

The social and economic impact of coronavirus in a globalized world

Coronavirus – the word that most of us, especially students really cannot stand anymore. We are constantly confronted with this new virus and we currently live with the consequences of it. But what exactly are the consequences for us and what are the global and national problems that come along with it?

One thing is for sure – this virus affects us all. What started in China has spread out to the western countries and is now also here in our country, Germany. A few weeks ago, almost everyone was making jokes about this whole situation because it seemed so unrealistic and so far away. Who would have thought that our schools would be closed, almost every public store would be closed, weddings, concerts and other gatherings would be cancelled and the government wants us to stay at home and only leave the house if it is really necessary. Even if most of us finally understand how serious this pandemic is, there are still people that cannot help but feel some type of depression and desperateness. Nevertheless, in times like these it is important to stick together as one nation and really follow the rules of the government in order to restrict the virus.

This pandemic is very new for our society and therefore it brings a lot of serious problems especially regarding the economy. A lot of restaurants had to close down, some went bankrupt and had to file for insolvency and lastly many companies make losses of millions of euros and many people lose their jobs. *Vapiano* is a perfect example of a restaurant chain that has filed for insolvency mainly because of this crisis. There are over 300.000 branches of *Vapiano* in Germany but regardless this chain did not survive the coronavirus crisis that is currently going on. Moreover, there are various self – employed people that struggle to keep their existence because they are forced to close their shops or companies for many weeks or even months. In order to save themselves, many need to fire their employees because they cannot afford to pay them anymore. This is not only dangerous for the people who lose their jobs but for the families most of the people have to feed. There are a lot of mothers who lose their jobs due to this crisis without a specific termination of their contract. Additionally, In Overath the famous local “Kus Feinkost” in the supermarket “Hit” also struggles for their existence because they have lost a lot of loyal purchasers and therefore a lot of money which they need in order to pay their lease costs and to feed their families. That is why we need to support our local shops like bakeries and other small businesses in order to help them survive this crisis. Another issue is the closure of schools and universities, especially for the students that graduate this year. Important lessons have to be done online and communication to the teachers only takes place via email. It is a very stressful and saddening time because the A-level exams and all the organizational things that go along with it probably have to be postponed. The time every student looks forward to turned into a time of uncertainty and darkness because nobody can estimate the long-term consequences of this virus and therefore we do not know what we can or cannot look forward to.

Besides these national problems there is a serious global economic crisis ahead of us. In China, there are millions of small companies that won't be able to recover from this crisis and the always very successful sale of cars has decreased from 92% to 83% after the outbreak of coronavirus. Professionals say that there is a huge wave of bankruptcies ahead of China. However, Europe and Germany will not be spared from this economic crisis and the future will show how bad the outcome of this crisis will really be. In terms of traveling and tourism all the affected countries are extremely restricted. The travel and tourism industry suffer extremely from the outbreak of coronavirus because Germany and other countries like Italy and France have closed their borders and completely quit the ability to go on vacation or enter the neighbouring countries.

Regarding the social problems of coronavirus, the shopping behaviour of many citizens, the isolation to family and friends is very problematic. People think it is necessary to buy 10 kilos of flour, 15 packages of noodles and an immense amount of toilet paper. This behaviour only causes stress and people start panicking when they see empty shelves in the stores. This behaviour is not only unnecessary but also egoistic because many people just think about themselves not really caring about the citizens that really need the groceries, for example the older generation that is the most vulnerable to this virus. Furthermore, this crisis leads to a constant fear inside every person. Today going to a store is not the same as it was a few weeks ago. Going outside to buy necessary things used to be so unproblematic and it was normal to greet the friends when you unexpectedly met them, but today going to a store creates an extreme feeling of unease because nobody wants to be near another person and everyone tries to avoid one another. Formal greetings with a handshake are not possible anymore and all of this could possibly lead to enormous social problems nationally but also globally. Almost every citizen in Europe is requested to stay at home and should not leave the house if it is not really necessary. This social isolation can also lead to many problems regarding the social behaviour of the citizens in our world.

In critical situations like these it is rather hard to see positive aspects to the crisis but regardless there are some economical and social aspects that improve in times like these. One of the positive things regarding the economy is that the modernisation and digitalization is promoted by the rising amount of online shopping and online commerce. Because everyone is requested to stay at home, online shopping gets more attractive for people, especially for the older generation and pre-diseased people for whom it is too risky to leave the house. Another positive outcome is the rising relevance of Social Media. People tend to use their social accounts more often and use platforms like Netflix in order to pass some time. And finally, the best thing this coronavirus has given us is the ability for our world to breathe and recover to a certain point. Experts say that the air in China has never been as clean as it is at the moment. All over the world the CO2 emissions are going to decrease immensely because of the limited industry during this corona crisis. Moreover, the water in Venice, Italy has never been so clear that it is possible to see the fish in the small channels and dolphins have found their way back to the coast of Italy which last happened many years ago. Socially the coronavirus can help to strengthen the bond between neighbours and between people in general. The number of people that are trying to help when it comes to grocery shopping for older people or when it comes to sharing their masks and disinfections with people that really need it rises. Germany offers a lot of ways for people in need to contact others for help or support. Furthermore, the international support in hard becomes clear when people start to applaud at 9pm for all the doctors, nurses and all the other people that keep the system going, in order to show their gratitude towards them.

Personally, I think that coronavirus is a very serious topic and that we have to stick together globally but we have to help nationally. We can only survive these times if we all follow the rules of our government and if we take this situation seriously. We need to help each other which means buying bread from the local bakery, supporting small local businesses to ensure their existence. I believe that we can get through this really annoying and desperate situation once we start to think in a solidary way and no longer egoistically. We can get through this if everyone follows the rules, stays at home and keeps his/her hopes up.