally, remaining proactive, with a clear program, and not waiting for the problem to arise before acting. The company must be ready to manage risks or crises and must preserve its reputation. This notion of CSR meant that mortality rates could somehow be contained via the provision of medical assistance and advice as well as a series of prophylactic solutions to the sick population. The Covid-19 pandemic appears as a test of resistance for companies in a suddenly changing work climate.

1. 3. Ethics and Responsibility Assessment throughout the World

Starting off by the international perception of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): "this is a plan endorsed by every country in the world and every major global development institution». As far back as 2015, the UN was working with governments, civil society, and various partners to build on the momentum generated by the MDGs and develop an ambitious agenda to "transform our world [with a] sustainable development agenda by 2030"². This agenda proposes a list of actions to be taken for the good of the planet and its people," 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) described by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon as "our shared vision for humanity and a social contract between world leaders and people. And yet Novethic, French media on responsible economy constats: *"Hunger, Poverty, Work... The Covid-19 crisis has slowed down the*

2- Source: Sustainable Development Goals. United Nations. Retrieved November 30, 2024, from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

sustainable development goals" (14/08/2020) that cast a dim light on the SDGs. With this crisis, the progress of several SDGs has effectively been halted or regressed.

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In addition, the *Tax Wars* documentary (Arte, 2024) sheds light on the growing issue of corporate tax avoidance mainly from what is called "technocracy", a topic closely tied to global economic inequality and the fulfillment of SDGs³. The documentary reveals how

3- The documentary *Tax Wars* (2024) features insights from prominent economists and experts who critically examine the role of tax avoidance in global inequality and its implications for corporate social responsibility (CSR). Thomas Piketty, a renowned economist and author of *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, addresses the link between rising inequality and corporate tax practices. Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel laureate and advocate for global economic justice, explores the moral and economic costs of tax havens. Gabriel Zucman, a leading researcher on tax havens and inequality, provides empirical data on the scale of corporate tax avoidance. Nicholas Shaxson, journalist and author of *Treasure Islands*, explains how financial secrecy fuels tax evasion. Pierre

multinational corporations, including giants like Amazon, Google, and Apple, exploit loopholes in international tax systems and use offshore tax havens to drastically reduce their tax liabilities, depriving governments of crucial revenue that could be used to fund public services, infrastructure, and social programs. This practice undermines the achievement of SDGs, particularly those focused on reducing inequalities (SDG 10) and fostering responsible consumption and production (SDG 12). The scientific contributors reveal how this tax avoidance exacerbates wealth inequality and undermines social justice. The documentary illustrates the direct link between the erosion of the tax base and the increasing gap between the wealthy elite and the most vulnerable populations, making it clear that a more responsible approach to taxation is critical for advancing the SDGs and fostering a more equitable global economy. This is a key issue for Corporate Social Responsibility: businesses must adopt fair and transparent tax practices as part of their ethical obligations to society, contributing their fair share to the communities in which they operate.

The pandemic has halted the progress made since 2015. This is the warning signal sent by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) that the outbreak has had devastating effects on the well-being of populations and has also increased global economic risks that could have negative consequences for the implementation of the SDGs. The MDGs against hunger and poverty are particularly weakened by the health paradigm. The pandemic is expected to "push 40 to 60 million new people into extreme poverty", "undoing years of progress" the ESC notes (id.). The observation is therefore alarming, in an era of digital transition that has already forced new international

Moscovici, former European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, discusses EU efforts to curb tax avoidance. Denis Beau, Deputy Governor of the Bank of France, offers insight into the regulatory challenges of global tax systems. Together, these experts highlight the need for stronger corporate accountability and fair tax practices, which are central to the principles of CSR and the global push for more ethical business practices.

divisions of labor, generating popular crises that have been repressed in a year of global revolt. The agenda setting could not fail to address populations jaded because of corruption, who have given rise to anti-government movements thirsty for more democratic reforms and better governance.

In a few words, outbreaks of epidemics, occurrences of famine, manifestations of destitution and misery increased over the world. In Algeria with *Hirak* challenging times, in France with the *Gilets jaunes*, the fervor spread to several European countries with a follow-up of many African countries and the Middle East, the Latin American and Asian Agitations, until the Ukraine/Russia crisis; all of which reignited and persisting post-colonial conflicts, affecting entire populations...and this, not only the Palestinians yet highly supported throughout the world shocked by the starvation and the taboo subject of genocide handled by politics. Palestinians always colonized in 2024, waiting for a justice globally perceived.... precisely as corrupted. According to the ESC, the immeasurable economic fragilities aggravated by these numerous crises added to the Covid one, will undeniably result in an increase of poverty for the first time in over 20 years. The younger generations appear poorer than their parents post-World War II, all over the world. Today, companies must demonstrate their capacity to help their community and to prove themselves worthy of a mission of public interest. For Ivan Tchotourian (2020), founder of the LIRSE –an Interdisciplinary Laboratory on CSR – CSR presents different interests for the sustainability and survival of companies. And many companies, especially in the context of health crisis, want to put CSR at the heart of their strategy because of its beneficial effects for society but also for their reputation. Indeed, a real market for CSR exists by integrating it within a company, it can attract customers and committed investors who share the same values. Thus, we understand that the actors of entrepreneurship must act in a responsible manner by rethinking profit and the perspectives of all

stakeholders especially in times of crisis. For Oliver May⁴, a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) who worked in various leading positions including as auditor and CFO in Europa, there is a crucial point regarding the entire process:

“CSR and Data Protection are very valuable concepts, but it is a *conditio sine qua non* that the shareholders, i.e., the owners of the companies; share these concepts, because they are the ones who must accept lower dividends implementing the relative mechanisms and processes. Without the owners being convinced there is a significant risk that the need to comply with new regulations resulting from CSR and Data Protection result in pure eyewash.”

Therefore, in terms of the legal stakes associated with the concept of CSR, the Covid crisis appears as an exceptional crash test for the entrepreneurial sphere with innovative initiatives to be adapted in these crisis circumstances. Transition to adulthood or regression, which is the question. In a French opinion article to “*CSR put to test by Covid-19*”, Yvan Le Queinnec (*Les Echos*, 2020), a Strategy Communication’s CEO⁵ quoted, states that the concept of CSR can bring tremendous opportunities, but the risk of regression is even higher:

“It reflects the insufficient seriousness of CSR within the management staff of the largest Groups (...). It is about consolidating what has been achieved and massively

4- Semi-structured interview held on the 3rd of January 2024 in Luxembourg, with Oliver May, CPA, former CFO of *Pramerica Real Estate Investors* Luxembourg (Prudential Financial Inc.) and previously audit manager for KPMG in Italy and Germany.

5- Affectio Murandi is a French consulting agency in societal, normative, and reputational strategies which articulates CSR, Corporate & Crisis Communication.

accelerating the change (...). CSR must find its place at the highest level of organisational charts and future strategic agendas.”

Starting from this premise, the company must communicate and act in the most viable way in times of socio-economic crisis. Indeed, shareholders and business owners can financially play an effective role in reducing the impact of the pandemic by contributing to medical research or through solidarity donations. This is especially true since there is an urgent need for individuals, institutions, and the entire society to preserve the stability and gains achieved in times of prosperity. If the aid offered by public and private companies in terms of social responsibility can reduce the risks, how can it be distributed equitably to the affected populations? Research about data and CSR lead by scientists within the Maastricht University’s European Centre on Privacy and Cybersecurity (ECPC) points to the need to legislate CSR for Public Companies (2022). Compliance should advance together with sustainability to generate both social and financial value. This research led by Pr. Paolo Balboni proposes guidelines for companies. In his own words:

“On the market (...) we need to go beyond compliance, we need to go beyond mere legal compliance to stimulate responsible data processing activities, enhance the effective protection of data subjects and their rights, and trigger virtuous competition in this field among organisations. Fundamental rights and data freedom are subject to laws and for business reasons, organisations must understand that they can have a return-on-investment complying with CSR and data protection”.

In 2023 the European Commission produced new rules regarding the social responsibility of Business. Those rules are clearly delineated

in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)⁶. Though assessments as of 2024 may prove premature, we can notice that this CSRD entered into force to modernise and strengthen the rules concerning the social and environmental information that companies must report. A broader set of large companies, as well as listed SMEs, will now be required to report on sustainability. Nevertheless, in 2024, conclusions remain the same for Europe. The publication "Social Investment, the Foundation of Social Rights and its 20 Principles" by the European Commission for Employment and Social Rights shows the necessity and paramount importance of an agenda for Social Europe. It emphasizes the challenges for a resilient European social model considering the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis. It highlights the significant effects of the pandemic on inequalities, poverty, and territorial disparities, stressing the need for additional investment in social infrastructure⁷.

Based on these different perceptions throughout history, the notion of CSR can therefore be seen as a lever for economic growth and the proper functioning of businesses as much as they address health and environmental issues. Its action would consist in strengthening employment, housing, social services, care, education, etc. Companies therefore need to communicate effectively to prevent further medical precariousness, reinforced by the logistical consequences brought about by a supply chain-disrupting pandemic.

6- Source: https://finance.ec.europa.eu/capital-markets-union-and-financial-markets/company-reporting-and-auditing/company-reporting/corporate-sustainability-reporting_en Consulted 04/05/2024.

7- Source : <https://confrontations.org/linvestissement-social-le-socle-des-droits-sociaux-et-ses-20-principes/> / Consulted 04/05/2024.

2. Organisational Communication and Risk Management in Algeria

After a few initial cluster cases, the pandemic would have spread rapidly throughout the territory: hospitals were confronted with a massive influx of patients. To prevent themselves from more social panics, organisations must handle communication to the best of their abilities through both traditional and digital media to inform about measures that will be established in time of crisis (Saadaoui, Bangali, Lafrance, 2015).

2.1. Communication, Media, and Epidemic measures

Mediation is done through various communication channels including television, radio, social media. The success of this activity is premised on the implication of health specialists of all kinds, on the establishment of awareness cells for the most vulnerable neighborhoods, on provisioning medical personnel with batches of masks of diverse types, as well as on the release of a toll-free number by the Ministry of Health.⁸ The International Press Center of Algiers proposes a small-scale website on a smaller scale - covid19cipalgerie.com - allowing citizens to follow the evolution of the crisis. In the news, governmental requests to businessmen to contribute financially to the rescue of their companies, impacted by the imposed confinement, are frequently relayed⁹.

These different channels are multiplying information and training activities on prevention methods and procedures to follow in the

8 - The number 3030 is dedicated to information and concerns of citizens on the virus. Still in a global approach - following the example of the US platform "ARCGIS, COVID-19" initiated by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering of John Hopkins University <https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6> Consulted 20/08/2020.

9 - This platform in Arabic, Tamazigh, French and English offers five sections including a press review Covid19, two referring more specifically to national and international news: <http://covid19.cipalgerie.com/fr/> . Consulted 20/08/2020.

presence of suspected cases. The State increased the capacity of hospitals by requisitioning certain services to cope with the influx of patients. The awareness caused a significant increase in the demand for masks and hydro-alcoholic gels, resulting in a shortage as stocks dried out. When the sudden closure of borders and factories appeared, the situation did not just paralyse productive activities worldwide but also changed the entire architecture of political and economic relations with countries affected by the measures taken internationally¹⁰. Then, for Minister Djerad, "the measures taken by the public authorities for the prevention and control of the pandemic directly impact the economic life and employment, which requires a *national solidarity of scale* for the maintenance of economic activity, the preservation of employment " (APS, 04/04/2020).

For crisis management, national solidarity initiatives are converging to help companies facing the risks of the health crisis coupled with the economic crisis¹¹. In the middle of the confinement,

10- Since the alert launched by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in Africa (09/02/2020) on the circulation of the coronavirus, the Algerian health authorities have set up a monitoring cell at the central level, while activating the device of surveillance and alert to the infection at the level of the points of entry namely the airports and the Algerian ports. They also closed the borders and stopped international flights in addition to restrictions on the free circulation inside the countries.

11- Several actions were conducted by the UNEP, in relation with the Central Pharmacy of hospitals, a list of various essential and urgent care products to be acquired or out of stock, were communicated to public companies, committed to produce, or provide them according to existing capacity. As for the employers' organisations and associations of Algerian industrialists such as CIPA - Confederation of Algerian Industrialists and Employers or AGEA, the General Association of Algerian Entrepreneurs, they have launched sectoral consultations with employers' organisations and trade unions to assess and have the impact of the pandemic on the company and economic life. The Algerian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CACI) has launched an initiative to ensure sustainability and preserve productivity, revenue and employee salaries and invited company managers to inform themselves, via their site, of articles and videos proposed by Algerian experts on important topics for any establishment (APS, 03/05/2020).

in April 2020, the National Union of Public Contractors (UNEP) announced its commitment to fight against the spread of the virus through the mobilisation of its member companies. By setting up a cell to monitor the situation, "all human, material and financial resources of all its members are mobilized alongside the government and the population until the total eradication of this plague" (APS, 02/04/2020).

The State had thus promoted, as in the time of *perestroika*, a national safeguard policy with three priority axes - economic, social, and ethical - for any strategic medical or food product, until the end of the crisis¹². Except for jobs related to the sale of food on the entire territory, workers were affected by extended periods of suspension: public and private educational institutions - from nurseries to universities - vocational training centres, Koranic schools, as well as mosques, court hearings, hammams, games rooms, commercial fortnights, and sporting events. If the objective of these measures is to prevent the spread of the virus, they are nonetheless an additional burden that is difficult to bear for all business leaders. The cessation of activity, the loss of turnover, and the payment of salaries to confined employees may further strain the cash flow of companies and their ability to meet obligations *vis-à-vis* their creditors or simply cause them to go bankrupt.

At the level of emergency actions to prevent the risks of closure, it was not until July 2020 when a financial aid package worth DA 30,000 targeted at "small trades" for a three-month period was unveiled (APS, 27/07/2020) to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on SMEs / SMIs and liberal professions. During the periodic meeting of the Council of Ministers to follow up on the Hirakian period, the mentions of

12- Among these stocks: semolina, flour, pulses, rice, pasta, oils, sugar, coffee, mineral water, tomato paste, food preparations, all dairy products, including those intended for children, vegetables and fresh fruit, red and white meats, medical and paramedical equipment, medicines and pharmaceuticals, personal hygiene products and household detergents.

"transparency" and "false declarations" were underlined to prevent misappropriation for any attribution (APS, 27/07/2020). Also, the crisis has brought to light dysfunctions that previously would have been ignored, even before the Hirak period. After the precariousness denounced in those times, the epidemic crisis has been particularly disastrous for offices, start-ups, weekly livestock markets, fruit and vegetable markets as well as souks and large local sales spaces where operators are subject to a lease on vacant spaces without receiving state aid. Many small traders who occupy most of the urban public space in Algeria have been economically victimized: the rents of inactive and unoccupied traders should be endorsed; the tenants have been hit hard by their activity's paralysis. Real estate developers have increased their turnover, as they continue collecting rents from tenants who lost their revenues. The culture of freezing commercial rents, revealed internationally, has only been weakly adopted. Furthermore, the public agora of coffee-shops and other "Square" do not exist anymore. This disappearance of the black market alongside the disruption of parallel markets, which generates countless jobs, wreaked economic damage among the neediest.

2.2. Prevention of Epidemic Situations: CSR Challenges

With the discontent caused by the health crisis, CSR should be the subject of greater interest on the part of executives and managers. In this sense, the entrepreneurial sphere must communicate in such a way as to reflect willingness to (self-) empower via the activation of support mechanisms. The loss of income has increased the number of people in need. The closure of restaurants and fast-food outlets, the stoppage of public transportation and the slowdown of business activities, the construction sites and factories locking down have all pushed thousands of households into precariousness. The negative effects on public and private companies in terms of loss of income is verbalized by Moussa Boukrif, director of the laboratory in Management and quantitative techniques at the University of Bejaïa: the Covid-19

pandemic is THE one “too much” crisis for Algerian companies. The abandonment of projects and the decline in public spending that were the main engine of national economic growth cannot be without negative effects on the country. These difficulties do not date from this health crisis. In 2019, economic outlooks published by these private business corporations were already pointing to the deterioration of the performance of public and private enterprises (*El Watan*, 19/05/2020).

This perspective leads us to reflect on the direct relationship between epidemic and CSR: the more severe the spread of the virus, the greater the social responsibility. CSR is even more relevant in difficult circumstances, as it is an essential and important pillar in the life of companies. The health crisis reveals the importance of corporate culture, giving it an unavoidable and urgent dimension. Obviously, companies must therefore know, because of this unprecedented crisis, which operates on a corporate strategy that integrates employees’ as well as other stakeholders’ interests and claims with other social and environmental components makes business sense. In fact, companies have for many years been talking about CSR along with their commitments and missions. All these words, all the procedures and standards that accompany them are there to try to demonstrate that companies should nowadays urgently change to participate in the public interest, not only to manage crisis, but moreover to prevent risks, with knowing how to get in, and being able to get out (Saadaoui, Yeghni, Louadj, 2021).

3. Urgent Responsibilities for Private and Public Companies during epidemic

How to achieve responsibility for companies that must make urgent and ethical choices in times of digital transition and crisis playing out simultaneously? To answer this question, we will focus on a few measures adopted by private companies (3.1), public companies (3.2) and finally on citizen assistance at all levels (3.3).

3.1. Aid Measures adopted by Private Companies

Media coverage of the emergence of the virus in March 2020 revealed various corporate initiatives loaded with reputational issues. Their "Big Bosses" are under the spotlight, especially when they have a less favourable image in public opinion, because of proven facts. Consider the example of the Cevital group, the first private company in Algeria, with multiple activities (food processing, automotive, industry, household appliances, sugar refinery etc.). Its founder, Issad Rebrab, will not miss an opportunity of *greenwashing* - a marketing or public relations process used by some organisations to create a misleading image of ethical responsibility. He was received by the Minister of Health, Population and Hospital Reform Mr. Abderahmane Benbouzid on the airwaves of Channel 1, to demonstrate live his willingness to participate in the national effort to cope with the epidemic (*Liberté*, 22/03/2020). He pledged to import resuscitation equipment from abroad and reassured consumers that his products would be available and that prices would be maintained. Another example is that of businessman Djillali Mehri, CEO of PepsiCo and Accord Hotels in Algeria, who donated half a million dollars, claiming to be in the process of acquiring materials and equipment for the manufacture of protective products against this pandemic (*El Watan*, 29/03/2020) ¹³. In that sense, we can underline the

13 - Other companies' examples could be highlighted for their values through a culture of donation: the laboratories Venus of Blida, with batches of hydroalcoholic gel, intended for hospitals, health centers, civil protection units of the Wilaya concerned "throughout the period of the fight against the coronavirus" (APS, 19/03/2020). Danone Djurdjura Algeria also guaranteed the continued supply of dairy products to the national market and stressed its commitment to contribute actively and responsibly in the event by continuing the activity while taking care of its employees, aware of their duty in the absolute respect of the barrier gestures. Henkel Algeria has donated 50,000 liters of bleach brand "Bref" to the Central Hospital Pharmacy, but also its initiative to disinfect neighborhoods and public spaces and places with high traffic to fight against the pandemic (*Le Maghreb*, 24/03/2020). Still, in a spirit of solidarity and Takaful, Salama Assurance Algeria has made a financial contribution of 6,000,000 dinars to the

role of dissemination of societal information on the perceived reputation and its brand image (Traki, Moussa; 2022).

Finally, it is worthwhile noting that no worker should be left behind in a corporate culture that values social responsibility and promotes some kind of equality in terms of care. This implies a radical change, a radical change in the way the profession is perceived, some of which are too quickly reduced with popular and often pejorative expressions such as "housekeepers" or "garbage collectors". It is a question of reviewing their functions, especially in times of health crisis. Especially if even a headline like "Constantine: garbage collectors at the forefront of the health battle against Covid-19", (APS, 04/14/2020) acknowledges their essential role in times of health crisis. This is compounded by the incivility of citizens who do not respect the schedules reserved for garbage collection. The need for 24/7 jobs as surface technicians or urban cleanliness agents for public spaces has never been so well understood from an existential point of view on the socio-political and socio-economic scene. Already in crisis in Algeria, this sector – public infrastructure – has been overwhelmed. Local actors and associations such as those of tourism have been denouncing the extreme pollution of public spaces and the lack of employment in the sector. Like caregivers in health facilities and security services, these workers should be increased drastically to adapt to the rules of social distancing, in an inappropriate environment given the extremely difficult conditions for collecting bags of garbage cans torn and dumped on the ground and in the public sphere. Therefore, each

Covid-19 account opened by the government to fight against the negative consequences of the Coronavirus (APS, 03/08/2020). External support such as the Circle of Action and Reflection on Enterprise (CARE) has set up an income, entitled "COVID-2020", in solidarity with affected private workers. At the same time, for the private sector, the public authorities have granted a flat-rate financial aid of 10,000 DA per month for one quarter for this category of workers (APS, 08/04/2020).

company must always optimize and consider the availability of this transversal and necessary field of work.

3.2. Aid Measures adopted by Public Companies

About public-sector companies, the case of the Algerian state oil and gas group warrants consideration¹⁴. The first company on the African continent, Sonatrach, offered a day's work to its agents and those of its subsidiaries for the benefit of national health institutions as a contribution to the national effort to fight the spread of the virus (APS, 07/04/2020). Sonatrach has also donated for the benefit of the "Pharmacie Centrale des Hôpitaux" which, in turn, must distribute them to hospitals in need (APS, 03/19/2020). In addition to these solidarity initiatives, this energy sector has reduced its budget for 2020 by 50% and postponed projects that are not urgent, due to the fallout from the spread of the virus on Sonatrach and other oil markets. Several solutions have thus been considered, such as broadening the tax base, resorting to public debt, diversifying the economy, developing Algeria's attractiveness, and reducing the share of oil in GDP. Moreover, the Organization of Petrol Exporting Countries (OPEC) had announced a reduction in world supply of 10 million barrels of crude per day, to curb the plummeting prices (APS, 03/29/2020). Public authorities have also created cell committees to help certain oil-producing but desert regions, such as the wilaya of Adrar, where preventive measures have been adopted by the government (APS, 03/04/2020). These committees aim to coordinate solidarity actions, particularly towards vulnerable social categories.

14 - In this section 3, and in particularly in this section 3.2., we focus on the information relayed via press releases from the Algeria Press Service news agency. This is why we will cite the facts as they were presented: namely by focusing on legal entities and not civil entities such as companies. In this sense, we will cite the positions as they were stated and not the people, such as ministers of ministries and business leaders for companies.

The government aid measures adopted have therefore been plural and heterogeneous depending on the sector.

During confinement, in another context known as government solidarity in the fight against corona, the Ministries chained announcements: the Post Office and Telecommunications declared the granting of an exceptional bonus to counter agents and other employees in direct contact with the citizen. This sector would have contributed to this solidarity effort with a notable amount (APS, 05/16/2020). The solidarity here encompasses the effort of all public sector companies (all the subsidiaries of the Algerian Telecom Group, the National Frequency Agency, and Algeria Post), as well as that of the first managers of these companies who donated one month of their salaries. This kind of "gesture" is not remarkable in Algeria: a month before, the Ministry of the Interior relayed that President Abdelmadjid Tebboune and the executives of the Presidency had decided to donate one month of their salaries in contribution to national efforts aimed at stemming the effects of the crisis on citizens; the Walis would also have decided to contribute with a month's salary (*El Moudjahid*, 04/05/2020). This financial contribution comes within the framework of strengthening national efforts and in a spirit of social solidarity. Under the presidency of Abdelmadjid Tebboune at the height of the pandemic, media have denounced this social malaise of the difference in salary, in times of the digital proletariat, irrespective of whether one works for the private sector or for the State. Finally, it is worthwhile noting that no worker should be left behind and that effective CSR policies should promote some kind of equality or equity in terms of care, stakes that would allow the government to control and prevent a massive brain drain.

3.3. The culture of Responsible giving, Individual or Associative

Faced with the size of the threat, several social actors have decided to mobilize for the collective effort to fight the pandemic. There has been a surge of solidarity from citizens with spontaneous actions.

Alongside the aid provided by the main economic operators, such as private and public companies, there is that of associations and, last and foremost, volunteers who, out of ethics, are immediately present on the ground to stem this pandemic with "the means at hand".

Despite all medical progress in the world, one of the most important weapons that Algeria deploys against the pandemic is a solidarity of *zakat*. It consists of donations and relief to the needy accompanied by a sense of social responsibility. The contribution of sport and its celebrities also are a significant help. Like Cristiano Ronaldo – known for his substantial aid for a free Palestine – who offered intensive care units to his country Portugal (*Le Parisien*, 24/03/2020), Algerian famous citizens have been put in the spotlight, providing independent aid. Riyad Mahrez, a player at Manchester City, contributed financially to an extent that the Tunisian press *L'Economiste maghrébin* (31/03/2020) described as a "pharaonic gift", an "astronomical" amount. His was indeed a humanist donation that is more touching, for all populations across borders, as far as the player wanted to remain discreet and modest and did not wish to disclose the amount. The Tunisian journalist Bechir Lakani, quotes Riyad Mahrez responding to a user who leaked the donation of 4.5 million euros that the footballer would have made to Algeria: "The right hand must not know what the left hand is doing". The contribution of the football family to the aid of people affected by Covid-19 and poor families was also welcomed through the creation of a special aid account with the External Bank of Algeria where the Algerian Football Federation (FAF) is domiciliated. From there, the FAF communicated the bank account number to all the Leagues (wilayas, regions, municipalities) for its supply. The donations would then be paid into the national fund for the fight against Covid-19 . In April 2020, we also learned that through his foundation based in Algeria, Zinedine Zidane offered five resuscitation kits and other emergency equipment which will be sent to health establishments in the wilaya of Bejaïa (*El Watan*, 02/04/2020).

Social media users have also stepped up their mobilisation to help by appealing for donations. The Maraudes, those solidarity caravans organized for needy families in isolated regions and shaded areas, focused on the distribution of packages of basic food products and consumer items¹⁵.

Solidarity initiatives such as that of the Algerian Food Bank network have resorted to collecting foodstuffs in supermarkets and redistributing them to large families, women raising children alone, orphanages and homes for the elderly (*Liberté-Algérie*, 08/10/2020). Also, during an interview, the president of the *El Ikram* association in Annaba was able to provide mediation with rapid and effective responses from the start of the pandemic, by transmitting clear messages to its members and adherents, via social media and by launching the "Awareness and precaution" page about the evolution of the pandemic. The same can be said about *Ness El Kheir*. This association's social media assumed responsibility for training a dozen people per wilaya on techniques for the disinfection of contaminated sites, the distribution of medical kits and the setting up of clothing workshops in thirty-six wilayas where could be produced for distribution free of charge to citizens (APS, 03/08/2020).

Other citizen solidarity actions have multiplied in this growing momentum of mutual aid, as well as community actions of foreign chancelleries present in Algeria. Attention is also brought by Algerian communities living abroad. For example, Algerians living in Belgium contributed with a donation of 35,000 screening reagents and 2,500 sample purification kits (*Algeria economy*, 06/08/2020). This spontaneous solidarity linked to *zakat's* mentality is far from the "greenwashing" one: it was triggered by various actors from civil

15- In addition to these stakeholders, the Algerian Red Crescent (CRA) would have mobilized its troops in the 28 municipalities of the wilaya of Adrar to lead awareness and prevention actions (APS, 03/04/2020).

society associations, non-governmental organisations and volunteers, through social media. The contribution of these different assets to social responsibility aims to transform their initiatives into catalysts for improving the well-being of individuals, building infrastructure for societal development, and protecting the environment.

4. Ethics & Data Challenges

In times of pandemic crisis, working conditions are to be rethought as previously discussed. The increase of online work – for the digital proletariat – leads to a new sovereignty of big companies owing the citizen data thanks to algorithmic strategies. That companies collect and analyze these data for the purpose of enhancing competitiveness or return on investment are not always consented to by the users. In that sense, it is a steal of precious information. As far as ethics is concerned, how can we understand CSR in connection with this data issue? In this section, we will focus on the GDPR applied as from 2018 in Europe to fight against such steals and adapted in several countries including Algeria through the establishment of dedicated enforcing bodies. Afterwards, we will concentrate on proposals to redistribute the wealth of the “big data’s companies” who encourages governments to solve precariousness with a Universal Basic Income, a “guaranteed regular cash payments from the government to every individual in society regardless of how much you currently earn or have saved up” (*The Times*, 13/06/2023).

4.1. CSR and GDPR: Citizen Data Sovereignty Challenges in a Multi-Polar World

Each economic revolution begins with a robbery. According to Marx, the preconditions of capitalism were to be found in a brutal system of robbery (1867), “manifested in the form of enclosures, the usurpation of the land, the dispossession of the peasantry, and the pillage of the colonised world—giving rise to proletarianisation, genocide, and slavery” (Bellamy Foster, Clark, & Holleman, 2021).

Nowadays data are better known within the fashionable motto “Data is the new oil” to explain that data generated by the citizen contribute highly to the digitalized world economy. In the sense that it is generated and stolen when confidential information can be sold and resold without the explicit One century after Karl Marx’s works about “brutal system of robbery”, works like and *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963) and *Discipline and Punish* (1975) from the French sociologist Michel Foucault analyzed how crises, such as epidemics, reveal underlying structures of power and control that govern human behavior. He argued that health crises, by exposing societal vulnerabilities, prompt the expansion of surveillance to manage and monitor populations—a concept he termed “biopolitics.” The COVID-19 pandemic brought this biopolitical control to the forefront, with technologies like QR codes and digital health passports embodying new forms of surveillance. These tools, while created to curb infection spread, also represent a deeper reach of authority over individuals’ personal data and movements. Research about QR codes impacts also show how it strengthens a classification of individuals based on the collection of personal data, raising concerns about surveillance and privacy (Xu, 2021; Zhang, 2022). Through this Foucauldian lens, we see that the commodification of personal data—much like the enclosures of the past—enables a new kind of “robbery.” As personal information is extracted, sold, and resold, often without informed consent, individuals’ data become assets within an economy that operates outside traditional frameworks of ownership and agency. This evolution not only echoes past patterns of dispossession but also calls attention to the need for ethical data governance and an examination of the ways digital power dynamics perpetuate inequalities.

Therefore, how can the regulations set up to protect data privacy and security in a commercial and non-commercial environment worldwide be used also for public authorities? In what ways are the European GPDR and other data collection regulations over the world

shaping differently the relationship a citizen has with its local authorities? To what extent may the regulations from other parts of the world affect your administration or your state? Could it be regarded as an instrument of influence? Those are the questions we were discussing during the MENAPAR conference in Algiers (November 2022) about territory and digitalisation¹⁶.

The Algerian GDPR, promulgated in June 2023, created the National Personal Data Protection Authority (ANDPD) to regulate data and consider the potential conflicts that may arise from data collection. This authority took into consideration the fact that our data are valuable but could also be a source of conflict between two countries if no regulation is proposed. In that sense, data collection for empowering the EU Citizen with his/her data, everywhere in the world leads to a right to know, to erase, to get notified of breaches. As a consumer versus a business entity but also as a citizen versus an administration, there are also different stakes involved in data protection to consider. The administrative regulation about data in this sense, should often be reviewed by these new actors, the DPO, the “data protection officer” whose role is still unclear, and who are still ill-prepared professionally even in Europe (Simoes, 2023). The study notes that companies did not wait for the European Commission to be made aware of this problem. In France, the so-called “Informatics and Freedom act” law of 1978¹⁷ was already mastered by organisations.

16- The MENAPAR 2022 International Conference “Territory, Digitalization and Development: Synergies and Perspectives” was held at the ENA – National School of Administration of Algiers from the 27th to the 30th of November. More info: <https://www.bipa.gov.bh/en/menapar2022/> . Our communication (Linda Saadaoui and Dimitri Janczak for Ameddias Luxembourg, focuses on GDPR & CSR recommendations for Algeria with worldwide comparative approaches).

17- This law is born after an attempt by the French government, under the presidency of Georges Pompidou, to create «SAFARI” a centralized database of personal data. SAFARI stands for *Système Automatisé pour les Fichiers Administratifs et le Répertoire des Individus* or "Automated System for Administrative Files and the Repertory of Individuals". On 21st of March 1974, an article in the newspaper *Le Monde*, "SAFARI ou

Many already had within them an “IT and freedoms correspondent”, ancestor of the personal DPO; a function established by the GDPR for public bodies and organisations required to process so-called “sensitive” data on a large scale, with monitoring, information, advice, control, and alert missions if necessary. We can therefore notice different conceptions of data collection and privacy around the world due to the implementation period of data legislation.

As private companies have gathered a vast amount of data about their customers and employees for their marketing and CSR responsibilities, the legislators around the globe had no other choice than to intervene and create a set of laws to try to limit the usage of such data. The legislators did not, however, limit these laws to the private sector. They were extended to all aspects of the life of the person, including their relationships with the public administration as a citizen in most regions. In the European Union, the personal data protection framework is known as GDPR and is said to empower the person with the right to know which data various private and public bodies have about him or her and exercise a right to amend and delete such information.

In the always complex language of European institutions, there are a few concepts which create interesting rippling effects for private companies and public administrations. Personal data is every piece of information that can singularize a person and allow the tracking of his activities. This may only concern obvious characteristics such as a person’s last name, first name and address. But, when it comes to the Internet, personal data involves dealing with technical pieces of information such as IP addresses which makes it possible for interested

la chasse aux Français” brought public attention to the project. Therefore, an authority – the Commission Nationale Informatique et Liberté (CNIL) –was created partially in response to public outrage against the SAFARI program, which was an attempt by the French government to create a centralized database allowing French citizens to be personally identified by different government services.

parties to know what you have done on the Internet. The framework also adds the concept of sensitive data when it comes to religion or handicap for example. Some exceptions are made for operating public services and missions traditionally operated by the State, such as the police, but it is not an exception granted by default. It must be justified. In the same global spirit, the regulation applies to anybody operating on the soil of any member state of the European Union but also applies to any company that processes data from a European Citizen. A data protection officer is the contact a person can reach to know what data is stored, and to exercise his rights to amend and delete the data. All of this creates a potentially interesting effect of the extraterritoriality of European law.

Nevertheless, CSR and data protection authority must work without forgetting the risks and the crisis it can also trigger. In 2023, the “Europe’s security hidden crisis” report led by two European researchers – Dr Johnny Ryan, Senior Fellow of the *Irish Council for Civil Liberties* and Wolfie Christl, principal of *Cracked Labs*, an independent Austrian research institute¹⁸ – was published. This extensive research shows how data about European defense personnel and political leaders flow to foreign states and non-state actors. One of the companies pointed out in this report is the Israeli firm “Patternz” endowed with technologically capabilities in the form of “real time bidding” that has allowed it to collect live data. Another risk is to manage to bend GDPR rules just like in the case of Lusha, an Israeli company headquartered in Boston, thanks to territoriality-related regulation gaps. Surprising gaps in people dealing with data rules who

18- Dr Johnny Ryan FRHist, S is a Senior Fellow of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties and the Open Markets Institute, and previously held senior roles in the technology industry, including in the RTB industry. He has written for The Economist, NATO Review, and Studies in Conflict & Terrorism. Wolfie Christl is the principal of Cracked Labs, an independent Austrian research institute. He is a regular speaker at government and research on cyber security and data conferences. His research is widely cited, including in *The Financial Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.

did not understand how this can happen¹⁹. Questions have already been raised at the European Commission about these Israeli threats among others²⁰ This kind of international alarming report also warns us about our insecure devices and tools, where the possibility of them being hacked into or them becoming ideal remote spy systems exists. In that sense, CRS linked to GDPR risks must be perpetually considered as CSR links to potential social benefits. One example of such social goods is the debated universal income, also called subsistence income, universal income, or universal allowance - depending on the name chosen by the States thinking about it.

4.2. From Paid Leave to Universal Income in the Post-Epidemic Period?

The revenue, known as "basic income", or "universal income" or even "universal allowance", was discussed in experimental test phases in various European countries, internationally but also in Africa (*Le Monde*, 02/06/2016). It continues to be discussed and researched. It is approached in the economic as well as political, entrepreneurial, trade union and other scientific spheres, in times of mass digital illiteracy and poverty: data protection but also a decent living are crucial rights. Indeed, the Internet and home working allow significant gains for private and public companies, but not for the Working-Class – or otherwise for just a minority thereof.

For Tom Zeimet, Ameddias Luxembourg's consultant from the University of Maastricht, an imperative and relevant analysis of the challenges of modernization and digitalization, and the inequalities this can cause should be thought up. It has become crucial to start

19-Source:https://shift-avocats.com/application-territoriale-rgpd-decision-lusha/?utm_source=chatgpt.com Consulted 20/02/2024.

20- Question asked about the Israel data-adequacy decision the 19/07/23 by the Belgium deputy Saskia Bricmont. Source: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-9-2023-002290_EN.html Consulted 20/02/2024.

applying the lessons learned during the pandemic to the post-corona world and the important relationship between data protection, data sovereignty and CSR in managing the risks and the unequal distribution of wealth in the digital age²¹. If the concept of CSR had not existed, while preventable deaths could have been averted through the provision of medical aid and guidance, including preventive measures for the ailing population, the emergence of Covid-19 presents a test of resistance for companies in an unthought evolving work environment. This shift in the work climate is characterized by contemporary digital proletarianisation, where the gap between this digital proletariat and the elite is starkly evident in terms of technological possession. Furthermore, economic recovery appears to be difficult with the deconfinement(s) and... the reconfinement(s), whether partial or total. Nevertheless, this period of crisis has given back, beyond the political crises, the human values in which nature reclaims its rights, with in the foreground concerns defining a priority common to humanity: better-being if not well-being. Several public and private companies, institutions, associative movements etc., seek to take a series of measures aimed at managing the pandemic, becoming aware of an increased risk of impoverishment for citizens. That is why a media outlet, the French newspaper *Libération* (04/05/2020), proposed during the Covid-crisis an overview on the project's countries wondering about universal basic income (UBI): UK, India, and Spain. The crisis comparison is made with the Great Depression one in 1929:

21- Semi-structured interview conducted on the 13th of January 2024 in Luxembourg, with Tom Zeimet, GDPR's consultant for Ameddias Luxembourg, studying at the University of Maastricht's Master of laws in Globalisation and law with a specialization in "International Trade and Investment". Tom Zeimet is also the main organizer of a closed roundtable named "GDPR from 1995 to nowadays: Legal, IT and Financial assessment", presented by Linda Saadaoui and himself. This roundtable organized by Ameddias at the CNPD – National Commission for Data Protection the 4th of December 2023.

“While the coronavirus pandemic paralyzes the global economy, the question of universal basic income is making a comeback in the public debate, emerging as a solution to protect the most vulnerable and cushion economic shocks comparable to those of the Great Depression of 1929. For its defenders, an unconditional basic income would be more than social assistance, it would amount to granting everyone a share of the national wealth created by the community.”

Despite a feeling of solidarity with CSR particularly, the reforms, beyond aid, could be inspired by more imperative “glocal” initiatives, such as that of the establishment of a minimum income to help each citizen in a world where the economic model is to be fully reviewed. This restructuring is explained by the need to contain both the dominant reign of algorithms at the core of the MAAMA and these companies’ modus operandi increasingly perceived as a de-facto “new government”. The MAAMA²² group of companies is comprised of the ex-GAFAM (Google, Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Microsoft), BATX (Baidu, Alibaba, Tencent, Xiaomi) and other entities under the NATU (Netflix, Airbnb, Tesla, Uber) acronym. This dominance plays out, especially in times of mass digital proletariat (*In these times*, 2014): with the computer as the main tool, it is possible to overcome the crisis while working online.

Compared to the socio-economic architecture built by our ancestors, contemporary society marks a turning point. In fact, inherent in its general structure (and functioning) is a digital system built by algorithms and data leaders that leads to an exacerbation of social inequalities. What can be done about them? Is overcoming these social issues by better redistributing wealth the future of the younger generation? To algorithm boss Mark Zuckerberg, who pioneered the

22- MAAMA for Meta (linked to Facebook), Alphabet (linked to Google) and Apple, Microsoft, and Amazon.

idea, the answer is yes. Indeed, in 2017, during a speech to Harvard alumni, he spoke out in favour of universal basic income. In the novel *I, Omega* by Erwan Barillot (2022), Ian Ginsberg, fictional double of the CEO of Facebook, gives the same speech and, from 2040, effectively establishes the basic income for all its users (*La Tribune*, 26/05/2017). So awaited here and so little known about there, the idea of a universal income is still in its infancy. In Germany, a behaviourist experiment was set up to evaluate this universal allowance: 122 people were drawn at random to receive 1,200 euros per month. It is thus a question of studying the effect of basic income on behaviour and the way of spending (*Le Monde*, 01/06/2021).

In addition to the Working Class, we have not solely focused on the painful ordeal endured by students from Algeria to Luxembourg and throughout the world, but also on the teachers who have faced a harsh learning and teaching environment. The higher education sector has uncovered the inequality and lack of equal opportunities within our university campuses and libraries when it comes to online teaching. While some students were equipped and motivated during classes, others lacked the necessary online resources due to their financial constraints. Moreover, students had to justify their learning deficiencies or lack of resources, which added to their burden. Psychologically, it was sadly challenging to conceal or reveal these deficiencies while experiencing a mix of pride and shame. And this equity of IT resources problem remains consistent, years after the Covid-19 epidemic, whether in the wealthiest and the poorest countries.

Conclusion

The question as to how to rethink our responsibilities as a civil but also as a moral person, adapt the benefits of capitalism to the less fortunate citizen is a fundamental one. A structural change has been observed in the relationship between individuals and digital work since the massive rapid development in Algeria of electronic

commerce, computer programs, artificial intelligence, robotization, algorithms, etc. There are innovative working methods for companies, but what about the working conditions for the less wealthy home-based employees who may not have access to crucial amenities – Internet, computer equipment, phones, smartphones, office equipment, ergonomic comfort – available in modern digitally enriched working environments? Within this framework, wealth gaps are narrowing and revealing convenient working conditions for some and social inequalities for others. We did not focus on the question. Questions about the need for essential or non-essential products differ according to the social classes to which the employees belong.

These gains must be reconsidered and redistributed considering the contention by the proponents of universal income that it can help people overcome exploitation and poverty even in times of economic downturn. If stakeholders in a crisis-hit society are in close collaboration and consultation with one another, then knowledge expands, assisting in consensus building within crisis management cells and in adapting the social fabric throughout. As a socio-economic paradigm, CSR must be taken into consideration and acted upon carefully to eliminate opportunities for situations of fraud, corruption, and abuse of aid measures; to prevent the still unresolved issue of transparency within various states. In times of mass impoverishment attributable to health crisis, exceptional and positive CSR gestures become obvious to socially redefine the better-being of everyone – wage-earners, self-dependent laborers, and all those who participate in the digital society via the sharing of his data – whether conscientiously or not. In that sense, if CSR and GDPR's initiatives can be one of those bridges that really connect the humanitarian sector together with the tech sector corporation, if data can be the asset to settle CSR, then it should not be neglected to create in parallel a perpetual crisis unit to constantly follow up on and prevent data crisis. Especially if this crisis coincides with the outbreak of an epidemic.

“Erst kommt das Fressen, dann kommt die Moral” meaning “You can only think about ethical questions when your stomach is full”. For Algeria and all over the world, how still is relevant this 1928 sentence from Bertolt Brecht?

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