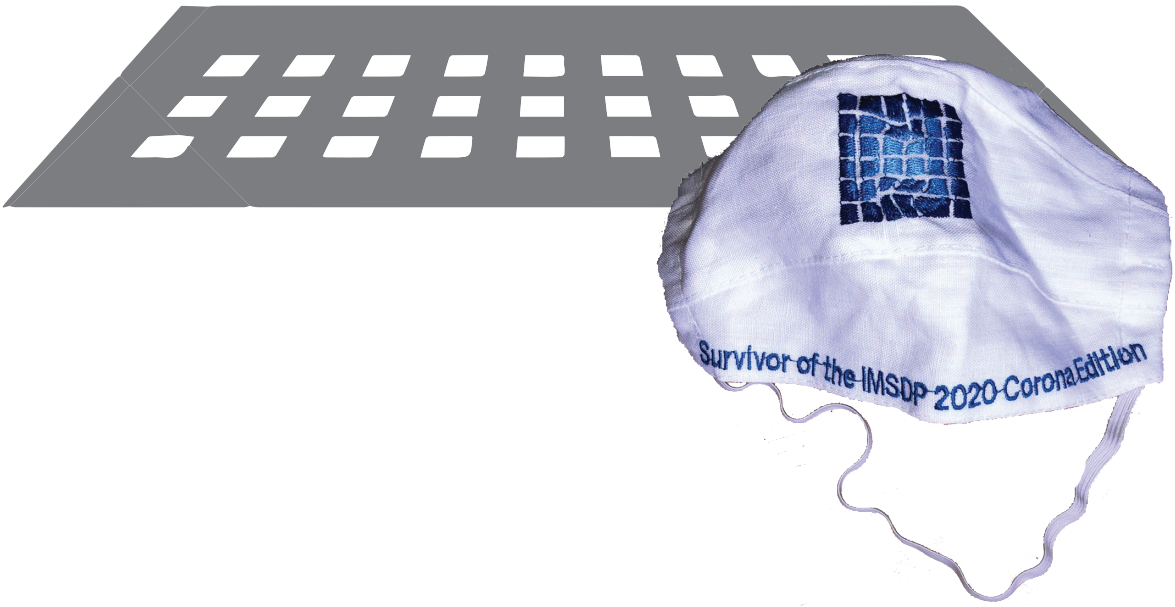
SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



INSIST CAHIER 4

This document is prepared with the contributions from KU Leuven profs. Pieter Van den Broeck and Frank Moulaert, 23 IMSDP 2020 participants (Post-graduate Program in International Spatial Development Planning), 4 KU Leuven Masters students and 3 Erasmus students enrolled for (IASP) Institutional Aspects of Spatial Planning course at the Faculty of Engineering Science in KU Leuven.

SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

INSIST Cahier 4

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CAHIER-4: SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE FACE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1 . PROLOGUE

1.1 THE PATH OF THE PANDEMIC

(Isye Susana Nurhasanah, Clara Medina-García, Joan Nyagwalla Otieno, Wossen Gebreyohannes, Angeliki Paidakaki, Pieter Van den Broeck)

No one imagined the year 2020 would be remembered as the year of a pandemic that struck almost all parts of the globe. It started when a new type of Coronavirus was found in Wuhan, one of the provinces in China. On 11 February 2020, WHO named the disease because of the novel Coronavirus as COVID-19 and declared it as a pandemic[1] on 11 March 2020. Pandemic itself is not a new thing in our history. There was the black death[2] in the Middle Ages (1346), and the Spanish flu[3] struck in 1918. Pandemics and epidemics that threatened millions of people and had a severe impact on social and economic life also occurred in our contemporary history, among others HIV/ AIDS, Avian Influenza, SARS, MERS, and Ebola.[4] The crisis caused by COVID-19 so far has been compared to almost every single crisis that happened on earth: the past pandemics, World War II, Pearl Harbour, Chernobyl, a nuclear war, 9/11, the financial crisis of 2008, but the final figure for the COVID-19 pandemic is still a projection. Amid the rapid globalisation and the massive technology development, COVID-19 presents a much faster and complex challenge. At this rate, COVID-19 is bound to become the new Godwin's law[5], with every internet discussion ending in someone bringing up a pandemic.

1 https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/

2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Death

3 https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/1918-flu-pandemic

4 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525302/

5 https://thecorrespondent.com/449/why-climate-change-is-a-pandemic-in-slow-motion-and-what-that-can-teach-us/59442751698-6f4701c1?pk_campaign=sneak-peek&pk_kwd=two-crises

According to the COVID-19 situation reports by WHO, this virus spread to over a short period of time through several Asian countries[6], such as Singapore, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Thailand, and others. In addition to China, several new epicentres appeared, from which COVID-19 then spread rapidly on a large scale and caused many fatalities. In Asia, the new epicentre became Iran.[7] Although it had been declared a pandemic, many countries at that time did not take the required immediate preventive action and priority attention to the possibility of its spread in the country; a stitch in time saves nine. Despite preparing for the worst scenario of contagion, these countries were only learning and seeing the virus spread from a distance. All activities were still running as usual, as if the virus would not reach them. Then this virus spread so quickly to Australia[8] and Europe that reality decided otherwise. In Europe, Italy and Spain became the epicentres of its spread.[9] Supposedly, from these two countries, COVID-19 hit almost all European countries. Not long after, the virus crossed the Atlantic Ocean to the Americas. The United States later became the new epicentre of the spread,[10] with the number of sufferers reaching hundreds of thousands while more than a hundred thousand died. Latin America[11], with among others extreme numbers in Brazil, was the next in line, while Africa is expected to be the last catastrophe.

Big sports events were considered vital in the fast-undetected spread across the world, disguised as the typical flu outbreaks that are common in autumn and winter in the northern hemisphere. Conversely, other theories pointed to business trips connecting the main economic hubs of our globalized world.[12] But also, lack of action and over-confidence were pivotal for the fast spread. Indeed, some believed that the beginning of the big problem occurred when the Chinese government tried to cover up the truth[13] initially conveyed loudly by a

6 https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200212-sitrep-23-ncov.pdf?sfvrsn=41e9fb78_4

7 https://www.newyorker.com/news/our-columnists/how-iran-became-a-new-epicenter-of-the-coronavirus-outbreak

8 https://www.news.com.au/lifestyle/health/health-problems/its-going-to-get-more-people-fears-australia-will-get-more-cases-as-sydney-becomes-epicentre/news-story/7cca110d4ce7291be9e09cf8c4730f16

9 https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200313-sitrep-53-covid-19.pdf?sfvrsn=adb3f72_2

10 https://www.livescience.com/us-coronavirus-cases-surpass-china.html

11 https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200523-covid-19-sitrep-124.pdf?sfvrsn=9626d639_2

12 https://blogs.publico.es/otrasmiradas/30966/la-propagacion-del-coronavirus-por-europa-contra-la-narrativa-centroeuropea-derechista/

13 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ycrqXJYf1SU&feature=emb_rel_end

medical professional under the guise of avoiding panic. Neglecting science at the beginning of the crisis sparked the exponential spread of COVID-19 in the early epicentre, China. When the virus took the whistle-blower's life and claimed the lives of others, all were finally aware of the danger in front of them. In that phase, which was too late for preventive action, the government and numerous actors still needed to work against the clock to tackle the pandemic and prevent it from growing bigger and bigger. From there, the issue became a governance crisis rather than a health crisis.

Like other crises, the Coronavirus is reinforcing existing inequalities between people, deepening the gap between the haves and have-nots, both within and between countries. Take, for example, people who have a big house and a garden that can easily create working space, take care of children, and find ways to relax at home during the lockdown. In contrast, those who remain isolated and locked in small apartments, studios, huts or even refugee camps, are stuck in monotonous activities that might, most likely, cause stress and disruption. Other cases show that access to the internet is very much helping people in the lockdown, while the lack of reliable broadband suffered by billions of people is limiting their ability to work, continue their education, or socialise. Inequalities are also evident in the type of health conditions afforded by people's homes. Poor housing conditions in informal settlements hinder people in practicing WHO advice to prevent the spread of the virus; COVID-19 increases their socio-economic vulnerability. While the haves still survive economically in the socially isolated time, the have-nots must choose between staying at home with no food or keeping some kind of mobility—walking or cycling to minimize the use of bus—and not losing their job. There are also inequalities in access to information: with many falling victim to populist conspiracy theories and other fake truths or witnesses of a post-truth boomerang. These are only some of the conditions that, over just about three months of the pandemic, have exposed and magnified existing inequalities; most likely COVID-19 will continue to discriminate the most vulnerable.

In addition to this, the prolonged stoppage of economy and delocalization and weak situation of industries in many countries pose a risk that solvency issues may appear; this in turn will require more intensive measures to be taken such as capital injections and restructuring. Such a symptomatic threat, typical of all economic crises, is an opportunity for the powerful to benefit; examples of this include budgets being released for big pharma or air companies, projects and processes of displacement and gentrification being accelerated, and dominant economies being stimulated while others are further indebted. For example, the funding given to the big pharma may potentially be a blockbuster for this

industry in terms of sales and profits, while in the worst case, authorities set prices and determine distribution, putting profit-making interests ahead of health priorities.

The Coronavirus has also shown us the cataclysmic legacy of neoliberal practices: the dogma of prioritizing the wealthy minority over the general public health's facilities; the economic crisis as a trade-off for the health crisis; the commodification of health no longer helping in the pandemic situation; the competition over solidarity; the privilege of big pharmaceutical companies to decide the price of medicine; the neglecting of the elderly and the most vulnerable; the practice of unprecedented encroachment into the natural habitats of animals; deforestation and wholesale destruction of our planet through climate change; the massive development in the name of pro-growth; and the covered truth information for the benefit of certain parties.[14] Here, the post-COVID-19 world should have no place for preserving the re-construction based on neoliberalism. According to many, now is the time to build a democratic society that binds decisions for everyone, without sacrificing minorities and overvaluing the majority rule.

However, we should not only consider what is generally discussed in times of crisis, such as inequality or budget allocation to strategic sectors of the dominant economy. Nor is this merely a discussion of a pandemic or other crisis, meeting with the stuttering of governance. This pandemic also needs to be discussed from the perspective of leadership, welfare systems, geographies, environmental policies, socio-cultural positions of the vulnerable (e.g. the elderly, disabled, people on a low income, refugees, children, women), solidarity systems and grassroots movements, that all make a difference. Further concern needs to be placed on how people deal with the crisis and address communities' capacities to adapt and return to a stable state in the wake of significant disruptions. In fact, in this time of pandemic, people made a difference, developing their responses and initiatives, taking action, helping each other, finding the best way for individuals, neighbourhoods, and societies—producing social innovation. This is precisely what INSIST cahier 4 aims to explore.

1.2 SEEING THE CRISIS THROUGH THE LENS OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

(Frank Moulaert)

[14] https://www.guengl.eu/covid-19-exposes-the-destructive-legacy-of-neoliberalis

What did you learn in (Corona) school today ...?

In these Corona-times my subconscious as well my occasionally rational mind has led me back to the song from the 1960s, 'What did you learn in school today' by Pete Seeger (lyrics and vocals by Tom Paxton). My memory of song was most likely prompted by hearing Ministers of Education from a range of countries warn that Corona is a threat to the quality of education and that subsequently new subject matters should be offered to pupils to avoid delays in student learning.

'What did you learn in school today' was a song we had heard at many sit-ins in the late 1960s and the 1970s—a song that reached across borders and cultures and translated into many languages. It is a song that foregrounds the fake truths which US and Western schools' taught kids about the supposed strategic importance of the Vietnam War and the trustworthiness of the political leaders of that time. It radiates the spirit of the rebellious 1960 and 1970s, questioning assumed values, systems, and beliefs.

In this prologue to INSIST-4, I feel especially challenged to answer the question 'What did we learn from Corona these weeks?' What should we understand by new subject matters? And who are these new authorities that we are instructed to put our trust in? These weeks and months have offered many of us the chance to reflect upon our respective circumstances: work, love, family, health, and so forth. It is a critical juncture or hiatus that communities, cultures, and systems have undergone, and it is imperative to ask what we learned from it. At the same time, it is equally crucial to ask, how do we now want to move forward, or perhaps, using a similar phrasing of Seegers, what should we learn (in school) tomorrow?

What should we learn (in school) tomorrow?

I am concerned about what could be the new (post) Corona subject matter for society and its members. What did we learn from Corona, and what does it mean to me? Let me connect to my shared learning trajectory. In the late 1980s, together with my beloved colleagues and friends, we started working with a 'new' view on the development of economy and society, i.e. the Social Innovation view. For scientific, political, and pedagogical reasons, we developed a social innovation view on development. To put it simply, 'we were fed up' with the exaltation of technology, managerialism, and economic rationality as drivers of societal progress through economic growth; we made a strong plea to reconsider the social dimensions of human action and progress. We proposed: no longer development through growth, but growth through development; a development in which cultural emancipation and social bonding would be put upfront. No longer providing social welfare by offering

cherries to the various well-disciplined and patronised categories of excluded populations, but building genuinely solidarity-based relations of communication, justification through co-creation. No longer Research and Development on hardware, technology and biochemistry only, but also on cultural emancipation, democratic governance, democratic and society-based education, solidarity building experiences and pilot projects, sustainable development in its various facets, ... No longer top-down or front-back (of the classroom) pedagogy but interactive pedagogy, in which the concerns and questions of 'those being taught' play a primary role. These concerns led us to an understanding of a tridimensional definition of social innovation, based on a combination of needs-satisfaction through collective action, inclusive social relations and political empowerment leading to deep democracy as a 'new' view on human development at the community or local level, but with connections to social change at the supra-local scales.

These Corona-times present a critical moment for reflecting on what is relevant knowledge to be learned, developed, and acted upon in terms of shaping society... And yet I am worried about the predominance of the economic and the material criteria in the change intentions of political and economic leaders and how these could affect our future (un)learning. This worry brings me back to early discussions on social innovation, namely those regarding the relationship between social economy as a solidarity-based way of satisfying needs and organising the economy and innovation in social relations in terms of solidarity, reciprocity, association, communication and mutual respect. With Diana MacCallum, in our 2019 state of the art book on social innovation, we wrote

"More specifically, SI requires attention to changing social relations through creating new forms of collaboration and reconfiguring the institutional forms that have (at best) neglected and (at worst) directly created or exacerbated the needs and problems. Thus, SI is widely promoted as a people-led initiative capable of providing a remedy for the externalities of technological and economic innovations (such as social exclusion or environmental degradation). (p. 31)

(...)

"We examine each case concerning how its social innovations meet human (and other) needs, its strategies and organising principles, its values and ethics, and the types of leadership that emerge. We also look at the social relations behind the organisational dynamics, including how they are territorially embedded and whether they sow the seeds of bottom-linked governance, i.e. new forms of democratic governance collaboratively built between SI initiatives and activists, their scalarly dynamic networks and state institutions and agencies." (p. 50)

There are a host of critical voices commenting on the repair strategies 'post-Corona'. These strategies rightly focus on saving jobs, incomes, livelihoods etc. They are visionary in recognising the opportunities for reinforcing short-chain food supply systems, the implementation of more city-oriented policies along with sustainability criteria, alternative modes of transportation, ... At the same time, the contradictory or incomplete character of some of these strategies and visions becomes clear. Is densification still possible? Will Corona (C-)fear discourage the use of public transportation? Will people continue to rely on honest food supply systems once they are 'released'?

I am not addressing these questions directly. My concern here is the social relations (in the many meanings of the term) that are emerging or are magnified in these C-times. The most visible is probably also the most contradictory: people fear each other as possible sources of contamination; but people also support each other by talking in the streets to people they never communicated with before, by assisting elderly, lonely and sick people; by providing financial support to NGOs helping poor people, refugees, sans papiers, etc.; by organising and participating in bear hunts and other pet hunts for kids etc. But at the same time a growing share of the world population, also in Western countries, is bumping into its financial and material limits. Economic poverty is spreading, along with social poverty. The solidarity of the first weeks risks not having a follow-up in a renewal of social relations. Social relations adopt many different forms in diverse contexts, and these forms affect each other in different ways.

Social relations in (post) C-time

Socially concerned citizens, activists and politicians point to the disastrous consequences of the C-crisis for individuals with a low income and/or an unstable job. They refer to the poor housing conditions, which turn quarantine into imprisonment and physical distancing into streetwise slaloming. Many vulnerable citizens and migrants with low-paid and unstable jobs are the ones that are still in what is considered 'essential occupations,' such as in logistics and food production or lowly-skilled cleaning and caring jobs in hospitals and care houses. For them 'home-work' is far from home. The chasm between the rich and poor experience of the Corona quarantine further exposes certain realities of social relations that have hitherto remained relatively obscured. Recommendations to privilege home delivery from local firms as a substitute for in-person shopping, not only further expose a particular economic class of workers who work in warehouses and delivery but the very act of online-shopping is beyond the reach for a significant part of the population: too costly, inaccessible without the use of new information technologies, falling outside the consumption patterns of the working poor, etc... Moreover, preventive medicine and reinforcing the immunity system are still the luxury of the middle and upper

classes. At the same time, lingering diseases are overrepresented among people doing hard labour in unhealthy work conditions or living in unhealthy housing and neighbourhoods.

This focus on 'what' could or 'should' be done leads us back to the first dimension of social innovation, i.e. the satisfaction of individual and collective needs through collective action. But if this is the only focus, it will obscure the essential importance of both other dimensions of social innovation: solidarity-based social relations and empowerment for socio-political transformation. History shows that materialising another, more just economy requires both these dimensions as much as the material acts of producing and consuming differently and redistributing resources in a more even way. Many communities and social economy initiatives, communist, and socialist experiments and systems failed not because the basic ethics, of for example the redistribution of resources, were wrong or disapproved of, but because of autocratic leadership, underestimation of the role of shared values in development initiatives and of the burden of shared responsibility, etc. When system failures occurred, even more stress was put on strong leadership with the oppression of the critical voices and actors.

So how can post-Corona do a better job and put social relations upfront? In this short prologue to INSIST-4, I want to examine how social connections can become more solidarity-based in post-C times and how such positive evolutions are under threat by overcontrolling and whipped-up collective anxiety.

Solidarity-based social relations in (post) C-time

Social relations in their most general meaning can be defined as relations between people and between groups as determined by their role in such regards. I do not mean to become functionalist in the interpretation of both 'role' and 'relationship.' People have roles as workers in production relations, as consumers in the consumption system, as citizens in the political system, etc. ... These roles and relationships are rather economically and formally/institutionally determined as they take shape in the capitalist market economy and its institutions. Yet, these roles and links can be changed through socio-political mobilisation and socio-political transformation. Other roles and connections between people, among groups, and in groups are less system or institutionally determined than the more system-bound social relations and functions. And there are ways to exit the latter and enter in so-called autonomous or post-foundational relationships; as there are ways to create alternative niches within the system.

Let us look at one initiative put forward by activists, progressive political leaders, philosophers, diverse analysts, etc. ... to deal with the socio-economic threats emerging from the Coronavirus, but also the opportunities rising from C-time

livelihood conditions. Let us look at the social relations that (should) come with the 'buy and produce local.' The limitation of the action radius for work, consumption, leisure, etc. has refocused our attention to the local economy. The short-chain food suppliers have in several places tripled their output. And the shortage of essential medical equipment 'made in China' has put the finger in the wound of deliberate globalisation cum free trade conditions. What are the relevant social relations to be discussed concerning these observations? Let us work with the simplified distinctions we just made. If communities (NGOs, concerned citizens, local authorities, ...) want to reinforce socially innovative short-chain initiatives in food provision and beyond, relations of production in these initiatives need to be (re)considered from an economic democracy point of view (who owns the capital? who decides? how are decisions made?). But economic democracy only works if relations of trust, mutual support, reciprocity in work tasks, etc. are taken on board. This means that not only the values of fair distribution, but also interpersonal respect and support should be part of the social interaction modes between both producers and consumers. This should be expected at the level of the local firms and their clientele. But do these attitudinal changes suffice to form a local economy or a local food system? There are examples of city-wide short-chain quality-oriented food systems that are managed by a food council (or a similar institution) in which all relevant actors are represented: regular food business to CSA and short-chain eco-growers and distributors, (idle) land-owners, land banks, production and retail coops, professional training institutions, schools, etc. Within food councils, new articulations between the existent market system and the emergent locally controlled market emerge. The operation of such a council requires a complex hybrid of social relations, again ranging from the interpersonal to the formally institutionalised modes of operation and cooperation.

We could extend this analysis to other actors and segments of the local economy—see the Foundational Economy, Integrated Area Development and the Social Region—but here again the features of formal and informal social relations should be at the forefront. A local more democratic economy will only work if a significant part of the population changes jobs from the capitalist to the post-foundational, autonomous or mixed economy; if people keep changing their consumption norm, by reducing their junk consumption, privileging local (food) quality a.s.o; if alternative funding institutions are re-established (see the regional banks that existed in the past); if economic advisory councils are opened up to social innovation voices if the local state transforms to work in a bottom-linked way; ... a.s.o

Overcontrol and collective fear and how to overcome them

As in previous times of hardship, C-times have shown that local, autonomous, and solidarity can work collaboratively. But the social relations needed to make

them work are exposed to at least three threats: collectively whipped up fear, overcontrol—mutual and state-imposed—and cultural change pessimism. The three threats reinforce each other.

Collectively whipped up fear has different sources: biased and incomplete information, the autonomous development of fake truths regularly contradicting each other, and the particular type of fear among individuals and households living in a capitalist society where most people have lost control of their income and health conditions. In a recent theatre play on the life of Marx, Marx returned to earth and revisited, among others, his theory of the proletarian reserve army. The monologue written by Stefaan Van Brabandt and acted by Johan Heldenbergh explains how contemporary capitalism survives because people are always tightrope dancing between staying healthy to be able to sell their labour-power and being an unhealthy consumer constantly in need of the medical and big pharma industry to survive. This double dependence, each embodying a high level of insecurity, is a structural source of fear in contemporary capitalism.

Collectively orchestrated fear is also reinforced by 'control.' Keeping Corona away from our hearths was possible through quarantine, keeping physical distance and early extensive scale testing. If the latter had been likely in the very early stage, quarantine and lockdown could have been organised in a more relaxed way; or would not have been necessary at all. Physical distance and good civil behaviour would have been sufficient to keep the beast at bay. But in most countries, it did not go that way. Reliance on citizen sense in combination with an arsenal of control and sanctioning measures had to make sure that quarantine and lockdown were respected. The higher the fear, the less power would be necessary, one could argue. But it does not always work that way: for a significant part of the population, fear transforms into panic leading to unpredictable behaviour going exactly against the imposed rules. Strict control raises the tension in people's minds and catalyses fear, a.s.o. We end up in a vicious circle with an increasing number of terrified people, which, through their mindset and cerebral activity, reduces their mental and physical resistance capacity.

Naturally, fear is also about the risk of losing jobs, a fear that is real. But a fear that could be countered by experts, political and economic leaders, financial institutions, development agencies, ... to name just a few. Instead, we notice experts feeding a growing panic based on figures of hundreds of thousands if not millions of job losses, and with very little attention given to economic restructuring. While creative analysts, social innovators, new technology and alternative agriculture experts have identified a host of opportunities to redirect the economy in support of a post-corona society, cultural pessimists are preaching that the only way to solve the [job] need is to bring the economy

back to normality as soon as possible. Will the innovators, especially the social ones, stand up, please? Will we become serious about a real Green Deal, an inclusive health and wellbeing system? And will the specialists in all these fields be invited to have an active role in mouth-masking doom-thinkers and systems sclerosis?

This is what I learned outside the C-school today

1.3 INSIST CAHIER 4: SOCIAL INNOVATION IN THE FACE OF THE PANDEMIC

(Isye Susana Nurhasanah, Clara Medina-García, Joan Nyagwalla Otieno, Wossen Gebreyohannes, Angeliki Paidakaki, Pieter Van den Broeck)

The INSIST Cahier 4 will review COVID-19 related dynamics from the lens of social innovation, as addressed above, and assess various aspects of life and experiences faced by different countries around the globe. These dynamics will be summarised along several sub-questions to answer our general question: *To what extent has the COVID-19 pandemic affected aspects of human life on at various scales? What happened to existing inequalities? And to what extent and how have socially innovative responses been triggered by multiple parties (governments, private parties, communities)?*

Specifically, the purpose of INSIST Cahier 4 is to produce an initial compilation of knowledge and analysis of COVID-19 related social innovations around the globe. This collective knowledge will enrich public discourse about dealing with the ongoing pandemic, which involves multiple agents--governments, communities, business, local, regional, national and international actors. From collective brainstorming the following themes for this INSIST Cahier 4 emerged:

- the environmental effects
- food & supply systems
- urban politics
- housing
- social solidarity
- public space & transportation
- body & soul
- urban-rural exodus
- populist lens against post truth reality

In each of these themes, the existence of the Coronavirus in our future lives forced socially innovative initiatives, expanding our resources, thinking out of the box to find new ways and instruments to adjust this situation into a better future. Based on this compilation of knowledge, a number of recommendations are formulated in terms of a manifesto.

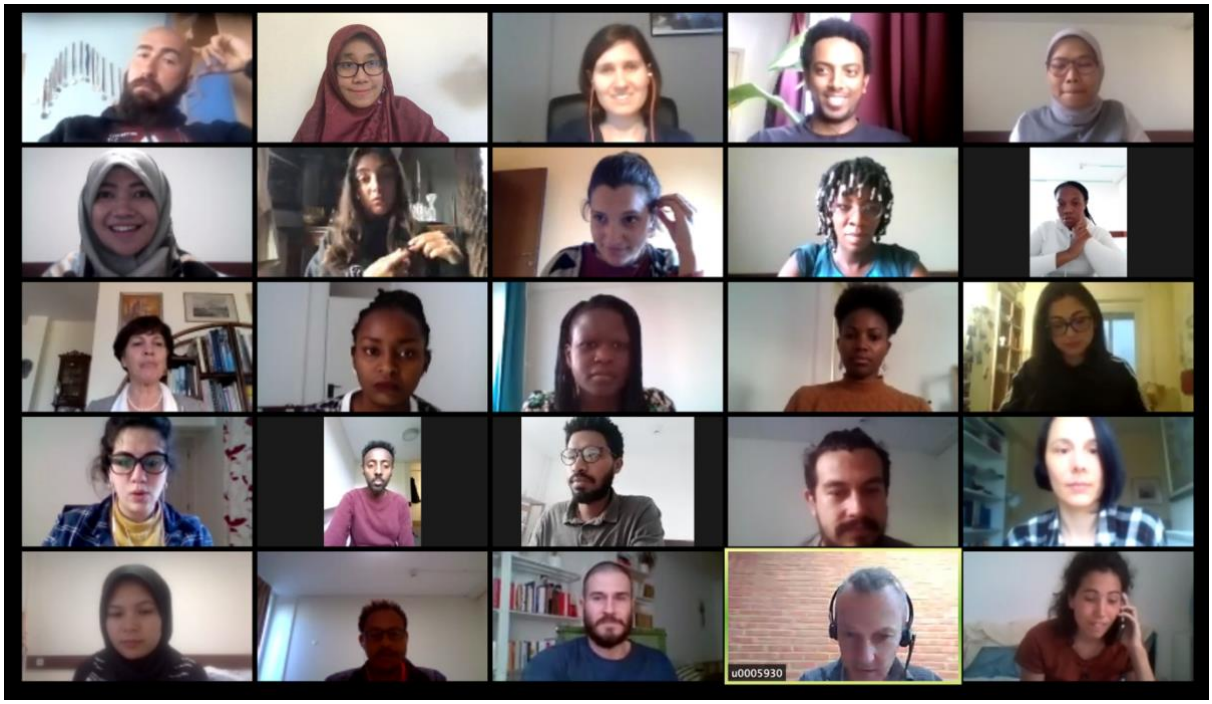


Figure 1 Online Discussion for INSIST: Cahier 4

This study is written from various perspectives and covers quite diverse sectors, with varied writing styles: academic pieces, artistic interpretations, and graphical representations linking to existing material. Contributors are 32 young academics, researchers and students, participating from the beginning of March until the end of May 2020 in the intensive programme "International Module in Spatial Development Planning (IMSDP)" in Leuven (Belgium), who each have respective fields of study, and come from almost all continents: Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin-America. Therefore, the analysis presented varies and provides a kaleidoscopic understanding of the COVID-19's impacts and socially innovative responses from different perspectives. The writing and discussing process ran intensively for six weeks, exclusively through online meetings and collaboration, and was followed by 3 weeks of post-processing. All contributors were actively involved from the beginning in a bottom-linked writing process. They generally used data sourced from digital media, both in the form of news and various reports available, as well as primary data through observations/interviews/questionnaires. The framework that unites the diversity of writing is the pandemic implications through the lens of social innovation. Hopefully, these writings will give colour to the analysis presented.

2. DIALOGUE

2.1 DID COVID-19 DO WHAT GOVERNMENTS COULDN'T DO FOR CLIMATE CHANGE? ON SLOW MOBILITY, AIR QUALITY, AND (THE LACK OF?) POLITICS

(Muluberhan Biedemariam Tassew, Federica Rotondo, Sylvia Inziani)

The COVID-19 lockdown caused a significant drop in GHG emissions in cities due to a substantial decrease in air travel, the underutilization in manufacturing industries, and a reduction in the use of cars, to mention just a few. The lockdown thus led to a series of changes in everyday practices, habits, and routines (in relation to new forms of spatial configuration for "smart" working, shared dwellings, slow mobility…). Such changes are indeed crucial in advancing current climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies (IPCC, 2007),[15] with the potential of contributing to more ecologically sustainable lifestyles. Acknowledging the current ruptures in our everyday life, the question remains however whether these changes are only temporary or whether they could be conducive to long-term transformations. Our main hypothesis is that most of the immediate environmental benefits that we currently perceive are just temporary or jeopardized by various side-effects (by considering for example a possible increase in housing cooling consumptions or peak in CO2 emissions that could be suddenly reached right after lock-down with restarting activities). Nevertheless, the current situation can be considered a "window of opportunity," a specific moment in time where contextual conditions open the possibility for experimentation and learning. Urban policies, we argue, are an important determinant to use this unique conjuncture in history in order to trigger long-lasting change and develop effective strategies with regards to climate change mitigation. The entry considers three case studies in light of how

15 Mitigation involves actions reducing the GHG emissions at their sources while adaptation refers to adjustments that aim at reducing the negative impacts of climate change. According to Magni (2019) mitigation measures reflect upon negative effects of climate change in a long-term vision while adaptation measures look at climate change impacts in a medium and short-term perspective.

temporary COVID-19 strategic responses are strategically used to rather structurally change the predominance of the car, and thus contribute to reducing GHG emissions.

Policies, Strategies and Discourses for Envisioning New Modes of Mobility after The Pandemic: The Cases of Brussels, Bogotá and Oakland

Cities have proposed various post-lockdown measures to cope with the pandemic while simultaneously focusing on ecological sustainability. Particular attention has been given to transport and mobility to reduce air pollution and prevent traffic congestions. City administrations have elaborated ready-to-use manuals and tactical solutions to favour slow mobility means of transport by reducing space for cars and introducing pop-up bike lanes or temporary pedestrian paths. The following case studies describe current policies that both seek to contain the spread of the virus and (sometimes) contribute to strategies for climate change mitigation in a longer-term perspective. The following section discusses how these strategies have unfolded in three cities (Brussels, Bogotà and Oakland), focusing particularly on the cities' strategies for temporary intervention, the involved actors, and the existing planning and policy frameworks.

BRUSSELS

In the city of Brussels, climate friendly mobility strategies were promoted by the regional authority, which strongly encouraged citizens to choose bicycles for short journeys and to avoid public transport in order to prevent contagion and counteract traffic congestion. The regional authority concentrated its attention on a double territorial scale. At the urban level, it aimed at reinforcing the vibrancy of the city centres of the capital and immediate surrounding areas with punctual "slow street" interventions, setting speed limits for cars at a maximum of 20 km per hour and giving pedestrians priority. This intervention allocated a wider area to pedestrians, allowing for physical distancing. At the regional level, bike lanes were extended by 40 km along the main regional axis. This second intervention involved 19 municipalities of the Brussels region and was implemented in different ways: in most cases, traffic lanes were converted into temporary bike lanes (like in Rue de la Loi); in others a side lane was used to give priority to cyclists; finally, in certain areas (like in boulevard Général-Jacques

and around the Midi metro station) attention was given to missing links of the already existing cycle network.

The "emergency plan" was part of a more general strategic vision for both the city and the region: at the city level, "public space" would gain priority to distribute scarce urban space in a more equal manner; at the regional level, bike lane interventions were conceived as part of an already existing slow mobility network, which however still features some discontinuities at crucial points. The regional multimodal axes constituted the priority for intervention in coherence with the mobility plan already in place, entitled "Good Move" plan (approved in March 2020). This plan was adopted by the regional Socialist-Green coalition government—the major political alliance formed around mobility issues in the region. The "Good Move" plan aims at decreasing the use of cars as well as at reducing traffic pollution by extending public space, fostering a more efficient public transport system and a more fluid circulation of people.

> *"Parallèlement, nous sommes en train d'installer des nouvelles pistes cyclables sur les grands axes régionaux. Une course contre la montre, car nous voulons être prêts avant que tout le monde retourne au travail et à l'école. À de nombreux endroits, nous avons déjà un réseau de pistes cyclables séparées, mais il manque certaines liaisons cruciales pour que les itinéraires complets soient sécurisés. Au cours des prochaines semaines, nous installerons 40 km de nouvelles pistes cyclables. Cette semaine, le boulevard Reyers et l'avenue général Jacques en était un avant-goût. Lundi, nous nous attaquons à la rue de la Loi. Nous travaillons en priorité sur les grands axes, la petite et la moyenne ceinture. Bien sûr, la situation ne sera pas encore parfaite, mais jamais autant de pistes cyclables n'auront été construites à Bruxelles en si peu de temps."*[16] (Mobility Ministry of Brussels, Elke Van den Brandt)

Announced at the end of April, the emergency mobility plan was operationalized at the beginning of May with the aim of being completed in less than one month. Following Brussels Mayor Philippe Cose's declaration, the new measures will remain in use "Until further notice."[17] This is further encouraged by the regional Mobility Ministry's statement, "This could start a cycling revolution in

16 "At the same time, we are in the process of installing new bicycle paths on major regional roads. A race against time, because we want to be ready before everyone gets back to work and school. In many places, we already have a network of separate cycle paths, but some crucial connections are missing to make the entire routes safe. Over the next few weeks, we will be installing 40 km of new bike paths. This week, we have worked on Boulevard Reyers and Avenue Général Jacques as precursors. On Monday, we are tackling the Rue de la Loi. Our priority is to work on the major roads, the small and medium belts. Of course, the situation will not be perfect, but never before have there been so many cycle paths built in Brussels in such a short period of time" (freely translated by authors).

17 https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-inspires-cities-to-push-climate-friendly-mobility/a-53390186

Brussels."[18] Presumably, the speedy operationalization was possible due to a previous consultation phase between the city of Brussels and the surrounding municipalities.[19] The next consultation phase could be drawn upon for COVID-19 proceedings, placing these firmly within the context of the "Good Move" plan, i.e. within an already established regional mobility plan that had involved a broad participatory process including mobility partners, public institutions, municipalities, local associations and citizens.

Since almost 60% of the population in the Brussels region already uses means of transport that differ from the car,[20] the new COVID-19 interventions can improve and extend a path of sustainable mobility that had already been explored before the crisis. However, there is also serious scepticism in this regard; for example, as expressed by the regional NGO Inter-Environment Brussels[21] (an independent association constituted as a federation of 80 neighbourhood committees and groups of inhabitants): *"It's unlikely that the pandemic will significantly change the main travel dynamics in Brussels, at least in the near future […] the Brussels Region cannot, on its own, and on the sole basis of infrastructure works […] revolutionize mobility* " (mobility expert of NGO Inter-Environment Brussels, Van Gyzegem).

18 ibidem

19 https://goodmove.brussels/fr/2019/10/24/les-premiers-resultats-de-lenquete-publique-sont-la/

20 In 2019 more than 50% of the Brussels residents used the train/public transport and almost 8% of the population relied on cycling/walking (FPS Mobility and Transport, DATE)

21 https://www.ieb.be/-La-federation-



Figure 2 Regional bike lanes plan (Good Move) in the region of Brussels

Source: https://www.lecho.be/dossiers/coronavirus/la-carte-des-pistes-cyclables-coronavirus-a-bruxelles/10223764.html



Figure 3 One of the first temporary bike lanes in the city of Brussels, Boulevard Reyers

Source: https://www.instagram.com/p/B_X1AvgAmAx/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

BOGOTÀ - COLOMBIA

In its efforts to limit contagion, Bogotà, the capital of Colombia, has reallocated space for walking and cycling. The city mayor noted, "*It is better to turn the streets into cycle paths and to decongest local public transport than to see the curve of contagion in the city grow*" (Sangalli, 2020). The Bogotà authorities thus increased the space provided for non-motorized transport facilities and reconfigured about 22 km of car lanes in order to counter the spread of the virus. The Mayor's Office further stated, "*The bicycle, being an individual means of transport, represents one of the most hygienic alternatives for the prevention of COVID-19, especially in this first preventive stage in which it is recommended to avoid close contact and crowds.*" Interestingly, this intervention adjoined policy-measures that were already in place before the COVID-19 crisis in order to cope with high rates of pollution caused majorly by traffic congestion according to the Inrix Global Traffic Scorecard (2019). These pre-existing measures focus on promoting non-motorized means of transportation, such as biking, and the implementation of the car-free day "Ciclovia" (on Sundays and public holidays), which allows citizens to take over approximately 121 km of roads meant for motorized transport and use it for biking, exercise, yoga, Zumba etc.

Previously, efforts had been made to consider citizens' needs with the former mayor of the city, Enrique Pelosa, adopting measures to face the challenge of congestion in public transport by increasing financing for non-motorized transport systems. Some measures put in place included restrictions on vehicle use, an increase in parking fees and gasoline taxes, as well as the construction of bollards. As a result, there was an increase in the use of non-motorized transport and a decrease in Carbon Dioxide (CO_2) emissions by 318 metric tonnes per day compared to the 1997 levels (Dalkmann and Brannigan, 2010).

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to spread, Colombia launched the new national roadmap for urban and regional mobility, i.e. a policy document on transportation (Hidalgo, 2020). The roadmap uses the avoid-shift-move paradigm and aims to contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions through the adoption of zero and low emission vehicles. These integrated strategies have the potential of being adopted to ensure the sustainability of some of the actions put in place during the post COVID-19 pandemic recovery period. The document can, for example, be used as a proposal to finance the non-motorized transport infrastructure, which would contribute to fewer motorized vehicles and subsequently reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

The key to success lays in the question of whether these scattered interventions can be integrated into the existing institutionalized framework—in this case, the Bogotá Development Plan (1951). The Plan includes an elaborate development proposal for a mixed transport network. Although much of it has not been implemented, it still provides a basis for decision-making on matters such as the provision of emergency bike lanes that were urgently required to provide space for physical distancing. Bogotá has further legally enabled the integration of bike lanes into their Trans Milenio Bus Rapid Transport (BRT) system. This accounts for 550 km of bike lanes in the city. Overall, as the city started to experience the effects of COVID-19 and sought to minimize the spread, it provided a total of 192 km of additional bike lanes. The first lane accounted for 112 km, while the rest were gradually added along the infrastructures' use assessment and the assessment of the pandemic's developments.



Figure 4 Temporary bike lanes plan (Ciclovias Temporales) in the city of Bogotá

Source: https://www.idrd.gov.co



Figure 5 Cyclists in Bogotá. Photograph: Raúl Arboleda/AFP via Getty Images

OAKLAND

In April 2020, the city of Oakland launched the "Slow Street Program" with the main aim of supporting physical activity and creating more space for physical distancing. The program implemented "soft closures" to restrict neighbourhood streets to through traffic. By the end of May Oakland city closed streets to an extent of more than 100 km, which is comparable to 10% of all streets, as a measure to offer inhabitants more urban space to get outside safely for outdoor activities such as running, biking and playing.[22]

Oakland is the eighth most populated city in California and the 45th most populated city in the United States of America. It is the largest city in the East Bay region of the Francisco Bay Area and is a major West Coast port city. 20% of the city's land is covered by streets and sidewalks. The development of bike lanes is part of the land use and transportation element of the city of Oakland's general plan, particularly the Bicycle Master Plan. Biking is a common mode of transportation in Oakland and, according to a recent study, one in five residents of the city regularly bikes. Oakland started the development of its bicycle plan in 1999 and the plan is continuously being updated. The first plan was revised in 2007 and later enacted in 2012. Recently, a comprehensive bicycle plan was updated. The bicycle plan development in Oakland is based on four interlinked goals: access, health and safety, affordability and collaboration. The first goal seeks to increase access to neighbourhood destinations such as stores, libraries, schools, recreation centres, bus stops, and Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART). The second goal aims at empowering Oaklanders to live lifestyles that are more active by providing a network of safe and comfortable bikeways for everyone. The third goal fosters a reduction of households' housing and transportation costs. Finally, collaboration intends fostering an increased role for the community in the planning process and building trust.

The City of Oakland's planning process with regards to bike lanes attributes a high priority to citizen participation with the purpose of developing a common understanding of the present situation and of taking people's recommendations into account. In line with this, the selection of "Slow streets" included in the COVID-19 emergency plan was based on a previous phase of "online" public consultation. The city encouraged the community members to share their feedback on "Slow street" by setting up an online survey[23] and interactive map

22 https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/oakland-slow-streets

23https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeNX0QHyErUEVa8FQJo_7zD4ukTNXCEEncne9Subqybqjf_og/formResponse

to suggest new streets for intervention and express their preferences about the existing ones.[24].

Before COVID-19, the city already had a plan named "City of Oakland 2019 Bike Plan" for neighbourhood bicycle routes, developed in 2019. The maps of the 2020 Oakland Slow Streets pilot program are included in the existing plan. Decisions made by the city during the pandemic are being implemented with curiosity. As a result, children are biking freely in the specified slow streets. Some of the new slow streets, particularly in East Oakland, will be a permanent fixture as a result of positive responses of communities. Such new permanent slow streets will be more liveable, having had the input for their design by local residents. That is, the co-development of the design with the community will lead to the proper implementation of the plan. Participatory citizen engagement, organized in different formats by the cyclist's and pedestrian advisory commission, is an important feature in the planning, design, and implementation process of Oakland's bike lanes.



Figure 6 Examples of "slow streets" in the city of Oakland during the pandemic

Source: https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/oakland-slow-streets

[24]http://oakgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f050343c1d584cf496876d2bb575cf17&extent=-13622229.1918%2C4535171.0936%2C-13588749.7734%2C4566586.7123%2C102100

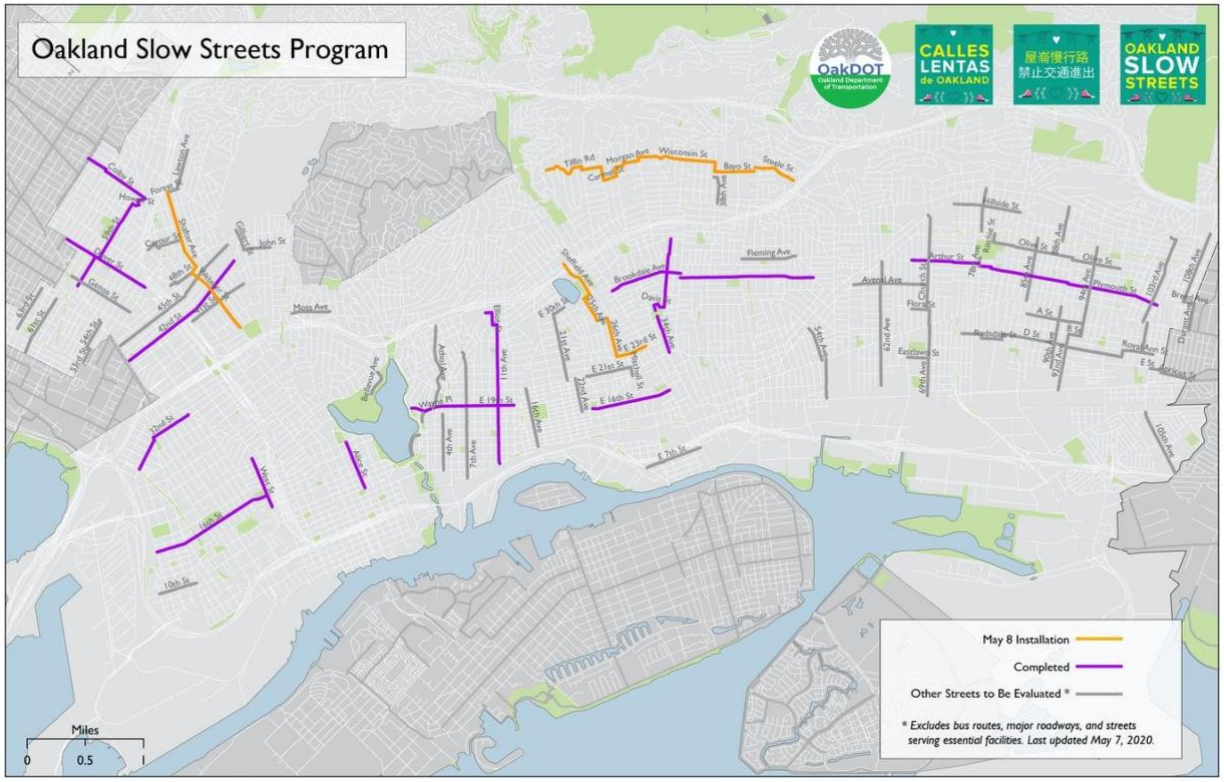


Figure 7 Temporary bike lanes plan (Slow Streets Program) in the city of Oakland, Photo: Courtesy Oakland DOT

Source: https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Oakland-map-closed-slow-streets-coronavirus-15192719.php)

Contextual Conditions and Temporary Solutions

The three case studies allow for some reflections to be made on how temporary COVID-19 slow mobility interventions relate to long-term climate change mitigation strategies. Existing power relations among a sheer diversity of actors, their (political, economic, social, and cultural) resources, the building of alliances as well as the possibility to draw upon already existing assets and institutions have been identified as crucial in order to actualize long-term potentials.

In some cases, the discourse on "emergency" has provided a pretext (or an opportunity) to further promote and push long-standing political agendas, often based on the reinforcement of liveliness in central areas (in the city capital) as well as cooperation among regional municipalities (such as the case of Brussels). Most of the selected "slow streets" were already part of the long-term plans. Hence, the pandemic has contributed to accelerating already on-going processes (like in Bogotá). In other cases, such as the city of Oakland, COVID-19 temporary mobility solutions have offered an opportunity to build (and

experiment) with a temporary digital infrastructure to allow citizen consultation. The process, although lacking in full transparency, has fostered a "collaborative" selection of slow streets in the city.

In conclusion, the presumed positive effects of COVID-19 on climate change goals in terms of more ecologically sustainable life conditions and "new" (forced) institutional assets need to be interpreted in their wider socio-political and spatial context, by recalling long-standing challenges of political inertia, power struggles, and institutional assets. An emergency situation combined with fertile contextual conditions may offer the possibility for experimentation oriented towards social change at the local scale.

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https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/oakland-slow-street

2.2 HOW THE COVID-19 CHALLENGED FOOD SYSTEMS

(Mónica Martínez Fernández, Clara Medina-García, Hongkai Chen, Carlos E. Martínez Canavate)

Food systems link research and thinking on many issues: economics, supply chains, actors involved, accessibility to food and commodities, environmental concerns, health issues, social habits, collective action, rural-urban relations, and international relations (including the economy and labour). Analysis of the impact of the Coronavirus on food and other commodity systems would help identify and connect these issues and further reflect on the social, economic and political changes that this pandemic could trigger.

The first section of this entry examines, from a global political and economic perspective, how the Covid-19 pandemic has generally challenged the food system and health supplies. The analysis is based on the issues that have emerged and that have challenged the system. The following sections analyse how the different actors in the system are concretely affected, as well as some of the solutions that have emerged to address the problem in question. In some cases, the collapse of the system has led to the disappearance of some elements of the chain; in others, it has led to their overloading. The importance of the analysis of the problems that have led the system to collapse lies in the solutions, in many cases innovative, that have derived from this situation. Therefore, the entry seeks to highlight not what has failed but rather how solutions have been found and, above all, whether these have come to stay and provoke a change in the system.

VIDEO:

https://vimeo.com/424312483

Once upon a time...

In the last decades food systems have been commodified and turned into an industry and, therefore, have suffered the same transformation as any other industry under the capitalist system. The specific application of this model in the food system has led to:

-Globalization of production and consumption

-Delocalization of production
-Too many intermediaries
-Precarious conditions for producers and industry workers
-Generalisation of fast food and processed food
-Countries that could self-supply relying on importation
-Production system based on "the more the better"
The consequences triggered by the combination of the aforementioned characteristics of food systems and the recent COVID-19 crisis lead us to the following lines of thought:

- Famine, already present in many countries, has increased and spread to many others. It is not a problem of supply but of demand/access to healthy and sustainable food. But measures to combat the Corona crisis—including border closures, paralysis of the economy and production systems, and restrictions on personal mobility—have made this situation worse.

  See this report on the global food crisis in 2020 by the Food Security Information Network: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000114546/download/

- The crisis resulting from COVID-19 has put the neoliberal system on trial. Generalised practices like accumulation, price speculation, insufficient regulation at the policy level, confidence in self-regulation of the market, ... have only worsened food sovereignty and the meeting of basic needs of the most vulnerable population. In reaction to this, Foundational Economy calls for a decommodification of food systems and a stronger role of the state and public administrations in food security and food systems (Martinelli, 2019; Morgan, 2020).
- Food is not an industry but a system (with implications in the social, economic and political fields) and needs to be resilient at different levels (production, distribution, sales, and consumption). But right now, it is not, so it needs to be rethought and modified. Nor can it be treated as a system of phases or parts that are independent from each other. The whole system is interconnected and can only work properly if it is understood as a whole.

  See this article explaining the multi-level connections in food systems: https://www.nature.com/articles/s41430-020-0634-3

- As a result of the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on the food systems, the evidence of their economic and health implications has helped bring concerns previously only related/fought for by ecologist movements, to the main agenda. For instance, administrations at different levels are considering economic, productive, industrial transformations as post-Corona recovery strategies.

  See a proposal for the EU aiming to strengthen the Farm to Fork strategies from the Green New Deal here: https://www.greens-efa.eu/en/article/news/the-covid-19-crisis-reveals-the-many-fissures-of-the-eu-food-system-and-show-us-the-way-out/

- As a matter of fact, the (agro)environmental movements are using the pandemic as an opportunity to spread their ideas and mobilise energies towards an agro-ecological transition. Innovative solutions that were being developed but were not "shared" by all now seem to be part of the new way of doing things.

  Read more about these thoughts here: https://www.tni.org/files/publication-downloads/web_covid-19.pdf

- Some innovative solutions have arisen to tackle the problems caused by the Coronavirus crisis that may be the first step towards a general change in the system. Collaboration has proven to be fundamental for this new system to work (e.g. the expansion of solidarity movements). Going back to business as usual cannot be an option.

  Read some examples in this discussion about "Resilience in Emergency": https://municipalitiesintransition.org/special-covid19-virtual-cafe-open-discussion-resilience-in-emergency/

- The Long-term planning is a fundamental factor in the food system. This includes planning revolving around: what type of production is sought, along with what products and types of farmers are prioritised (small vs. industrial companies); thinking about productive land as commons; decisions over permaculture vs. extensive monoculture; how relations between city and rural areas are established, …

  In this video you can learn about Quito's long-term resilience strategy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WpfoiCtR7AA

- The collapse of the system has shown that the actors involved in it cannot be seen—or acted upon—in a vacuum. A problem in one phase of the system affects the whole. In the same way, a problem in one part of the world can affect different countries. This leads to an awareness of the importance of relocating production directly in the producer-consumer relationship. It also affects international relations as well as urban-rural (local level) relations.

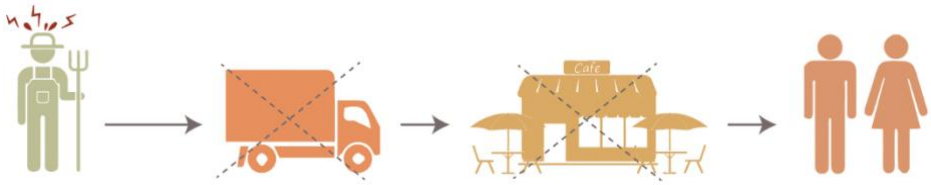
  In this post Rikolto reflects about interactions and possibilities in the food systems during the crisis: https://www.rikolto.org/en/news/what-we-can-learn-corona-crisis-will-help-shape-our-future-food-systems?utm_source=Global&utm_campaign=b30a690684-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2020_04_17_07_42&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_7d037d7e4d-b30a690684-443875613

  In conclusion, the consequences of the crisis cannot be considered from the point of view of an individual actor, as they are not independent from the rest of the system. Thus, the necessary transformations to come must work towards building a collaborative system, where cooperation between the different parts in the process is paramount.

For this reason, the following section discusses the socially innovative collaborations that have emerged to address system-wide effects caused by disruptions in specific actors.

...There were Producers, Distributors and Consumers

Farmers, Agribusiness and Small Producers



Problems encountered

- The first and more direct disturbance in the food system occurred when millions of restaurants and collective canteens were forced to abruptly stop their activity as lockdowns spread among countries and regions and all catering industry froze. Suddenly, the chain of intermediaries that connected producers with end-consumers broke. Not only was demand changing due to changes in habits during lockdown (see section 4), but also relations with stable buyers had stopped, their regular supply system had frozen and they were forced to find alternative ways to directly reach end-consumers; while lack of storage capacity pressed them to dump surplus, especially fresh products and perishable goods with a short shelf life.

Socially innovative adaptations

- Devising new direct connections between producer-consumer:
  - Increase in demand in already existing consumer groups and online selling sites of products with added value from the production side (local, agroecological, organic, ...)
  - General increase in people adhering to "consumer groups" or "weekly purchases from farmers"
  - Reinventing food production and distribution locally
  - Reviving urban commons around food production and distribution

- Creating new alliances among producers and other actors to transform and share resources to overcome the actors missing in the chain:

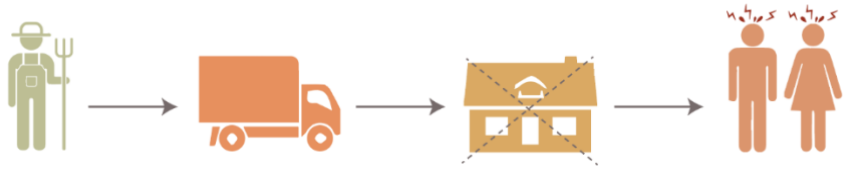
- Producers grouping for collective selling to consumers (an example from the region of Lyon: https://www.colibris-lemouvement.org/magazine/a-lyon-deux-halles-alimentaires-ephemeres)
- New partnerships among local producers, public markets and consumers (see Supercoop Madrid as an example: https://si4sd.home.blog/2020/03/31/supercoop-madrid/)
- Multi-actor coalitions involving municipalities, local producers, and other premises and services temporally on hold during the crisis, like catering schools (see the example from the region of Madrid: https://elpais.com/espana/madrid/2020-05-03/cordero-asado-comprado-via-web-que-llega-a-casa-en-taxi-el-pequeno-productor-se-reinventa.html)

- Working towards long-term relationships with consumers to "produce on demand":
- Boost of social economy as more resilient in crisis times
- Collective mapping of initiatives on the social and solidarity economy (SSE)
- When We're Back Initiative to "pre-order" meals in local restaurants

Delocalisation of production showed a lack of industrial premises to produce "basic products" needed during this crisis. Still, those available transformed and partnered to provide essential goods:

- Liquor factories transformed to produce sanitizer in the South of Spain
- Businesses donating material and self-organising to produce locally what was absent or lacking in the market (health protection material)

Public Distributors (schools, cantinas, public catering)



Problems encountered

The COVID-19 crisis has not simply led to the closure of restaurants, but also to the closure of other establishments that offered a food service, even if it was not their main activity. This is the case of schools or soup kitchens, for example. The problem here is that among the people affected who made use of the catering service of these places, there were vulnerable people who had no access to food through other means.

Socially innovative adaptations

The most immediate and logical solution is for the state to take charge and propose a solution so that food reaches the at risk population during the crisis, as has happened in some cities such as Quito and New York. However, in many cases there have been no or insufficient solutions provided by the state, which has led to the creation or mobilization of solidarity networks, involved in collective mapping. First, volunteer citizens offered to do "outdoor activities," like shopping, for those who could not leave their homes due to illness or vulnerability. Then they organised running food banks and solidarity kitchens that have become a key element during the pandemic to help everyone have access to food (see example in Madrid).

Finally, and also derived from the collective and citizen initiative itself, there has been a growing development of urban gardens. These spaces, previously seen more as recreational, have become truly productive. In many cases, they supply food banks and solidarity canteens or even directly citizens who have decided to produce their own food in the face of a possible lack of supply on the market. An example from the USA is the Victory Gardens, which had already been developed to fight climate change. These initiatives, which began independently, have been developing and establishing links between them in such a way that they have become real cooperative works between different groups and associations, and even with local administrations. Also, networks to exchange knowledge and practices in farming have spread.

Private Distributors



Problems encountered

What would happen if, all of a sudden, the demand for a certain product were to increase by twice as much as usual? What would happen if, instead of just one product, it affected the market in general? The answer in this case is a description of what happened at the outbreak of the pandemic: the system collapsed. Suddenly, the number of home orders, online shopping, etc. skyrocketed. The system was not prepared, due to lack of physical infrastructure

(warehouses, trucks, ...) and lack of personnel. It was not a problem of lack of supply but of lack of means to get it to the consumers. The closure of borders prevented the transit of certain products and also of workers who went to work in other countries (e.g. day labourers from Africa and Eastern Europe working in Spain and Central Europe). Countries like Congo, which depend mostly on imports, saw the system collapse and had to adapt from one day to the next.

As a consequence, the failures and nonsense of a system in which countries capable of self-sufficiency in their own production are dependent on imports (e.g. Colombia, Venezuela) have become apparent. Ironically, countries highly struck by increasing unemployment during this crisis missed immigrant workers for their farms, forcing some special regulations to consider agricultural workers as essential both in the EU and USA.

Socially innovative adaptations

The system has been put in check but has also shown that, in some cases, it is capable of moving quickly. Workers in restaurants or supermarket chains who were previously waiters or cashiers, have had to go out on the streets to deliver orders. Companies that had not made the leap to online commerce or that had not given it much importance, now depend almost completely on these sales. Businesses that have had a lack of products have had to look to local products as the only form of supply. In some extreme cases, consumers have had to leave the city for the countryside to become producers of their own food, as the only form of supply. Local producers have become, in many cases, the true saviours of this collapse. And consumers have realized the importance of local products. It remains to be seen whether this mentality has come to stay, and countries start producing first for themselves and then for other countries.

Consumers



Problems encountered

The eating habits of consumers are among the collateral damage of the COVID-19 crisis. Beyond the closure of restaurants or canteens and the lack of certain products in shops or the delay in orders, described in previous sections, the state of confinement imposed in most countries has affected consumer's lifestyle and behaviour. This state of confinement already makes life more sedentary than normal, but in certain cases, this lack of activity is accompanied by bad habits such as snacking or lack of time at meals. Also, other problems

like anxiety or fear, derived from the situation, lead people to acquire bad eating habits.

Socially innovative adaptations

But there have also been positive changes in mentality. The lack of supply of many products has led shops to depend on local produce, as mentioned in the previous section. This has led to a concern on the part of the consumer in wanting to know the origin of what they are buying and eating. This trend or interest has also been increased by the economic crisis that many countries are already suffering and that has led consumers to want to support the national trade as a way to boost the economy of the country itself.

Awareness of what one eats, healthy diets, and interest in cooking are also growing. At first, this was driven by the closure of restaurants, the excess of free time for some, and the new hobbies taken up. But it seems that as things get back on track, people still seem interested in cooking, knowing the product, and using local and sustainable products. Even some trends like veganism have been gaining followers during these times of confinement.

The importance that food and everything related to it now seems to have is also evident in the markets, which during the pandemic have become places of social interaction.

Trends in food habits have been affected during this crisis and it seems that many of the new mentalities will remain.

Now what?

The previous sections have shown how the food system in general—from production and distribution to sales and even consumption—has been truly affected by the Coronavirus crisis. However, before the crisis the system was already being questioned by some social movements, calling for a change towards more sustainable models. The difference now is that while those questioning the system used to be described as environmentalists almost in a derogatory way, these concerns are no longer a matter of a few. It has become a matter of general and shared dominance.

Unfortunately, not only has there been a growing interest in change for the better but also lobbies and pressure groups have seen this situation as an opportunity to push towards revoking environmental policies and regulations that had taken so much effort to become established before the crisis. (See some examples of policies at risk in this article - https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/apr/17/polluter-bailouts-and-lobbying-during-covid-19-pandemic).

Threats from policies and economic plans disregarding sustainable farming and single-use plastic with the excuse of economic recovery:

- In the **EU**, the farmers' association Copa-Cogeca called for a further postponement of the "farm to fork" strategy, which is aimed at making agriculture less polluting. The call is backed by the right-wing EPP bloc, the largest group in the European parliament.

- In **Germany**, its farming lobby pushed for an easing of environmental standards, particularly those restricting fertiliser use, which are intended to reduce pollution.

- In the **US,** the American Farm Bureau Federation and the National Cattlemen's Beef Association lobbied heavily and won a $23.5bn bailout package. Agricultural pollution is the cause of a huge "dead zone" in the Gulf of Mexico.

- In the **US, the plastic industry** lobbied to remove bans on single-use plastic bags, citing hygiene concerns, and saw bans lifted in Maine, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Massachusetts. The EPA also weakened the Toxic Substances Control Act for many chemical and petrochemical manufacturers.

- In the **EU**, plastic industry lobbyists asked the European commission to postpone implementation of the single-use plastic directive, intended to cut plastic pollution. However, the commission rejected this call.

- In **England**, a ban on plastic straws, stirrers, and cotton buds that was due in April has been postponed.

- In Indonesia, the trade ministry revoked rules requiring basic certification that wood exports were legally produced in response to lobbying from the furniture and logging industries, according to campaign group Mighty Earth.

Therefore, neither previous achievements nor changes and initiatives that are being "improvised" or adopted these days can be taken for granted. We also need to be critical on the trends that are gaining strength these days "in the name of health security," such as the increase of online food trade and individual packaging, which might still not be as sustainable and good as it might seem in the long term. So, this is not the time to relax, but to push harder and join forces to drive the much-needed socio-ecological transition in our food systems.

It has already been shown that trying to separate the actors involved in the system is a failure but that joining forces will only be possible if we understand the complexity of the relationships within the system. Multi-level relationships and the spatiality of food and supply systems have been questioned and could change the relationships in the future (moving from the local to the physical, to global cooperation at the intellectual and strategic level). As Walden Bello reminds us, this paradigm shift was the "road not taken" after the 2008 food price crisis, "when transnational agribusiness interests and their ideologues asserted

their power to preserve and expand the system." Let's not trip over the same stone twice.

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2.3 COVID-19-LESSONS FOR URBAN POLITICS

(Richard Bärnthaler)

COVID-19 has unearthed the merits of a "grounded city" and restored courage in politics to make binding decisions. Whether these preconditions for sustainable urban politics will survive the crisis depends not least on our ability to reimagine ourselves as democratic subjects instead of individual consumers.

From the hyper globalised to the "grounded city"

COVID-19 has radically disrupted economic growth, world trade and financial flows. The "global economy" is badly wounded, its odds of survival uncertain. So far, so bad. But the crisis has also revealed something more important. It has dispelled the myth that there is only one global economy, one big market. It has performatively demonstrated that a variety of different economies exist – economies that are organized according to different principles and institutional arrangements.

This not only pertains for activities of housekeeping (cooking, cleaning, care activities) that don't even feature in standard economic indicators, but also for the foundational economy (FEC, 2018), which assures the satisfaction of basic needs: from electricity, water, housing and garbage disposal to local food supply, postal services, health and care. These "mundane" welfare-critical goods and services are often taken for granted – until they fail. Their provision, however, can only be organized via markets to a very limited extent; and certainly not via a global market, dominated by oligopolies that are primarily committed to maximizing profits for their shareholders. The foundational economy functions differently from a global market economy for goods and services. Long-term economic thinking, planning, cooperation and a focus on resilience are more important than short-term profit maximization for certain groups and unconditional competition. The foundational economy is the basis of functioning societies; it fulfils basic needs and enables well-being. Ironically, however, these foundational activities have been widely neglected by economic policies over the last decades in favour of a market-monistic outward orientation.

In the urban domain, the creation and liberalization of markets – from real estate and tourism to markets for the provision with basic supplies – was a logical consequence of such an outward orientation, which, in the name of international city competition, first and foremost sought to create attractive conditions for international capital. International investors, tourists, the "creative class" (Florida, 2019) and highly qualified knowledge workers became the new key addressees of these policies; efficiency, optimization and expected returns became their guiding values. Rather than the ability to meet the everyday needs of city dwellers sustainably, affordably and in high-quality, the attractiveness for foreign investments became the primary yardstick to measure a city's functionality. In other words, a hyper globalised city was prioritized at the expense of a "grounded city" (Engelen et al., 2017).

COVID-19, however, has changed the discourse overnight. The pandemic, threatening in many ways, initiated a collective expansion of consciousness by vividly demonstrating the importance of those foundational activities that cannot be shut down, even in moments of extreme crisis. Workers labouring on farms, in supermarkets, in transportation, those who ensure we have access to water and electricity, caregivers and hospital workers as well as those in social security are suddenly in the spotlight; they are praised as the new heroines, who maintain the forefront of the foundational system. In just a few days, COVID-19 has demonstrated what socio-economics, a discipline inspired by Karl Polanyi, has been arguing for a long time, namely that economics is first and foremost about organizing and securing livelihoods.

From market choice to infrastructural decisions

The rediscovery of a grounded city has been accompanied by another discursive rupture: the restoration of political courage to make decisions. While this may sound strange at a first blush – aren't decisions always a central part of politics? – it is indeed a radical reversal of previous trends. Over the last decades, the hyper globalisation of cities has restricted the democratic scope for decision-making in favour of offering legal certainty to investors and corporations as well as attracting international tourists. Political scientists have referred to this process as post-politics or post-democracy. Political decisions were replaced by individual consumer choices on a variety of markets – from real estate to tourism. For sure, politics continued to set market incentives, but interventions beyond such incentives were quickly condemned as "state patronage" and "the road to serfdom" (Hayek, 1944).

This rhetoric, however, fundamentally (though not accidentally) disregards that binding decisions, in contrast to voluntary choices, are "the operator of politics

proper, by virtue of politics being the name of the *undecidability* of the social: if society were a *decidable* structure, there would be no need for politics in the first place" (Hausknost and Haas, 2019: 10). The mobility system, the central problem area of climate policy, clearly shows how this degeneration of political decisions to market choices prevents sustainable politics since its provision often relies on parallel, publicly funded infrastructures for motorized private transport (roads and airports) and public transport (especially railways). The balance of CO2 emissions results from the choices made by individuals: if I take the train, emissions are low; if I drive a car, they are high; if I fly, they are even higher. The lack of political scope for action, the inability to make binding decisions, undermined political as well as individual problem-solving capabilities; awareness, willingness, ability and action are misaligned more than ever – nowhere more clearly than in climate policy.



Figure 8 Lack of problem-solving capabilities (picture from Shutterstock)

The COVID-19 crisis, however, shows a disruption, which came as a surprise in its severity: politics defines goals that it achieves with radical means such as a quarantine. Politics presents itself as oriented towards the common good ("health" is more important than the "economy"). Neoliberal arguments are banned from official speeches. No zero deficit, no austerity in the social and health sector, no sideswipes at low-wage earners. Instead, appeals for responsibility and community spirit, criticism of excessive globalisation and a clear commitment that health is more important than business. After decades of neoliberal austerity, investments on a grand scale are promoted across political camps to lead us out of the crisis.

Within this extraordinary window of opportunity, there is potential for a reorientation of politics that reasserts its legitimation on a new basis: politics that both deliberates and decides (BOX 1). And indeed, we have been observing a

constant deliberation for weeks under conditions of great uncertainty between health and other criteria: whether in programs on subsidies, in opening options for shops and schools, or in travel restrictions. Experts advise and support decision-making. The media, parliaments and civil society expose mistakes and in transparencies, call for accountability and demand fundamental rights. This is important because democratic societies need dissent as much as the ability to compromise. Sustainable democratic politics combines the art of deliberation and the ability to make decisions (Novy et al., 2020). It is a constant balancing act between individuality and solidarity, between diversity and equality, between limitation and enablement. This political model, used in the exceptional situation of a pandemic, can serve as a role model for other crises such as the climate crisis. It is a starting point for future-fit politics with problem-solving capabilities in complex situations; politics that acknowledges that it has "the ability, in principle, through institutionally coordinated processes of contestation, deliberation and collective will-formation to make collectively binding decisions that restructure the very terrain on which problems are defined, solutions sought and choices made" (Hausknost and Haas, 2019: 11).

Restructuring this very terrain implies long-term political decisions that are less reversible. In this regard, decisions on infrastructural systems are of particular relevance for urban politics. Infrastructures lay out the pathways of how everyday life can (and cannot) be lived. They enable and constrain everyday practices, activities, routines and habits – preferences are not fixed or given, but malleable and unstable (O'Hara and Stagl, 2002; Bowles, 1998). We do not decide every day on the means of transport that takes us to work. Children do not choose every day who brings them to school. In line with a grounded city, which offers stability and resilience in an increasingly instable and uncertain world, three priorities are central:

(1) "Material infrastructures": Existing supply networks (pipes and cables for electricity, water, gas, etc.), largely built in the Nineteenth century, need to be secured, maintained and expanded (keyword: "digitalization").
(2) "Social infrastructures": The achievements of the Twentieth century welfare state, particularly affordable and accessible healthcare, education and housing need to be defended and partially restored. Simultaneously, the group of beneficiaries need to be expanded to all city dwellers (BOX 2).
(3) "Social-ecological infrastructures" (BOX 3): Infrastructural decisions in the Twenty-first century need new priorities in order to build a city that is crisis-proof for climate change. A functioning local provisioning, post-fossil-fuel mobility systems, green public spaces as well as the expansion of basic goods and services that foster social cohesion (especially high-quality care facilities) need to take central stage.

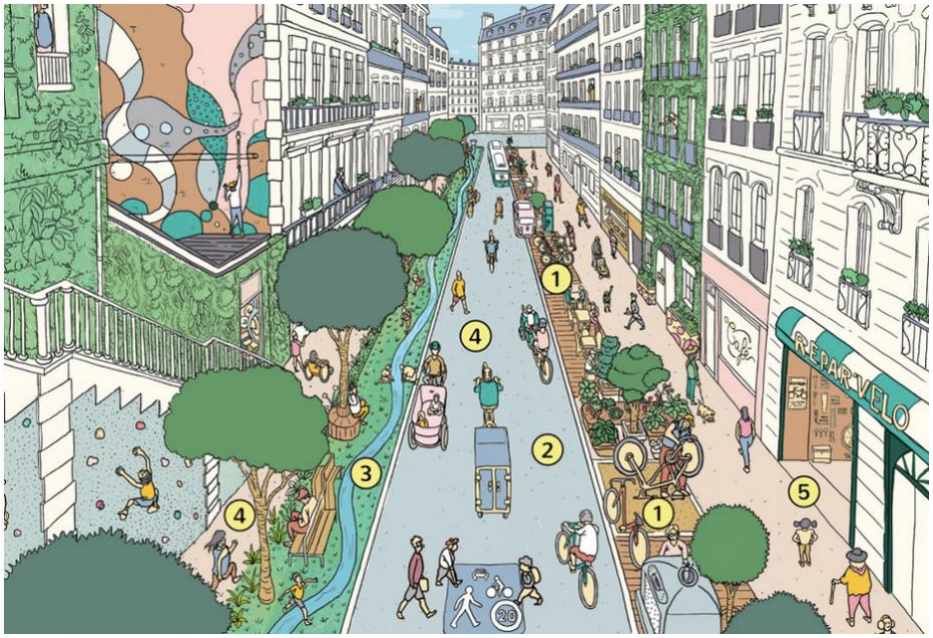


Figure 9 Social-ecological infrastructures (picture from Forbes)

From individual to collective freedom

Restoring the primacy of politics, that is: its ability to make binding decisions (e.g. on infrastructures), revitalizes a notion of democracy that is "more than a form of government," but "primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communal experience" (Dewey, 1916: 87). Democracy is a form of living *together*, and democratically deliberated political decisions provide the framework and rules that relate one's "own action to that of others" and thereby giving "point and direction to his own" (Dewey, 1916: 87). As the legal philosopher Hans Kelsen (1925: 54) emphasizes, "If society is to be, if even state is to be, then there must be a binding order of mutual behaviour between people". The very fact of society thus inherently raises the question of freedom, because "everything social is in its innermost essence bonding and only as a bonding connection and thus the negation of freedom" (Kelsen, 1925: 54).



Figure 10 John Dewey (picture from Shutterstock) / Hans Kelsen (picture from Alchetron)

Kelsen differentiates between the "Germanic" and the "ancient" concept of freedom. The former arises from an "anti-state primal instinct" that "puts the individual *against* society". This ever-expanding, limitless and unconditional freedom is not negotiable. It is a negative freedom since it constitutes itself through the absence of any form of coercion. It is the freedom of market choice. In contrast, the ancient idea of freedom constitutes the more complex "freedom of democracy". It replaces ethical individualism with a collective ethics that has to be negotiated democratically (the art of deliberation) and legally enforced through political decisions (the necessity to make binding decisions). The politically and socially free subject is always subjected to the law, common institutions and infrastructures, because "where the 'you should' of the social imperative is determined by the 'if and what you want' of the addressee, order loses all social meaning" (Kelsen, 1925: 56). Law, institutions and infrastructures always need to be the result of deliberation (BOX 4), a result of compromises, that is: "putting aside what separates those to be connected in favour of what connects them" (Kelsen, 1925: 58). This distinguishes liberal from illiberal democracies. Ultimately, however, democratic societies need binding decisions for everyone. Without sacrificing the protection of minorities, majority rule applies. If this is not accepted in the name of individuality and freedom, this freedom degenerates into an illusion.

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Boxes

BOX 1: This relocates value and moral judgments back into the political domain and thereby breaks with "the hegemony of the neo-classical theory of value – that price determines value, and that rating the social contribution of different sectors, groups of workers and consumption practices is an impertinence. It is not. It is absolutely central to building a sustainable and just economy" (Gough, 2020). The neoclassical theory of value does not allow us as society (as opposed to as an individual consumer) to negotiate what actually matters and contributes to a good life. It does not allow us to make any distinction between necessities, comfort goods, and luxuries. Markets, by definition, only value one's ability to pay. Such ability-to-pay-morality, however, is surely insufficient to guide an economy that is able to fulfil its function: to secure livelihoods and provide well-being.

BOX 2: A "city for all" foregrounds opportunities for political and social participation for all residents, not just for those who are formally entitled to vote. This is where the idea of a resident-centred concept of citizenship takes hold, which focuses on participation in the design of the living environment and the shaping of the infrastructures of everyday life. For example, in the city of Vienna, around 30% of residents who are not eligible to vote could thus participate in a "city for all" (Hamedinger et al., 2019).

BOX 3: The 21st century is characterized by major challenges: the climate crisis, hyperglobalisation and market-radical forms of digitalization, endanger social cohesion and liberal democracies (Aulenbacher et al., 2019; Novy et al., 2020). The key to successful transformation strategies is the expansion and development of socio-ecological infrastructures that make new habits, ways of life and modes of production possible. Social-ecological infrastructures strengthen ecological sustainability and social cohesion as well as creative freedom and social participation. They are pathways towards the future and make sustainable changes possible, since they potentially change behaviour permanently and operationalize normative ideas of a good life in concrete terms. Infrastructures materialize and standardize social imaginations, their values and interests, and make them tangible and liveable (cf. Jasanoff, 2015). Routines, without which people cannot cope with everyday life, are based on certain prerequisites, on the positive freedom to be able to organize life in certain ways (Jonas and Littig, 2016). Over the past decades, habits have emerged without considering their ecological consequences. The changes required today are therefore not limited to small adaptations of the mass consumer society of the 20th century, but rather imply new ways of structuring the infrastructures that enable far-reaching changes in the ways of living and working. It needs a reorientation towards strengthening the foundational economy, which changes routines: only new public means of transport make it possible to refrain from using the car; only good local supply, new settlement structures, green areas and recreational opportunities "on site" create a vibrant life in the district or neighbourhood; only with decentralized care facilities are there alternatives to care at home or in a large care centres. We need the establishment of a regional circular economy that is less dependent on global value chains, as well as innovative infrastructural rules for the common use of public spaces and facilities - from schools to community areas as district centres. In order to meet the desire for a new relationship between man and nature, some other historically grown infrastructures have to shrink at the same time. This primarily affects fossil and resource-intensive infrastructures that underlie the current mobility, energy and food systems. For example, Vienna developed into a city with excellent public transport, but without questioning car-centrist

transportation policies. Considering the scarce urban space, this is at the expense of cycling lanes and public spaces, where relatively modest improvements have taken place. Facing the climate crisis and growing inequalities, we need political courage to make unpopular decisions. In view of scarce resources, the necessary expansion of a decarbonised infrastructure will only be financeable if there are political decisions to dismantle fossil infrastructures that exacerbate the climate crisis. Sustainable mobility needs socio-ecological infrastructures that change the routines of city dwellers, but also the logistics of companies towards resource conservation. The expansion of social-ecological infrastructures enables a "city for all" in the 21st century by expanding the social to a socio-ecological question. Both share the insight that a good life can only be achieved in relation to the community and the environment. The infrastructures of everyday life tend to be egalitarian, they are needed and used by everyone and bring different worlds together. If such connecting public spaces are missing, the risk of polarization and social division increases. Instead of relying on sustainable consumption and thus choices on the markets, the expansion of the social-ecological infrastructure creates new commonalities. Therefore, the social-ecologisation of urban infrastructures is potentially the best way to a cooperative and solidary community (Novy et al., 2019).

BOX 4: The local involvement of citizens is a core element of integrative urban development. At the same time, particularly in the design of the socio-ecological living environment, important lessons from environmental psychology and practice theory must not be neglected. They show numerous obstacles with regard to the environmental behaviour of individual citizens (e.g. the desire to own a car versus using subsidized public transport). Enabling a good life for everyone requires strengthening decarbonised and biodiversity-sensitive socio-ecological habitats. The idea of such a future - and the design of infrastructural systems based on it - implies a value judgment in line with Karl Polanyi's (2001) "freedom in a complex society": sustainable are only those modes of living that can potentially be universalized, enabling freedom not only for the selected few, but for all - private swimming pools and gardens for all are illusory, public swimming pools and parks are possible.

TOMORROW

By Genaro Alva

I

Tomorrow, I want
to go outside with a 'Give Hugs' sign.
to kiss those I love until they are soaked with saliva.
to make love to that person, like it's the first and last time.

I want a tomorrow
where we can pay for everything with hugs.
where hospitals prescribe high doses of kisses.
where in schools they teach us to love one other.

II

Tomorrow, I want
to bathe naked in the sea, while the birds look amazed over me.
to crawl up a leafy tree, close my eyes and listen to its melody.
to climb the highest mountain, to realize how small we are.

I want a tomorrow
where seas, lagoons, and rivers are treated as living beings.
where we build biophilic habitats and reconnect with nature.
where the biocentric prevails over the anthropocentric.

III

Tomorrow, I want
to grow vegetables, tubers and fruits with my neighbours in our local park.
to exchange our products instead of money in the neighbourhood market.
to build collective houses inspired by the Amazonian malocas.

I want a tomorrow

where land reform ends world hunger and the myth of development.
where the economy prioritizes the freedom of nature and not the market.
where nobody lives on the street but lives in homes, and not houses.

IV

Tomorrow, I want
to enter a club without the guard looking at my clothing and the colour of my skin.
to dance with my female friends, knowing they will return home safely.
to see my gay friend fearlessly attend his school reunion party.

I want a tomorrow
where racist jokes are no longer funny.
where women are not objectified in men's chat groups.
where love is not defined by gender or the number of partners you have.

V

Tomorrow, I want
to start a business with the support of the state.
to learn Quechua and communicate with my brothers and sisters.
to build a lake with my community and dance with the rain.

I want a tomorrow
where the economy talks with the informal to create a popular economy.
where schools teach us indigenous languages to understand each other. Yes, 'we' first.
where communal green infrastructures replace corrupted grey ones.

VI

Tomorrow, I want
to dream of utopias, knowing that the reason for being is on the horizon.
The more we move towards it, many times crawling,
the more it moves away, mocking us.

I want a tomorrow

where pluri-nations think of collective policies to reach utopias.

where we can someday hold them, even for a moment.

where that moment could be eternal.

Could it be, that when all this is over, we will begin to build utopias?

The Pachakutik: The Birth of Being Pachamama

By Genaro Alva

I

"What was lifelike in modern cities, Awicha?"

My granddaughter asks me as we watch nature's green taking over the grey remains of what was once called the metropolis.

"The ancient man traded his nature-based gods for money, Hafida," I answered.

"From swimming in majestic rivers and listening to the musical melodies of nature's spirit,

to dressing in watches made from the slave master´s gold, hearing a cacophony of cars, surrounded by giant buildings, inert beings wandering, connected from device to device.

From playing outside with friends until the sun sets,

to saving digital worlds from aliens through a box inside, while the real-world begged to be saved.

From conversations around the campfire to digital text messages

From knowledge constructed through communal experiences between all life forms,

to an absolute truth imposed by the anthropocentric rationality originating in the West.

Mankind decided to live with death instead of Life.

Father Science instead of Mother Earth."

II

And how did the metropolis man become extinct, Kushe papai?

My granddaughter asks me, as she finds the remains of a device that appears to be an artificial ventilator, and dozens of blood smeared masks behind the rubble of what was once a hospital.

"The Pachamama grew angry with mankind for all the damage they had caused, my curious niña.

She decided that man must learn a lesson of humility, so she sent one of the smallest, most complex beings in the world to capture his attention.

However, it was not a virus that ended the metropolis man

The real virus was the obsession of mankind with 'me' instead of 'we'

And when the 'we' ended, it ended what had been our greatest survival tool for centuries."

III

"So, the metropolis man did nothing to save himself, Abue?

My granddaughter asks me again while reading aloud graffiti sprayed on a concrete wall. It read; Capitalism is the Real Virus ... Degrowth Now!

The metropolis man was wrong again, Ñawe.

They believed it possible to find solutions in the system that created the problems but the only thing they found was more of the same; wars, hatred, hunger, poverty, discrimination, inequality and death.

They turned away from the warning call that Pachamama had sent to them.

The challenge of coexistence between different cultures.

That we should celebrate our differences to build a world where many worlds fit."

IV

"And why did we not disappear like the ancient metropolis man, Jadati?

My granddaughter asks me as she points in the distance to the smoke rising through the forest. A sign that it is time for lunch in our "village-world" and that soon we must leave.

"Pachamama saved the uncivilized, the ignorant, the savage. Those who rejected their development. Those who do not have the word "I" within their languages, Willka.

We are beings interconnected with other beings and in that interconnection lies our existence.

We are a great fabric formed from the fabric of many others; the thread alone is not woven if it does not interlock with others.

Today she has given us an opportunity to continue. To do things better than yesterday.

But if the Pacha tomorrow decides that we are to leave, we will leave with humility.

We will always *be* her and part of her."

GRANDMOTHER: Awicha (Quechua), Abuela (Spanish), Kushe papai (Mapuche), Jadati (Arabic)

GIRL: Hafida (Arabic), Ñawe (Mapuche), Niña (Spanish), Willka (Quechua

2.4 COVID-19 IN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS: HOW POOR LIVING CONDITIONS AFFECT COMMUNITIES' RESPONSE TO THE PANDEMIC

(Nur Hamidah, Grace Valasa, Mohak Jhawar, Yescha Danandjojo, Dawit Gebrehiwet)

Adequate housing is part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It stipulates "everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate of health and well-being for himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing..." (United Nations, 1948). 72 years after the declaration, still not everyone has access to the right to housing. Slums, squatters, shacks, favelas, refugee camps, and other illegal urban settlements reflect the immensity of inadequate housing in cities. It reflects how states are unable to respond to their citizens' housing needs due to urbanization. These settlements suffer from spatial, social, and economic exclusion (UN Habitat, 2015); discrimination due to physical marginalization; basic service and infrastructure deficits; poor governance frameworks; limited or no public space and green areas; precarious livelihoods and high vulnerability to the adverse impacts of poor and exposed environments. These settlements involve a combination of informal land acquisition, self-help construction, and incremental service provision; they exist outside the regulatory framework and can result from a coordinated action of a group of citizens or a gradual occupation of land over time.

According to UN habitat, the percentage of people living in urban slums varies significantly between continents. Africa has the highest share of urban population inhabiting informal settlements with 61.7% followed by Asia with 30% and Latin America and the Caribbean with 24% (UN Habitat, 2015). For instance, out of 412 million people residing in urban India, 26-37 million households are estimated to reside in informal housing (Amaya, 2017); whereas the Kibera neighbourhood in Nairobi (Kenya) has 2.5 million people inhabiting an informal settlement, making it the largest in Africa (Smith, 2020).

These settlements are termed as informal settlements in many literatures. Abrams' *Man's Struggle for Shelter in an Urbanizing World* (1964) was one of the first documented investigations into urban expansion and explosion. 'Informal' is understood as a broader concept that is applied to urban housing and settlements, infrastructure, economic practices, and social processes as well as political practices (Abrams, 1964). Overall, they are classified as spatial, economic, and political aspects. These aspects are not separate but rather drive each other in many ways and can lead to crisis. For example, spatial

informality was looked upon as a consequence of rural-urban migration linked to industrialization and agricultural decline (Lombard & Paula, 2017). The term 'informal settlement' itself is not used in every country; the line between formal/informal is also debatable in the discourse. We will hence use the terms interchangeably to best describe situations for cases in Kenya, Indonesia, and India.

Disasters hit the most vulnerable groups harder than others. They disproportionally impact the poor (Wisner et.al., 2004; O'Brian et.al., 2006; Baker, 2012). People living in informal settlements face poor living conditions along with a lack of socio-economic support, making them a vulnerable group in cities. When an outbreak such as COVID-19 happened, people who live in such settlements encounter more challenges than others in coping with the disease related to their limited living condition and socio-economic support. UN Habitat has called governments from all levels to pay attention to informal settlements and slums in response to the outbreak (UN Habitat, 2020). Looking at how vulnerable these settlements are to the virus spread and the potential burden if an outbreak happens, we echo this concern. This entry discusses the struggles of people residing in informal settlements during COVID-19 pandemic and suggests changes for improving their living conditions and reducing the risk of future shocks.

COVID-19 Mitigation Measures and Practices In Informal Settlements

To flatten the curve of virus transmission, WHO has issued advice to the public for self-protection, i.e.: social distancing; washing hands regularly; avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth; avoiding crowded places; self-isolation when feeling ill; seeking medical attention if showing symptoms; doing a quarantine if exposed to potential source; maintaining good respiratory hygiene; and keeping up with the latest information from trusted sources (WHO, 2020). To widely implement this advice, countries have put in place mitigation measures, including school closures, businesses closures, cancellation of mass gathering events, mandated quarantine, and contact tracing mostly in the location where infection has been identified.

Unfortunately, not everyone has adequate capacity to conduct the above-mentioned measures. Individual mitigation measures require adequate living conditions and protection equipment, which are scarce for people living in poor housing conditions. Collective mitigation measures create socio-economic impacts such as unemployment, the reduction or loss of income, and the deterioration of mental health for those who lack social and economic protection. In the context of this entry, the crisis increases existing vulnerability of people who reside in poor living conditions, either to cope with the disease itself or to deal with its socio-economic impacts.

Washing hands regularly is a luxury in places where water, sanitation, and hygiene is inadequate

Proper hand washing is generally recommended as highly effective for killing the virus since soap breaks its lipid membrane. Nonetheless, according to the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme for Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene, 40% of the world's population in 2017 did not have appropriate facilities for using water and soap at home (WHO/UNICEF, 2017). The bad quality of groundwater, unavailability of water pipelines, and unintegrated wastewater networks are among the WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) problems of in informal settlements. For example, access to water in Kenya is limited; only a third of households in informal settlements are connected to the public water supply (Zhu, 2020). Therefore, the water supply in informal settlement has to rely mostly on water vendors (OHCHR, 2020).

To cope with the issue, in many settlements in Indonesia, communities place portable hand washing stations within and at the entrance of the neighbourhoods. On the other hand, the EU and the governments of Sweden, Finland, and Denmark have worked together with Kenyan local communities to increase access to water by planning to build communal hand-washing facilities in urban low-income areas in 25 counties that will target almost 120.000 people (European Commission, 2020).

Social distancing and self-quarantine are difficult to do where houses are overcrowded, roads are too narrow, and open spaces are limited

Social distancing requires maintaining 1-1.5 meters between two people from different houses. With narrow pathways within the neighbourhood, maintaining the suggested distance is hardly possible in dense settlements. With this condition, outdoor activities such as getting fresh air and natural light as well as obtaining essential supplies can be the source of transmission. Poor housing conditions necessitate household members to go outside for fresh air and sunlight (Yuniar, 2020). In this situation, they face a dilemma between staying indoors, with poor indoor lighting and air quality, or exposing themselves to the virus; both pose a risk to their health. Creating a timely schedule for people of a community to be out can be a simple solution. In a neighbourhood of a dense settlement in Jakarta, one community sealed off its entrance to prevent outbreaks (Varagur, 2010).

Social distancing is not mandatory for people from the same housing unit. However, if a household member shows symptoms or is exposed to potential sources, isolation or quarantine is mandatory for that person. In an overcrowded house where members share a limited space, self-isolation or quarantine is not possible. Those members need to be evacuated to a place where isolation and quarantine can be conducted. An alternative measure to quarantine facilities

was adopted in Kenya's informal settlements (Muungano wa wanavijiji, 2020). A local task force proposed the conversion of multipurpose halls, therapy centres, and other public facilities within different informal settlements into isolation and quarantine centres. Some local task forces in Indonesia also prepared quarantine facilities for those who are just entering the area or who cannot practice self-quarantine at home (Ovier and Yasmin, 2020).

Proper health treatment is less accessible where information and health facilities are inadequate

The first thing to protect people from the virus is ensuring a good understanding of the virus itself, of the disease, and its symptoms. In doing so, people will know how to prevent, self-diagnose, and conduct appropriate measures when showing the symptoms. With limited access to reliable information, people risk being misguided by false information. The residents who live in informal settlements often lack general knowledge on diseases, and with the limited information available, they tend to ignore the symptoms. They often receive health treatment from informal health providers, consume traditional or herbal medicine, or take medicine with minimum knowledge of its benefit (Corgrove, 2020). As such, many health issues in these communities are not treated properly, which leaves them with chronic untreated conditions (Wilkinson, 2020). It is therefore paramount that awareness of COVID-19 be raised in order to prevent its transmission within these communities.

In order to increase people's awareness of a healthy lifestyle, such as the importance of wearing masks and washing hands, strategically placed banners, posters, and graffiti have been placed in the neighbourhood—as seen in the work of a street artist in Nairobi (Sobecki, 2020; Evangellou et al, 2020) and in some Indonesian streets. Community volunteers alongside an NGO have been working in the informal settlements and spread information and awareness about the pandemic small groups and door-to-door initiatives (Brown & Ilako, 2020). Health clinics in Indonesia provide communities with information and ensure that people who are doing self-quarantine follow the instructions. The New Delhi government initiated the model of 'Mohalla Clinics,' offering basic health services across the city and slums, free of cost (Upadhyay, 2020). To date, they have served 16 million people (Hindustan Times, 2019). These clinics are set up either in portacabins or in rented properties within the slums, becoming the first point of contact for the poor—a physical manifestation of making health a civil right and not a privilege (Tiwari 2020).

Staying at home is depressing: there is no security of tenure, income is reduced, and internet connection is limited

The population of informal settlements is largely dominated by low-income groups that work in informal sector enterprises and earn a minimum (or even below minimum) wage (Srinivas, 2016). Forcing people to stay at home means reducing this low-income group's mobility and access to work, leaving them without an income. For those who reside in rental housing, this may lead to a forced eviction by the landlords. The daily provision of needs is also hindered and cases of hunger often lead to cases of violence. Such cases are found in Jakarta, where people are sleeping on the street after being kicked out by their landlords. In response, and addressing the need to prevent the transmission of Coronavirus among the homeless, the provincial government has provided temporary shelters for the homeless (Lova, 2020). In Kenya and Ethiopia, forced evictions have taken place during the pandemic, increasing the burden to affected people in this difficult time (Amnesty International, 2020; Bhalla, 2020).

To address the needs of low-income groups in Kenya, some local facilitators within informal settlements have introduced alternative cash transfer schemes like Sarafu Credit (Zhu, 2020): a network of micro-businesses to exchange local goods and services using digital vouchers when the official currency is scarce. Supermarkets have allowed citizens to shop using Safaricom Bonga points earned over time through the purchase of electronic (mobile) money (Safaricom, 2020). Mutual aid programs (Zhu, 2020) have been enacted to identify at-risk households and supply them with flour, beans, and soap in bulk, acquired through mobile money contributions from individuals in Kenya. NGOs and individuals in Indonesia are also working hand in hand to reduce the economic burden of the economically affected people using crowdfunding platforms and social media (Pinandita & Syakriah, 2020).

A 'stay at home' order means that students must follow distance learning and employees must telework, requiring them to have a proper internet connection. This is a challenge for families with young school age children that do not use computers and the internet on a daily basis. The Indonesian government uses the national television station to broadcast programs as substitutes for face-to-face teaching for families in less developed areas that can also benefit people in poor housing conditions (Kemendikbud, 2020). Social platforms like WhatsApp have been used to enable e-learning. To support this initiative, Safaricom, a network platform in Kenya, alongside Eneza Education, Longhorn Publishers, and Viusasa, provide daily free 250MB and e-learning platforms to primary and secondary students.

Delivering assistance and contact tracing are challenging where population databases are not updated

The demographic data of informal settlements is usually not available or not updated. The unavailability of this data leads to inadequate provision of health and sanitary measures (Cosgrove, 2020). It also challenges the distribution of assistance, leading to mistargeting, inefficiency of distribution, social conflict, or disregard for those needing assistance. Indonesia has neighbourhood and community level organizations in informal settlements called RT/RW (Rukun Tetangga/ Rukun Warga) that can potentially handle these challenges. The President called relevant ministries and regional heads to strengthen these organizations in order to manage COVID-19 on the local, grassroots level (Setkab RI, 2020). Updated data is also important for contact tracing. The lack of data together with limited knowledge of the disease will lead to unreported cases in informal settlements, which can be a ticking time bomb that can explode anytime.

Will COVID-19 make significant changes to informal settlements?

For people who live in poor housing conditions and the least desirable location in cities, COVID-19 is not the first disturbance confronted in their lives. It is just the tip of an iceberg of many other disasters they must face, such as flooding, water borne diseases, and fire. An important question to be addressed is whether the pandemic will improve their living conditions. Relying on ad-hoc and small initiatives every time the crisis hits is not sustainable. We argue that changes need to be made on a systemic level, incorporating paradigm, physical, and behavioural shifts.

A paradigm shift

The terms 'slums, squatters, shacks, favelas, villas miserias, bidonvilles' are all used to describe informal settlements. Those words highlight the negative characteristics of these neighbourhoods, while their existence is actually a product of self-help efforts used to access their right to housing (Zarate, 2016). People who live in such settlements are stigmatized as secondary citizens who create problems for the environment, powerless, and cannot make decisions for themselves. These stigmas inhibit their voices from being heard. A paradigm shift is needed to ensure that they access the same rights as all citizens: having a voice, security of tenure, decent living conditions, access to health and education, and derive equal benefits from investments made in the city—with their settlements being invested in as much as any other neighbourhood in the city. Enhancing these communities' resilience means enhancing the resilience of the city in general. In other words, a failure to cope with the Coronavirus because of their poor living conditions means a failure of the city.

Physical upgrading

Managing density and improving sanitation of informal settlements should be done with or without a pandemic. Improving housing units and neighbourhood roads, adding more WASH facilities together with parks and adequate open spaces should be a high priority. Enhancing access to social infrastructure such as schools and health care facilities must be done. This change needs to involve the communities themselves in the planning and decision-making process to better benefit them. This physical upgrading needs to be done together with intense capacity building for the operationalization of the facilities, to create more robust and resilient communities, and to reduce dependency on external stakeholders.

Behavioural change

Behaviour changes need to be made in order to adapt to the pandemic and any other outbreaks; this includes practicing more hygiene, maintaining physical distancing, and minimizing shared spaces. These changes apply to everyone—not just for those residing in informal settlements. However, most of these changes are challenging in informal settlements, especially because they depend almost entirely on physical changes being implemented (improved WASH infrastructures, adequate access and public spaces and improved housing conditions). Changing behaviour requires changes in infrastructure, otherwise it is difficult for people who reside in the poor living conditions to adapt to this pandemic and other health related crisis. Assuming the physical changes have been made, communities in informal settlements must adjust to a new behaviour in order to draw the most benefits from them and to maintain the infrastructures themselves. This requires collaboration of, in particular, local stakeholders to increase community awareness of better hygiene and practice healthy lifestyles.



Figure 11 Illustration of Informal Settlement during the pandemic (by Dawit Gebrehiwet)

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New Normal

by Nur Hamidah

We hear people talking about new normal
We ask them
What is the new normal?

They say keep your distance.
How do we make space here?
Show us for instance

They say stay at home.
Where do we get natural light and air?
Our sanity will be gone

They say wash your hands regularly.
How do we get more water?
We can't even drink frequently

They say do not share stuffs.
How do we get extra money?
To make sure everyone gets their own stuffs

They say avoid public transportation.
Where is the lane for us walking or cycling?
We wish we can do teleportation

They say, this is the new normal
Then we think
What was the old normal, for us?

2.5 SOLID BELIEF FOR (RE)SOLIDARITY

(Eshete Sitotaw, Isye Susana Nurhasanah, Wosen Gebreyohannes)

On the one hand, the pandemic has presented challenges to the formation and development of communities. On the other, the pandemic has been an effective socio-political agent to create grassroots movements and re-create existing ones. In the absence of government action, mushrooming grassroots initiatives are becoming effective in promoting solidarity as a survival strategy. Some sense of humanity is rising and spreading rapidly among citizens in many countries, including many examples of mutual aid given to citizens in need. However, the question arises: to what extent can communities reproduce, continue, and institutionalise these solidarity actions? Framed by the Social Innovation approach, this study attempts to reveal emerging practices of institutional support to maintaining this increased sense of humanity. More specifically, the study investigates the transformation of religious practices reproducing the community such that solidarity actions are prolonged. It focuses on revealing reformed practices of Muslim communities during Ramadan in pandemic times. It uses a pod (microcosm of the community) map method to collect data on a virtual platform. The technique is interactive, easy to use, and primarily designed to stimulate cohesion of communities, especially the ones that are vulnerable. The pod maps help illustrate relationships and perceptions of community members of the transformation of virtual and physical communal practices. The specific subject chosen for the study is the Muslim community in Leuven, the so-called International Muslim Student Association of Leuven (IMSAL). It appears that processes focusing on collective solidarity actions, such as Sadaqah and Iftar, and grounded on collective values, have a strong power to reproduce communities and institutionalise their actions.

Why choose the Muslim community as a case study?

The Muslim community in Leuven presents a relevant case study for understanding collective solidarity actions from a social innovation perspective because of the following characteristics:

- Minority group
  Being a minority is the first justification for choosing the Muslim community in Leuven. There is no exact percentage of Muslims in Belgium; in 2014, various sources estimated Muslims to be 4-6.5% of the country's population.[25]

[25] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam_in_Belgium#Discrimination

- Vulnerable community
  Given its low demographic proportion and its cultural diversity, the Muslim community can be easily overwhelmed by larger communities, and its needs and values can be disregarded.
- Non-conformist /outlying case
  Outlying' practices' or 'cases' play an essential role in the social innovation process (Moulaert & MacCallum, 2019). Furthermore, the non-conformist social practices and values of the community, which are based on unique institutional logics related to the context, present an opportunity to reveal unique potentials in this field.

Terms and Definitions

- Sadaqah: the term for charity in Islam, meaning to donate money to the needy. This includes simple acts like smiling at people and other compassionate actions that comfort and provide well-being.
- Iftar: an activity to break the day's fast at sunset in the month of Ramadan.
- Cyber Iftar: the reform of iftar during the pandemic, created by the community to share the joy of breaking fast in Ramadan and checking-in on everyone's condition.
- Ramadan: the ninth month of the Muslim year, during which strict fasting is observed from dawn to sunset.

Reformed practice for (re)producing community: IMSAL community against COVID-19

Despite the shock and the fear provoked by Coronavirus, the outbreak of the pandemic has given humanity some time to rethink its existence, its actions, and its behaviour, be it its desperate struggle to survive in solitude or to help and motivate each other. Corona-times show us that civil society truly becomes a "pivotal terrain" (the term was used by Swyngedouw (2005)) in initiating innovative actions to help each other in facing challenging times together. Take, for example, the flourishing solidarity action that emerged around the globe reaching beyond nationality, gender, religion, etc. We can find people helping each other on every scale of interaction. Whether it is to pick up groceries and medicine, help a vulnerable neighbour, or offer contact

information and phone numbers to merely have a chat with the elderly[26]—it has become evident that humans are social creatures, after all.

These actions of solidarity take place in an organised manner as well, through social media mobilisation of volunteers doing grocery shopping and other errands for the weak and fragile.[27] These practices are not just happening in a particular country but resonate within every part of the globe. This is how solidarity becomes a dime in a dozen in the time of the pandemic. To further explore this, this entry focuses on the reformed communal practice of solidarity in the Muslim community of Leuven resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, it focuses on the case of the International Muslim Students Association of Leuven (IMSAL).

IMSAL as an agency of solidarity

IMSAL emerged as a platform of international Muslim students in 1984 under the umbrella of KU Leuven. IMSAL presents itself as a niche for the community of students and residents who are followers of Islam (IMSAL Predikt Verbondenheid, n.d.). Unlike its humble beginning as a connecting platform for a small rather homogenous group of students, it has grown to be a very inclusive and representative community for a large population of Muslim and non-Muslim members. Moreover, online platforms have also emerged as an efficient database and a more accessible alternative venue to the previously acquired physical space for communal activities.

> "IMSAL- beyond culture! ---- One platform ---Our mosque is the first Belgian mosque !!!"-- 2nd Interviewee

IMSAL, as a community, dwells on two distinct but mutually reinforcing perspectives. On the one hand, IMSAL, as a religious institution, hosts rituals like the activity of prayers, Quran study, wudu, …etc. Through these shared rituals and collective religious practices, a stronger bond is established in the community. However, unlike other mosques in town, the IMSAL mosque is not a place of the dominant culture of a particular nationality or context. Instead, it offers an open, relatively flexible and inclusive venue for Muslim practices and rituals from all cultures and international backgrounds.

26 https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/24/nyregion/ny-coronavirus-help.html?action=click&module=Top%20Stories&pgtype=Homepage

27 https://invisiblehandsdeliver.org

> "...For the rest, the audience is very diverse, women with and without a headscarf, native, foreign, internationally from all corners of the world, more traditional or more modern dressed....." (IMSAL Predikt Verbondenheid, n.d.)

On the other hand, IMSAL distinctly addresses and supports specific values in and outside the community. Based on our interviews, IMSAL has represented solidarity by standing together regardless all the differences—merely shared the same value of believing in one God. The IMSAL community focuses on building bridges with other communities and standing together with them in solidarity in the face of challenges; this form of solidarity encompasses ISMAL's core values based on rights and morals. Events, gatherings, celebrations, meetings, etc., are used to establish and build shared values. Moreover, the community partners and collaborates with other institutions to maximise its reach-out capacity. IMSAL organises shared activities and events with numerous institutions including Leuven's City Hall; the Department of diversity; the Indian community association; the police force; the KU Leuven University parish, etc. For example, IMSAL representatives met with the City Hall at the start of the pandemic to take part in the city-level campaign for volunteer-based solidarity.

IMSAL is a local agentic entity that is collectively motivated and that has been co-constructed through time as an international Muslim community responding to its context in Leuven. In the next section, ISMAL's actions during the pandemic will be discussed in relation to the pillars of social innovation (SI). In particular, with regards to the fulfilment of local human needs, the transformation of social relations, and the upscaling and empowerment to supra-local scales.

Pandemic-resilient IMSAL

When the government is busy solving the macro-level impacts of the pandemic, community initiatives, such as the acts of solidarity practiced by IMSAL (and other communities), have a deeper impact on society and provide positive externalities. The reformed solidarity practices conducted by the IMSAL community have shown the ability to adapt to the crisis and still manage their practices, without losing its essence. The experience of social movements illustrates how this kind of innovation can trigger initiatives in fulfilling human needs that cannot be satisfied by others.

The community of IMSAL is showing exceptional resilience and agility in this period of the pandemic, given the overlap between holy Ramadan and lockdown measures. The community opened its volunteering and solidarity activities to reach out to the general public in Leuven. Besides collaborating with the City Hall for solidarity activities, the IMSAL community reformed its practices like Sadaqah (the practice of solidarity) by providing food delivery

and online exchanges, easing the impact of the lockdown measures. A group of volunteers from the IMSAL community coordinated carefully packaging and delivering uncooked food for the needy. The platform is open to anyone, regardless of the religious position, to receive Sadaqah aid based on trust.

The virtual presence of IMSAL also created opportunities for resilience against the pandemic. The development of online platforms in recent years contributed to maintaining alternative platforms to facilitate the IMSAL community rituals and value-based activities. Especially during the month of Ramadan, it is a known practice to do Iftar (breakfasting) together in the evenings. Although the community members were physically separated, the IMSAL platform created the online network to maintain the common practice of breaking fast on online venues. It was also possible to do coordinated night-time prayers and rituals together through the same network of IMSAL. Creative ways of interactions also emerged in this period, including, for example, the initiative of Ramadan plates association for sharing recipes and alternative meal preparation in Ramadan times. This initiative addresses lonely members who are not used to cooking appropriate dishes for fasting during Ramadan, attempting to replace the communal cooking and sharing of food in pre-pandemic times.

The open, inclusive, and accessible pre-pandemic network of the IMSAL community found a way to somehow continue shared practices of solidarity, despite the limitations of the lockdown measures. The IMSAL community's actions are rooted in religious motivation as much as they are in their capacity for reflection and creativity. However, the level of inclusivity and accessibility of these reformed practices can be questioned, considering the high dependency on social media and skills, mind-set, tools and infrastructures required to join these new platforms. Unlike the pre-pandemic live platform for a multiplicity of sharing and interaction, these new platforms only allow limited ways of collectivism, somehow limiting the extent and strength of the reproduced social relations.

Despite the spirit of solidarity, the social initiative is not only having difficulties in terms of opening accessibility to its practices but also as relates to the financial constraints for its implementation. The organisation, which is entirely dependent on donors and volunteers, finds difficulty to hold a massive charity event. Moreover, not all members of the community feel the need, or have the time, to take part in activities in digital platforms, which decelerates the development of the community and the association. Scepticism also seems to be another challenge in which groups believe such kind of charity from Muslims somehow contradicts their personal beliefs.

The other question is if the IMSAL community is resilient enough to reproduce itself for the post-pandemic period by institutionalising and upscaling these

solidarity actions. According to interviewees, IMSAL has managed to continuously grow and evolve in the past because, besides the unwavering faith of its members, it is rooted in shared values. Basing its actions on shared values, the boundary of IMSAL is blurred, always ready for collective engagement, which builds its resilience as an inter-communal entity with a multiplicity of manifestations. Furthermore, the community of IMSAL is built on shared practices and actions as much as it is an open religious community, which always opens the door for new forms of collaboration and exchange, expanding the realm of possibility. In the short-term experience of the pandemic, the IMSAL community reacted effectively in preserving and empowering its communal solidarity activities in the face of the unforeseen institutional prohibitions and social distancing. However, given the incomprehensible prevalence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the constrained possibility of performing shared practices and actions, the social embeddedness of the IMSAL community could, in the long-term, be threatened.

Networks of solidarity practice

In the lens of SI, agents are social, organisational, or experiential, making interventions aiming at adopting a particular context (social or natural). In contrast, institutions are fields of activity that possess enabling and constraining capacity (Moulaert et al., 2016; Cajaiba-Santana, 2014). Therefore, in this section, we intend to elaborate on the contextual character, type, and spatiality of reformed social solidarity relationships of the pandemic and pre-pandemic periods.

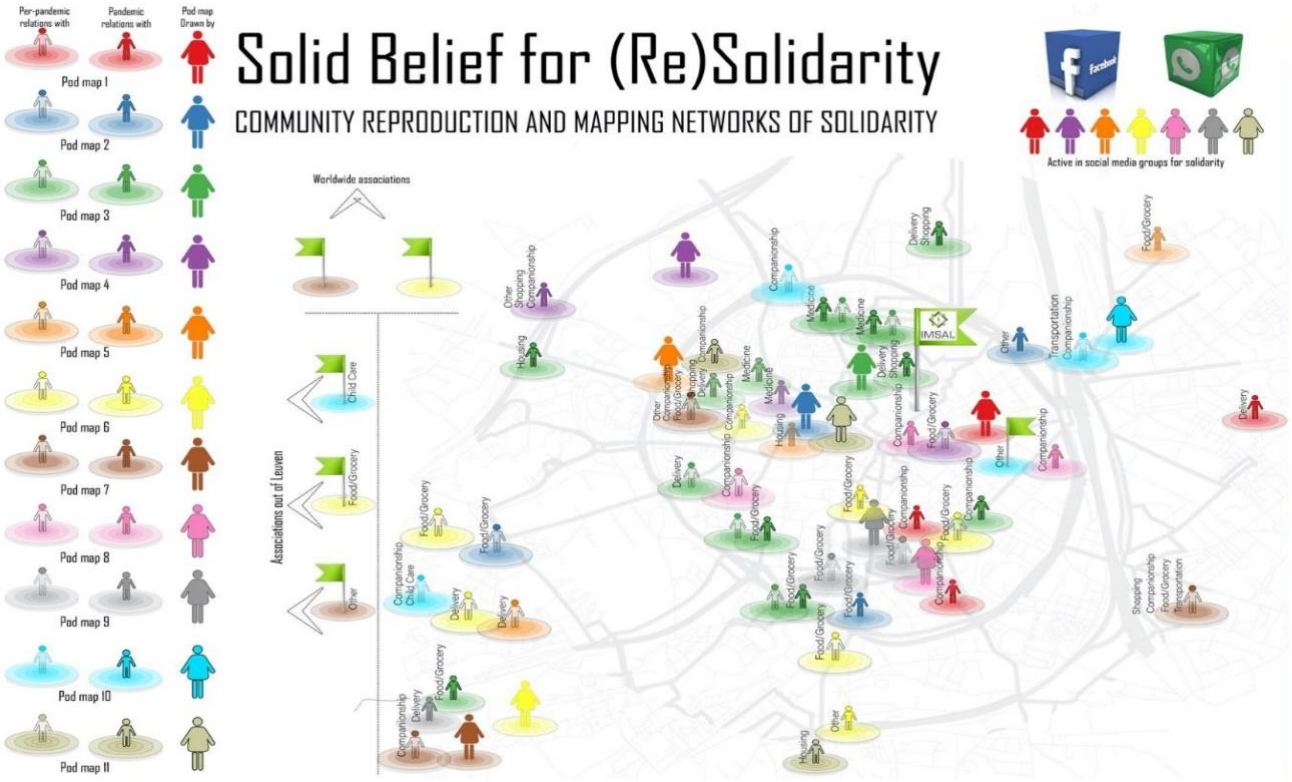
IMSAL and the volunteer community within it exuded an inviting spirit welcoming students, including non-Muslims, before the pandemic. Practicing one's faith alone is difficult when someone is out of his/her comfort zone; having a network of solidarity can help in the strengthening of belief. Using a mosque not only as a centre of faith but also as a meeting point for social interaction shows that being Muslim is communal and involves much more than symbolic solidarity. Although interviewees relied on sympathy from their family/friends as a pillar for their recovery (from the pandemic situation), most also underlined that the improvement of their situation could not have been possible without the intense solidarity action, professionals' network and volunteers' contributions (Virginia et al., 2019).

Based on the POD map[28] obtained from 11 participants, which are part of the community group of IMSAL, various types of solidarity relationships appeared,

[28] Pod Mapping (Originally developed by Mia Mingus for the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective in Oakland, US) will be used to understand how communities are spatially re-organizing themselves. Through this method, the study attempts to unravel the potential

such as family, neighbourhood, extra neighbourhood, friends, and, most importantly, Sadaqah relations. These solidarity relationships have a complex and collaborative character whereby shopping, delivering food and medicine, as well as providing companionship for the needy, is at the core of its work during the pandemic.

IMSAL made an incremental change in its approach by joining the online platforms for people living outside of Leuven, including those who were isolating themselves from social media. Consistent facilitation from the members of IMSAL for online activities made it suitable for the ones found far away and for those in 'silent mode.' Hence, the transformation of religious practices made it possible for all international students and the wide range of Muslims found in the city to join the action as both givers and patrons.



supporting system embedded in selected community practices in this time of the pandemic, show the spatiality of solidarity actions.

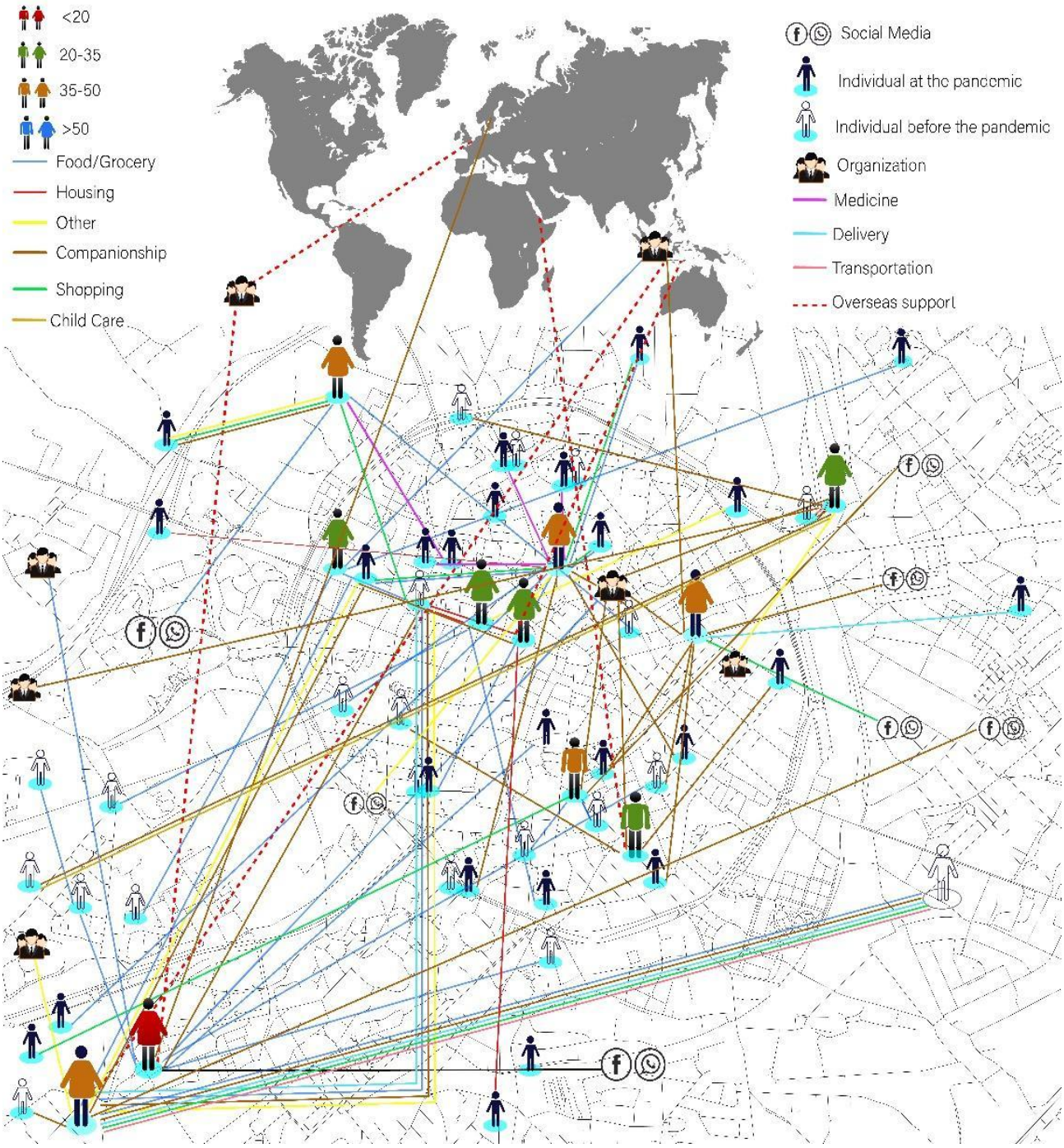


Figure 13 Complex Network map of solidarity relation (extracted from the collected POD Maps by Authors, 2020) (2)

What Next?

Research into community-based psychology has emphasised solidarity for its transformative potential to promote social change within vulnerable groups (Nelson and Evans, 2014). Solidarity has not been discussed as the focus of a

great deal of research by geographers or planners. It is firmly placed within debates on care and responsibility rather than as a geographical concept that tries to understand socio-spatial dimensions. This workaround of the idea of solidarity asserts itself, as Herod (1995) defines it, as 'a practice fundamentally concerned with overcoming geographic barriers to unified action by workers.' IMSAL's actions have practically revealed the spatial dimensions of solidarity and the distribution of networks by reforming the Muslim community located physically in Leuven and virtually in the rest of the world.

As the infographic map reveals, the complex network of virtual and on-ground solidarity actions is happening in the physical space but emphasises a need of reformation of practice. Diversity of community plays a vital role in the capacity of a community to reform itself to overcome challenges like social distancing. It also highlights that the spirit of community solidarity emerges from the power of Muslim's belief—practising sadaqah gives them, not only needy people, enormous benefits. This belief has become a base for the continuity of solidarity action beyond the hardship of crisis.

Regardless of the difficulties and conflicts, mutual ties on a community level through solidarity practices can be a foundation to convince people of the possibility of a more transformative political and economic change. By making it visible to everyone that local community-based solidarity is capable of helping during such a crisis, people can build a solid foundation for the struggle for the commons and to (re)produce community capable of adjusting and confronting challenges. The power of this process lies in local-scale solidarity networks being co-constructed and having a solid base of shared values for guiding their actions.

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2.6 MOBILITY AND PUBLIC SPACES: RECLAIMING THE POWER AND APPEAL OF CITIES

(Juliet Njeri Ritta, Christine Muchiri Njuhi, Dora Bellamacina, Kammerhofer Arthur)

Examining Urban Mobility and Public Spaces in the Era of COVID-19

The spread of the novel Coronavirus over the world has resulted in unprecedented measures that have revolutionized urban mobility. The risk of contagion especially in the public transport sector has led to physical distancing, resulting in it running on reduced capacity in many countries, as well as to a shift to the use of private cars and non-motorized modes of transport such as cycling and walking. The pandemic has made us more aware of the fact that existing space in cities is limited and shared unequally. In developed countries, the street has been a power struggle amongst the car, public transport, and non-motorized means of transport. In Africa, while the majority of people walk, the cities have continued to invest in major road infrastructure with little investment for pedestrian and cycling paths. In the wake of the pandemic, many city streets are being converted to open public spaces and to more non-motorized street spaces for residents. In the case of Oakland for example, 10% of the streets have been opened to people for walking and biking while in Bogota, 75 km of temporary bike lanes have been created (the Guardian, 10th April 2020).

In some instances, physical distancing measures may negatively affect the well-being and health status of the people due to the social isolation and limited activity (Johas, 2020). There also exist inequalities and exclusion in the use of public spaces in cities especially for persons with disabilities, and those on low income. As people remain mostly at home, the need for leisure and sports activities has increased, making it crucial to provide this service near the home while not compromising the health of the users. It will be interesting to see whether the residents will look at these spaces with caution and fear of contagion in the near future.

To examine how mobility and public spaces have been affected by measures taken to combat COVID-19, this entry looks at the community's resilience in the face of disaster and crisis. We borrow from the Resilience Theory that argues that it is not the nature of adversity that is most important, but how we deal with it and how we address a community's capacity to adapt and return to a stable state in the wake of major disruptions (Agder et al., 2005). Two distinct approaches in understanding the community resilience will be used: a social-ecological approach and a psychology perspective (Fikret Berkes et al., 2013). In the entry, we use secondary data from internet sources, group discussions,

illustrations, and compilations of photos from Italy, Belgium, and Austria as the main tools for analysing and presenting our work.

Mobility and Public Space Back Then

Urban mobility plays a vital role in cities globally. In Europe, the focus was on how to provide 'clean' mobility for the 60% of the total population that lives in urban areas (EU, 2011). "Clean," in the era before Covid-19, entailed the reduction of carbon emissions (since public health was not a concern then). In Africa, the focus was on developing organized means of public transport to reduce the overcrowding and traffic congestion in most cities.

Public spaces, as places where people connect and interact, form the stage and backdrop to the drama of life in cities. In the 19th century, Frederick Law Olmsted (America's first landscape designer) already postulated the notion of parks as transformative places essential to reinvigorating bodily and mental health. Prior to the pandemic, these spaces were used freely and with no restrictions to the residents in most developed cities, offering an opportunity for recreational activities and sports.

The New Dawn in the wake of COVID-19

While socialization and physical connection are the key characterizations of mobility and public spaces, containment of COVID-19 has required social distancing. This was recommended by scientists who observed close proximity and surface contacts as the main routes of transmission. To safeguard against contamination, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends keeping a physical distance of 1 meter. This has been adopted by governments across the globe with amendments varying from 1 to 2-meter distancing.



Figure 14 UK's social distancing demonstrated

Source: https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-52522460

COVID-19 Reality Check in Urban Mobility

Most countries have imposed travel restrictions and closed borders to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. The main restrictions across the globe that led to drastic changes in urban mobility include:

- Closure of educational institutions
- Shift of many sectors to work-from-home policy
- Closing of non-essential shops and service providers
- Prohibition of public events and gatherings
- Prohibition of non-essential movement from residence/homes.

Urban mobility is critical not only for the economy of cities but also to ensure the supply of essential goods and services. The specific instruments used to help in the containment of the COVID-19 disease in urban mobility include:

- Advocacy of the need to avoid or reduce travel
- Promotion of clean public transport (social distancing by reducing carrying capacity, cashless payments, and disinfecting the vehicles used)
- Promotion of cycling and walking, which has been supported by restricting the travel radius of residents
- Improvement of freight and good travel to ensure an uninterrupted supply of essential goods

Mobility Changes – Cases in Europe and Africa

In Europe, lockdown measures to combat the spread of Coronavirus were enforced in most countries by mid-March 2020. According to Google's mobility report, travel demand reduced significantly (Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports, 2020). Trips to work decreased by 50%; while the number of people using public transport (train, tram and bus) decreased by up to 70% in April 2020 as shown in Figure 2.

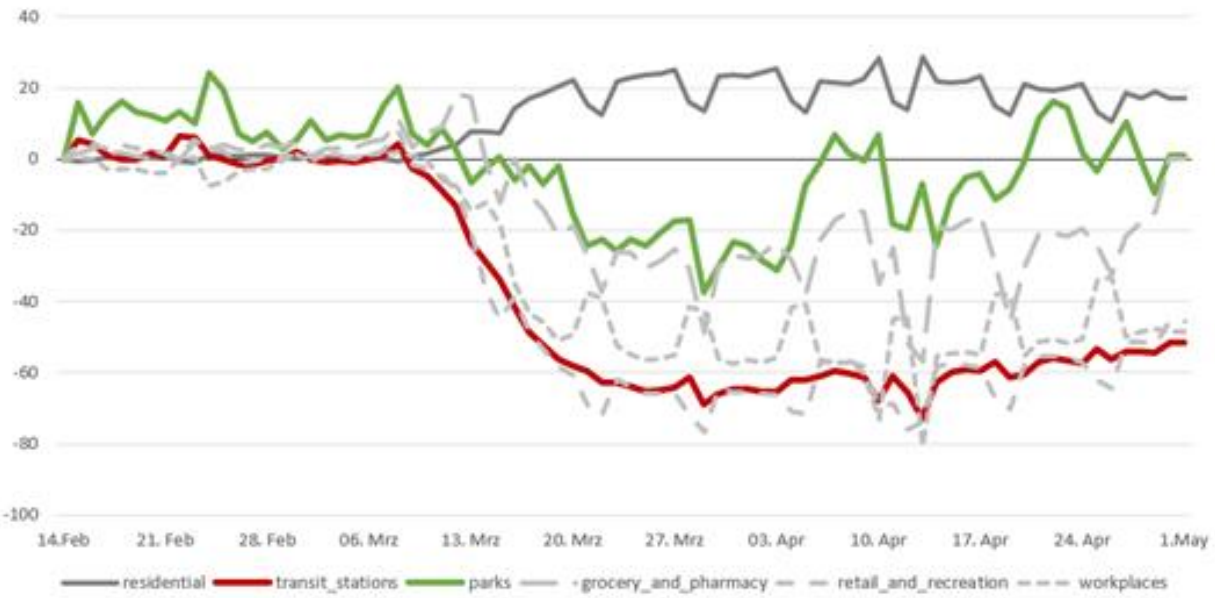


Figure 15 Frequencies of Travel in Europe

Source: Google LLC "Google COVID-19 Community Mobility Reports. https://www.google.com/covid19/mobility/ Accessed: <4th May 2020>

Public transport systems in Africa are often crammed and operated by profit-driven private operators. Efforts have been made to provide sanitation facilities to sanitize the travellers as well as to reduce the operating capacity. The need for pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure is urgent in many African cities such as Nairobi, Kampala, and Addis Ababa.

Right Column: Public space in cities today is limited and shared unequally. For example, in Vienna, 67% of the street space is reserved for motorized traffic, although its share in the modal split is only 25%. In contrast, cycling has a share of 7% but only 1% of the street space is reserved for bike lanes (Source: https://platzfuer.wien/)



Figure 16 On-going Pedestrian Footpaths construction in Nairobi, Kenya

Source: Nairobi Metropolitan Services (@NMS_Kenya), accessed on 26th May 2020

> "The two most obvious things that this pandemic has revealed in the little details of city living are sidewalk widths and balcony depth," Toderian says.
>
> Source: https://www.citylab.com/life/2020/04/apartment-design-balcony-private-outdoor-space-zoning-laws/610162/

COVID-19 Reality Check in Public Spaces

In order to mitigate or suppress the virus, most governments enforced movement restrictions, requiring residents to stay at home except for essential tasks or to work in essential businesses. While the stay-at-home orders increased the human need to utilize urban open spaces for recreation and mental rejuvenation, they also triggered a deficiency in their use and access. Firstly, this is the result of government directives limiting the access and use of public spaces (seats in public streets and parks not to be used for longer than 5 minutes, and only for the elderly and for pregnant women; penalties and fines are imposed on law breakers).



Figure 17 Notice restricting seating on public benches in Leuven, Belgium

Source: Authors, 2020

Literal translation

"Bench temporarily out of use. Only pregnant women and elderly people with a handicap are allowed to take a rest here.

We hope you will respect this measure. This way, you will help slowing down the spread of the virus."

Secondly, most cities have experienced years of budget cuts for the planning, designing, and maintenance of parks over the years—thus jeopardizing their quality and adequacy.

Furthermore, access to public spaces was already significantly and unjustly restricted for many people before the Coronavirus pandemic. People on low income were already excluded from quasi-public and commercial public spaces like cafes and shopping malls. Those unable to climb stairs have no access to basic public infrastructure such as train stations that lack lifts or ramp access. Current restrictions could intensify the existing inequalities in access since disasters tend to intensify whatever inequity is already there.

Authorities have imposed significant restrictions on the size, purpose, and location of gatherings in public space to slow the transmission of COVID-19. Restrictions on public space have greater impacts on people who have less access to private space. People without stable homes, and those with restricted access to domestic space, tend to live more of their lives in public spaces. Urban dwellers are currently experiencing inconvenience and frustration of limited access to urban open spaces.

The restrictions are paired with instructions to stay at home. While it is inconvenient for some, it is impossible for others. For instance, students may be living in crowded conditions in shared, family, or informal accommodation, with no access to quiet private space for study. Also, children have been hard hit by the Corona measures. While most parks remain open, playgrounds have almost universally been shut. According to a recent survey by the US National Recreation and Parks Association (O'Neill, 2020), 91% of playgrounds are closed. These closures—while necessary for public health—have underscored just how important playing areas are, for kids especially, but also for communities at large.

The new reality is that urban mobility needs to be rethought, especially in the wake of enhanced public health. The greatest realization is that urban space remains limited, and we need to make provisions for safer infrastructure. Observing the recommended social distances for cyclists and pedestrians in cities is proving rather difficult; yet, this means of transport is preferred not only to limit the risk of contagion but also to enable residents to keep safe and strengthen their immune system.

A stronger promotion of cycling and walking seems logical as an alternative to public transport, which might be considered contagious, or to motorized transport. While distancing is essential in pandemic times, it is difficult for everybody to keep the recommended physical distance while walking and biking when there is not enough space. For example, in Vienna, 38% of all sidewalks are smaller than 2 meters (Platz für Wien 2020). To enlarge and widen the infrastructure seems logical but is not always feasible due to limited space. Therefore, the fast creation of a better walking and cycling infrastructure is only possible through a new division of the existing public space. There are several temporary actions city authorities have taken to promote walking and biking in Corona times such as pop-up bike lanes, closed streets, shared space, free bike-sharing, and automated crossing at intersections.

Pop-up-bike lanes are new bike lanes or the broadening of existing bike lanes that replace a car lane. They can be quickly created through road markings, cones, and reflector posts. Usually, they are implemented on roads with more than one lane per direction and as such, cars and trucks can use the remaining lanes. Already by March 2020 the Columbian capital Bogota had created the first pop-up-bike lanes. This temporary network reached 117 km within a short period of time. Many other cities like Berlin, Mexico City, Paris, Budapest, Calgary, Minneapolis, Vancouver, and Vienna followed suit (Citylab 2020). The transport administration board of Berlin even published guidelines for Temporary Cycle Lanes and the Expansion of Cycle Facilities to encourage emulation in other cities (Senat Berlin 2020).

In April, Vienna started to declare several km of narrow streets as temporary shared space. Consequently, the speed of cars was limited at 20 km/h and pedestrians are now allowed to walk on the road. In May, the city authorities also established two short sections of temporary bike lanes along heavy frequented roads. In comparison with the temporary biking network of Bogota with 117km, the network in Vienna seems insufficient. Therefore, the new citizen movement "Platz für Wien," formed during the Coronavirus outbreak, fighting specifically for better walking and cycling infrastructure and more space on the streets for leisure and sports.

Long-Term Effects: Cities often want to expand their cycling infrastructure and have the plans for it ready, but the implementation is usually delayed because of technical or political obstacles. The Corona pandemic now provides a positive momentum for long-term change by transferring the pop-up-bike lanes into permanent ones. As motorized traffic is already slowly rising, the window for a drastic redesign of our streets is closing again. Big disruptions in mobility services like the London Tube strike (Centre Piece Autumn 2015) in 2014, which caused a significant shift towards biking, showed that they have the potential to change the travel pattern of people in the long run.



Figure 18 Examples of temporary shared space zones / pop-up bike-lane

Source: Authors, 2020

Public Space's Quarantine Experience

Cities across the globe have taken short-term measures to ensure the usability of public spaces in the wake of COVID-19. These measures aim to ensure that individuals continue to enjoy greater well being for psychic and physical benefits accorded by the use of greenery and other public spaces in the short term.

In Milan (Italy), the government moved from absolute lockdown and re-opened public spaces with a sort of 'natural' shift. Its operationalization entailed the use of public spaces for a variety of activities such as the functioning of schoolyards for sport and recreation activities. Secondly, different age groups could be allowed to access public spaces at designated timings. Citizens have realized that the utilization of urban green spaces in their neighbourhoods and staggering the use of public spaces prevents overcrowding, which has been a concern in the past. The City's administrators have enforced public health measures to facilitate the safe use of public spaces including among others: the provision of regularly disinfected public toilets, hand sanitizer dispensers, the use of technology for flow control, and the enforcement of user timings.

In Tel Aviv (Israel), the municipality quickly moved from a total ban on the use of public spaces to restricted use within a 100m radius and use by family members or groups of not more than two persons while observing social distancing

measures. The City has an elaborate security system consisting of cameras, emergency call buttons, a public address system, and panic buttons in public spaces. Technology and real time GIS mapping have been used in the pandemic period to monitor the traffic of people in public spaces as well as monitor the situation of vulnerable populations. GIS mapping gives residents information about the demarcation of outdoor movement allowed within their neighbourhoods ensuring residents enjoy outdoor activities while avoiding overcrowding in popular public spaces. The system is supported by free Wi-Fi coverage through the city.



Figure 19 Resident using rooftop in Tel Aviv to play music to the neighbours

Source: https://covidnews.eurocities.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Tel-Aviv-overview.pdf

Across the globe, there have been experiments such as the superblocks in Barcelona and London, the 20-Minute neighbourhoods in Portland, and La Ville du quart d'heure in Paris, that aim at implementing circular models that ensure easy and convenient access to places and daily services. This is relevant during the pandemic times when the use of public and private transport is limited. Such models support sustainable urban development goals by fighting pollution while ensuring that the city is enjoyed by citizens on foot and that other 'soft' non-motorized mobility is possible. The experiments have equally aimed at promoting social equity and economic development while facilitating trade within home proximity.

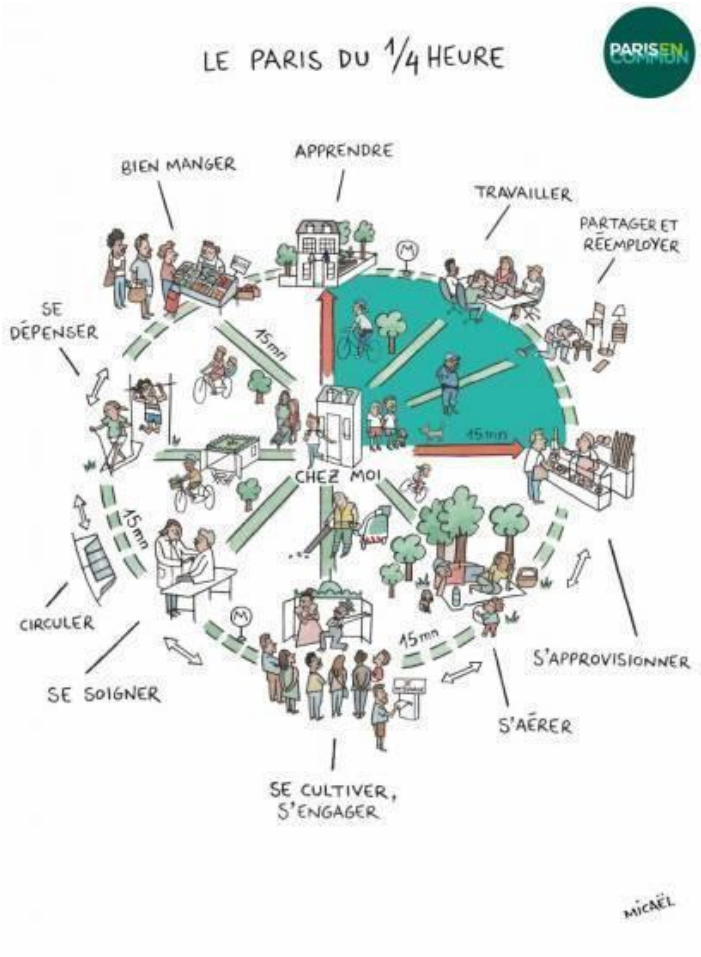


Figure 20 The 15-Minute Access Neighbourhood in Paris

Source: https://annehidalgo2020.com/thematique/ville-du-1-4h/

The scenario that has been configured can also be interpreted as the appropriate occasion for the redevelopment of public spaces. Rethinking the common areas of the city through individual neighbourhoods would lead to the redevelopment of squares, streets, and intersections. The rediscovery of obsolete gardens and badly used spaces would become the engine of transformation in the city through the installation of new collective services.

Drawing the Post COVID-19 City

Humans are social beings with complex social structures. Social distancing is an unnatural behaviour. It is paramount that re-emergence from lockdown measures do not compromise the containment gains and be people centred. Strategies adopted to bounce back must focus on self-organization of communities to develop innovative interventions.

We look at some proposals inspired by the building back better (BBB) approach to ensure that cities re-emerge from this pandemic better than they were before

it. While BBB has mostly been applied in disaster recovery the same can be applied to re-drawing our cities post COVID-19 with collective action involving the communities. The approach will be based on the model illustrated in BBB models.

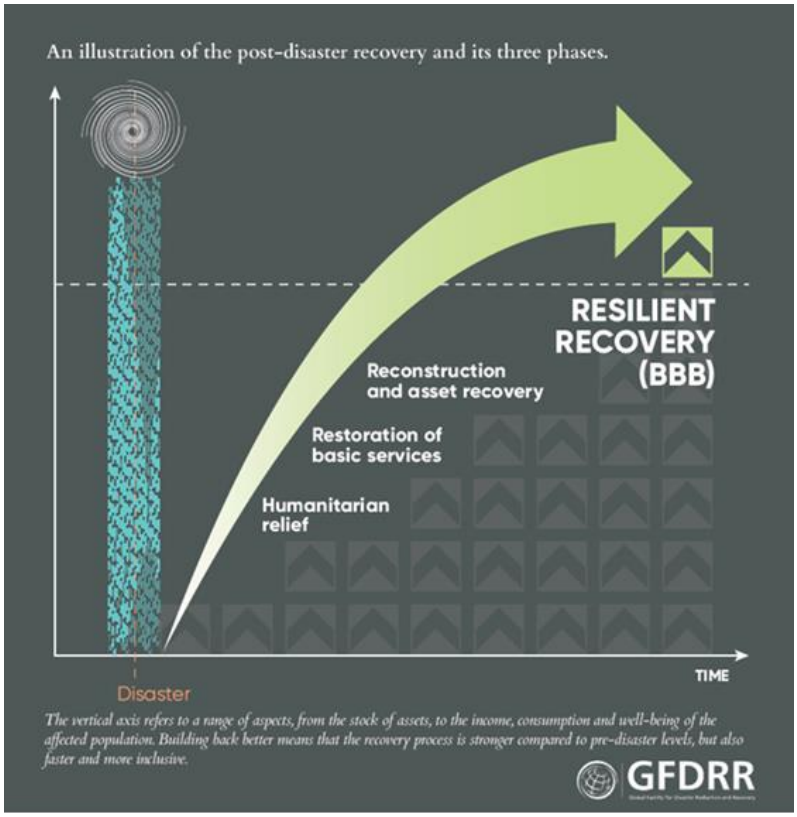


Figure 21 Building Back Better (BBB) Model

Source: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2018/06/18/building-back-better-how-to-cut-natural-disaster-losses-by-a-third, accessed 20th May 2020.

We propose self-organization of communities to develop innovative interventions in the use of public spaces and mobility; provision of heterogeneous public spaces at neighbourhood level; scaled down investment in big infrastructure investment to focus more on people-driven mobility such as walking and cycling in cities; the use of ICT infrastructure and work at home policies to reduce the need to travel and hence aid in efforts towards carbon emission. See Figure Long term proposal below.

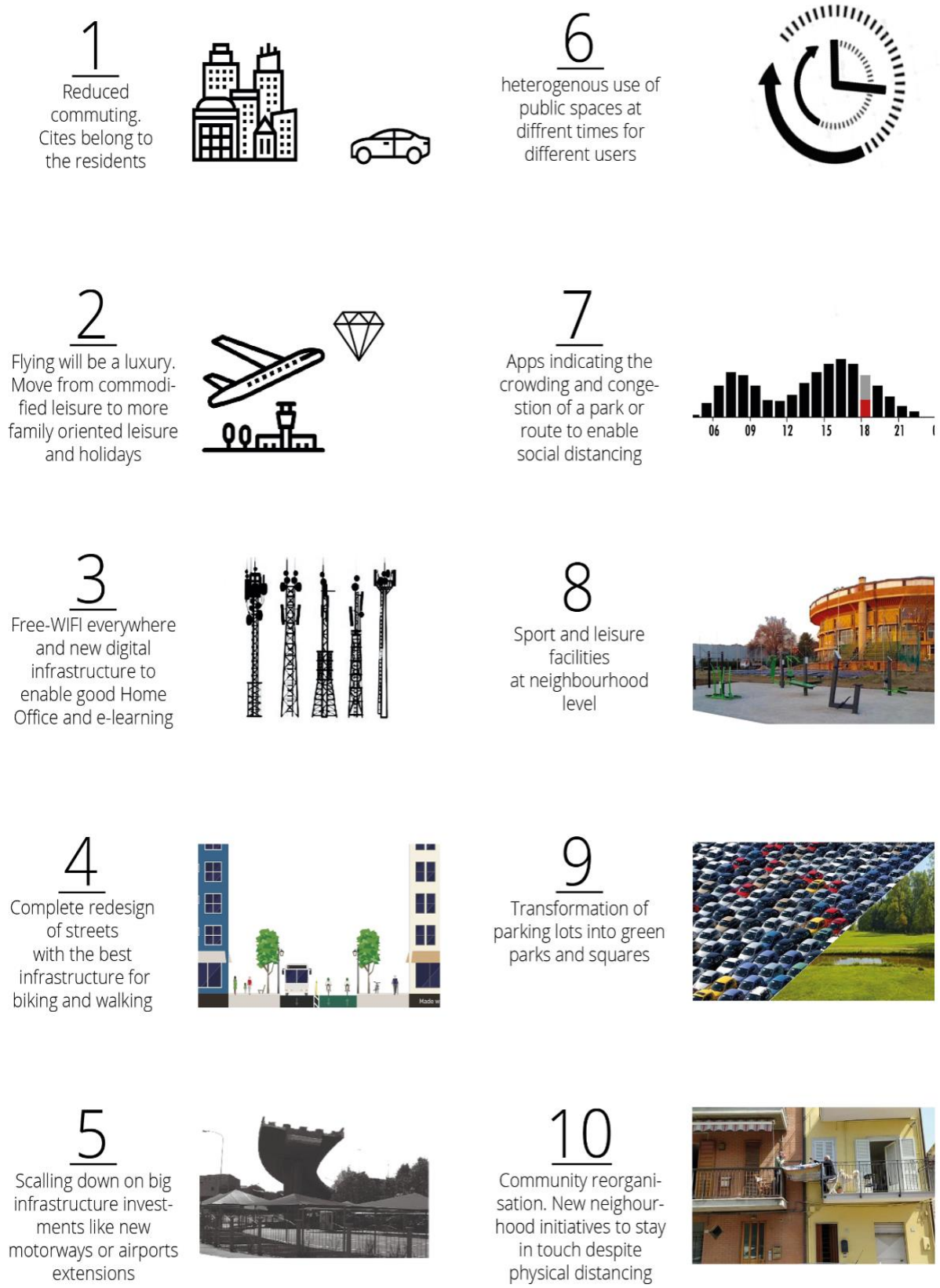


Figure 22 Long-term proposals for More Appealing Urban Mobility and Public Spaces (Source: Authors, 2020)

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Figure 8 sources: flaticon.com; adobestock.com; streetmix.net; https://www.goodthingsguy.com/environment/foreshore-freeway-precinct/ :googlemaps.com ; https://www.sorrentovibes.com/coronavirus-italy-daily-updates/and personal drawing

2.7 THE FEELING OF TRUST

(Ninelia Markarian, Sonia Mollica, Abdellatif Atif, Farzana Yasmin)

Body and soul in pandemic times

It all started with a virus and a slogan; "Stay at home". Aside from being encouraged by many, this was put into power with legal backup by the governments to eliminate our movements and ensure physical distancing and eventually securing the public health (Gostin & Wiley, 2020). It was a necessary act toward keeping our bodies safe, which evoked a higher attention to our psychosocial conditions. Anxiety, stress, stigma and distrust developed during the pandemic, have met attempts to replace these by compassion, help, building reliant knowledge on the problem, storytelling and honouring the frontline healthcare workers (WHO, 2020).

Despite the decreasing numbers of COVID-19 cases, the behavioural changes take an opposite trend. "Perceived lack of consistency, competence, fairness, objectivity, empathy, or sincerity in crisis response in the public could lead to distrust and fear", showing a vivid trace of disrupted comfort and trust. This is highly entangled not only with channels surrounding us such as the news and communication but also to the inside, our spirit. Both shape our perception over risk and direct our behaviours, which is crucial information if a certain behaviour change is expected (Betsch, Wieler, & Habersaat, 2020).

Such an inside-out relationship that is initially generated from a disease, triggers questions regarding physical, emotional and collective feelings of comfort and trust. How does the COVID-19 pandemic make us feel? How does it affect our emotions and how do we respond to them? And how are trust and comfort produced in this situation? Following a quick monitoring on behavioural changes or innovations during the pandemic, this paper approaches these questions by looking at three different and intertwined spheres: individual, communal and institutional. The three spheres bring to themselves different responses on an emotional and behavioural level, differentiating the perceptual function of each of us through mechanisms of thought.

It further makes use of a general questionnaire in Pakistan, organized by the authors, to illustrate some findings with quotes in the upcoming sections.

The imposed restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has put many in a stronger state of stress and disruption. These emotions were not only due to the obligation to stay at home but "fear and panic, anxiety and stress also emerged because of financial concerns, frustration and boredom, loneliness, lack of supplies and poor communication" (Usher, Bhullar, & Jackson, 2020). Humans are "programmed" to process events disturbing their lives, which are more or less clearly defined having a beginning and an end, and which, after the stress is over, allow to return to a psychophysical homeostasis. However, when stress is continuous or has an unknown end or when the stressful event requires facing social strategies that go beyond personal physical and emotional resources, the information processing is likely to "yield", damaging our system that is capable of dealing with harmful events. The consequence could be that people are emotionally activated even in circumstances which, in themselves, do not present a real danger but which, in some way, recall the traumatic experience (Fossati, 2020).

"…. we acknowledge that this uncertainty is stressful. And in fact, this anxiety is appropriate under the circumstances. This is a normal reaction to our new normal" Professor Roxane Cohen Silver Ph.D., Professor of Psychological Science, Medicine, and Public Health at UC" (SciLine, 2020)

But why do we experience such emotions that become a driver to our behaviors? It all has to do with the origins of these experiences, the mind that is entitled to our spirituality. This is where our experiences are given meaning and behaviors are originated from it. In the same way anxiety and discomfort originate in times of pandemics. When people express themselves as they "cannot stand social distancing" or they misread anxiety symptoms or breathing problems as corona symptoms, it has to do with this generated meaning. This understanding also sheds light on the fact that "the brain is not the mind" but their intertwined relationship represents itself as we seek activities to soothe our spirit such as "listen to music, read poems, sing, practice mindfulness and meditation, pray, watch live church services online" (Esperandio, 2020).

Anxiety causes a sick spirit. When the mind is sick, we are unable to cope which puts us in a resisting stand toward "living in this world of new habits" (Esperandio, 2020). This is why numerous initiatives have been promoted at national and international level in order to help the population to restore their mental and physical well-being during the pandemics. Nowadays, by just opening a newspaper, zapping on TV or simply connecting to the internet, you will find one or more references, such as CNBN (Olick, 2020) or the well-known wellness magazine Men's Health (Freedman, 2020), to psychophysical training, to improve the connection between mind and body. "The world needs yoga, now more than ever" was a slogan not only promoted by yoga teachers whose

career was highly affected by the lockdown (Caputo, 2020) but also by institutions such as WHO to keep the body active (WHO, 2020).

Disruptions and psychological impacts of the disease were a proof that this pandemic was not necessarily limited to the body. But this does not proof that disruptions cannot become physical. The complex emotions, also connected with misinformation spread by social media, are an alert to not only watch psychological but also physical health. They brought up feelings of fear and prejudice which have been the reason to implement incorrect practices toward staying away from the virus (Somma, et al., 2020). It is essential to understand that todays' status is also an "info-demic (or disinfo-demic)," and it is our responsibility to care about our loved ones but not via sharing information the credibility of which is not possible to proof (Llewellyn, 2020).

Not everyone puts psycho-physical side effects in priority; "Yes, I am losing my income and I am deeply concerned how to buy food next week" (A respondent from Pakistan)

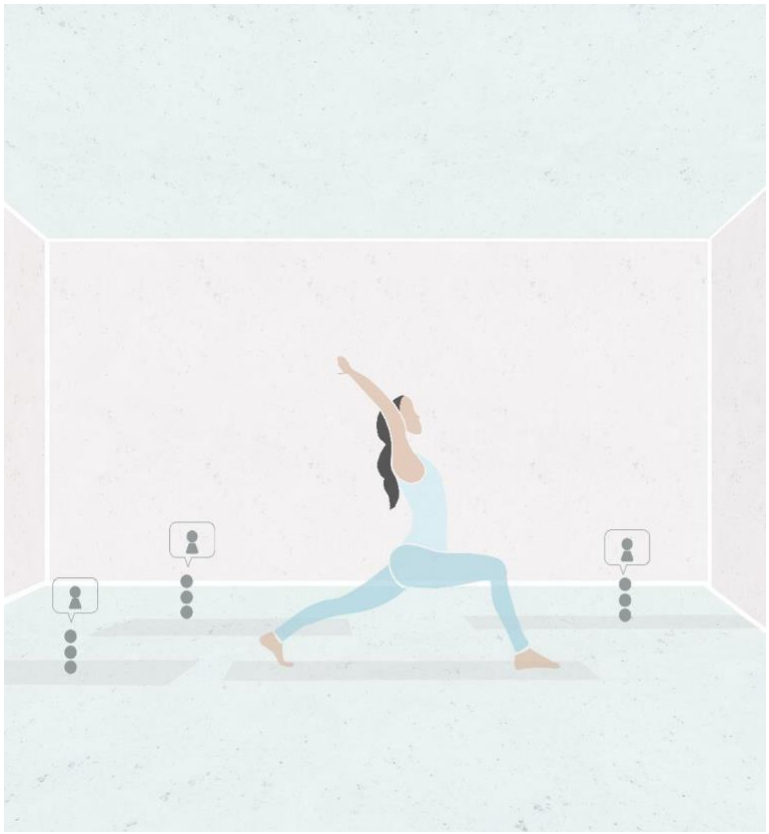


Figure 23 The entanglement of the physical and the spiritual (Illustration by Author, 2020)

The response of spirituality and faith

The association of our anxiousness and unsafe feelings with our behaviours is reflected not only personally but also collectively. In difficult times the need for

social support becomes crucial, the "sense of connection" involves the main instinct of the human being which, a cause of the quarantine measures, is hopelessly missing, modifying the way in which people act and react. (Usher, Bhullar, & Jackson, 2020).

As mitigating behaviour "humans have a tendency to turn to religion for comfort and explanation". During the COVID-19 pandemic this was notable in Google searches for prayers increasing with 50% or the high number of searches for "Coronavirus Prayer". This number was suggested as a proof of "religious coping" theory, index of increase in religious beliefs as a consequence of cognitive and behavioural activities aimed at managing internal/external stimuli perceived as stressful respect to the person's resources. (Bentzen, 2020).
The way (new) believers have tackled the matter of fear and comfort by themselves does not dismiss the role of religious communities and their services. Active attendance to religious services has been investigated as reasons for improved "mental health" and "social relationships", developing "life satisfaction" and "sense of meaning" as mechanism creating such results. Moreover, the communal element in practicing religion has been evaluated more effective in generating health and well-being: "attending religious services at least weekly is associated with 25% to 35% reduced mortality over 10 to 15 years". However, religious communities also have negative effects, if their attendance does not originate from a personal willingness or freedom, or when associated to a history of child sexual abuses or terrorism (VanderWeele, 2017). Regardless of the positive and negative effect of religion, it cannot be denied that it is a powerful institution that has managed to mobilize resources for its acts and have an impact on a broader scale by communicating its worldview. This means that the predefined status of religion in a system of politics, economy, and society can alter the amount of power and influence (Sherkat, 2015). This also puts religion in a critical position in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, as a driver for its followers, especially when its most important and effective essence of work, collectiveness, is triggered. Relying on spirituality to solve the unwanted spiritual disturbance is a solution (Post, Puchalski, & Larson, 2000), but if not adjusted well can reverse the expected outcome. For example, religious cities as hosts of tourists and pilgrims and manifesting stage (Arab-Mazar, Sah, Rabaan, Dhama, & Rodriguez-Morales, 2020) were hit by COVID-19 measures as they were introduced as the hub for the transmission of the virus (Che Mat, Edinur, Abdul Razab, & Safuan, 2020).

"It is pity that our neighbours, friends and relatives cannot see us anymore, even the social gathering like wedding ceremonies, iftar parties and celebration of Eid with family members is not possible". (A respondent from Pakistan)

This status brought up the matter of justification and acknowledgement which is not a new topic. A good practice of a religious movement and justification of the problem is the AIDS and HIV pandemic and the way it was addressed by the archbishop of the roman catholic church in Namibia when he announced in public that "AIDS is a disease, not a sin". This was an act of solidarity to move from judgment to prevention and tackling the pandemic (Steinitz, 2006). Such collision of practice and ideology and leadership is also seen during the COVID-19 pandemic when stated that "praying is not enough" (Dalai Lama, 2020). Another good example is the suspension of Hajj 2020 aiming at becoming a pioneer of a great "contribution to the safety of humanity", saying that Islam mandates that the sanctity of human life be placed above all other rights including the right of God to demand worship by mankind" (Ahmed & Memish, 2020). Some, on the other hand, show a position of resistance with some adjustment as the faith is the priority (AsiaNews.it, 2020) and some seek for innovative methods like the "drive-thru mosque" (Middle East Monitor, 2020). This is the dual spirit of faith and lockdowns.

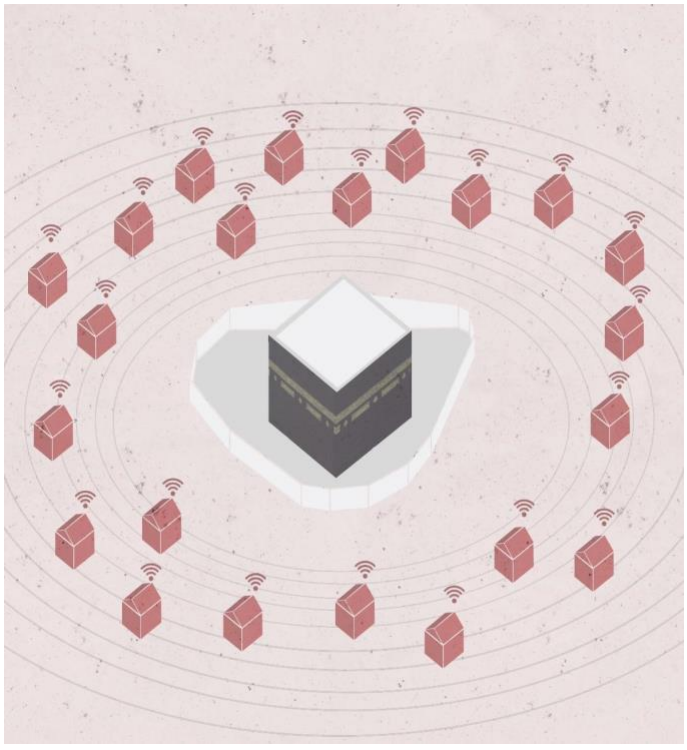


Figure 24 The dual spirit of faith and lockdowns (Illustration by Authors, 2020)

The social construction of trust

"Depriving people of their liberty for the wider public good, while representing an effective life-saving measure, is often fraught and needs to be handled carefully" (Somma, et al., 2020). Coupled with the unknown essence of the virus and its wide side effect affected everyone, including frontiers, healthcare systems and governments. This resonated in existing challenges, including for

example overpopulation, air pollution (Ciencewicki & Jaspers, 2007) (Cui, et al., 2003) and obesity (Fuller, et al., 2017), which can all indicate the incompetence of existing institutions and bringing up feelings of distrust. Notions of fear and health go beyond individual action and enter the domain of policies that realize unequal treatments based on factors such as race, civic and financial status, etc. (Cox, 2007). Institutional factors such as healthcare and government are crucial in creating either relief or fear and distrust for the members of society (Berger, Evans, Phelan, & Silverman, 2020).

For example, in the United States the history of public health is controversial, in fact, from the beginning there has been resistance to having a public health system. Garrett, however, explains that "organized medicine in this country has never been a great ally of public health" (Garrett, 2003).

At the same time, a public health system represents the right network through which to manage various emergencies including pandemics and other common diseases in the population, such as obesity. Based on data in 2019, obesity was announced as a real non-communicable epidemic, affecting almost 1.4 billion adults in the world, or 35% of the entire global population. This leads to a huge increase in costs for the healthcare systems, estimated to reach 760 billion dollars by 2025. The high possible psychological side effect of obesity also adds up to this problem, now culminating in the classification of obese people as vulnerable (Fuller, et al., 2017) and a high-risk group (Jordan, Adab, & Cheng, 2020).

As shown in the past (Berger, Evans, Phelan, & Silverman, 2020) and also now with the COVID-19 pandemic, inclusiveness helps healthcare systems to build trust in the society, by showing commitment to serve inclusively the vulnerable and those "without adequate access to health services". A good example is the way Singapore treated not only its own citizens but also people from abroad (Legido-Quigley, et al., 2020). The virus is not spread with a discriminating intension and everyone can be infected (WHO, 2020). This emphasizes the importance of trust-building strategies (Berger, Evans, Phelan, & Silverman, 2020) decreasing fear and stigma and eliminating the discrimination that was generated during the pandemic (Ren, Gao, & Chen, 2020).

"Soon we will be normal like before, once it will be over"

"depends upon the arrival of vaccine, it will take time to come back to normal like before, but precautions will always remain there" (A respondent from Pakistan)

Another lesson that can be learned from successful healthcare systems is transparency (Legido-Quigley, et al., 2020). "The closer we are to the truth, the farther we are from fear or panic", is a statement toward eliminating stigma and discrimination that was widely seen during the pandemic. Or as still argued in

chapter 2.8 of the Cahier 4 "in other words, we have a reality in which, as Hannah Arendt (1978) illustrates, 'nobody believes anything any longer', or in which one believes everything one hears since there are no shared objective standards of what constitutes the truth (Illing, 2018; Rorty, 1979)." As such, the transparency of the news became a subject of questioning (Ren, Gao, & Chen, 2020) as people started following the numbers of infections and comparing countries.



Figure 25 The social construction of trust (Illustration by Authors, 2020)

On the other side of the story comes the trust within the system. Healthcare workers were exempted from the "stay at home" campaign. The frontline experienced not only the discomfort discussed above but also an extra amount of it which in turn brought a unique kind of feeling distrust. Shortage in "personal protective equipment (PPE)" was the main concern of healthcare workers, questioning the government as the provider (The Lancet, 2020).

The tense dialogue between the healthcare organizing body and the workers is not novel. The ignorance they experience when the topic of mental health is brought up by healthcare workers to the organizers is a proof of an existing malfunction. This demand is usually waived by the organizers as they justify

"Resilience" as a most-have quality for the workers to "let organizations off the hook". The pandemic showed that such mentality cannot work (Maben & Bridges, 2020). Further, the shortage of supplies put both the healthcare system and the patients in the same position of fear and distrust (BMJ, 2020). This pushed healthcare workers to declare their rights and change the viewpoint of the government toward them. "It is vital that governments see workers not simply as pawns to be deployed, but as human individuals" and their "most valuable resource" (The Lancet, 2020).

Conclusion

A new virus triggered a new temporary lifestyle which brought new awareness, new motivations and changes into our lives, touching upon personal work, hobbies and self-care but also higher levels of authority. Management and remote working struggles to survive and to pass this phase, whether ill in the hospital or well at home, will become challenges for the future. But beyond all the daily in and outs, what remains is the need of reunion with ourselves, our body and soul, but connected within communities and society.

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2.8 TRAVELING VIRUS AND MIGRATING PEOPLE

(Vidya Spay, Joan Nyagwalla Otieno, Martina Bocci)

INTRODUCTION: THE TRAVELING VIRUS

The outbreak of COVID-19 was first reported in Wuhan, Hubei province in China in December 2019 following reports on several deaths as a result of a new infectious respiratory disease. At the time, the potential impact of the disease on the rest of the world was not clear. Fast forward to May 24th, 2020: 5.3 million confirmed cases worldwide, 2.1 million recovered cases, and 342,000 deaths as the world now grapples with a pandemic termed as the worst challenge humankind has had to deal with since the Second World War (Chakraborty & Maity, 2020).

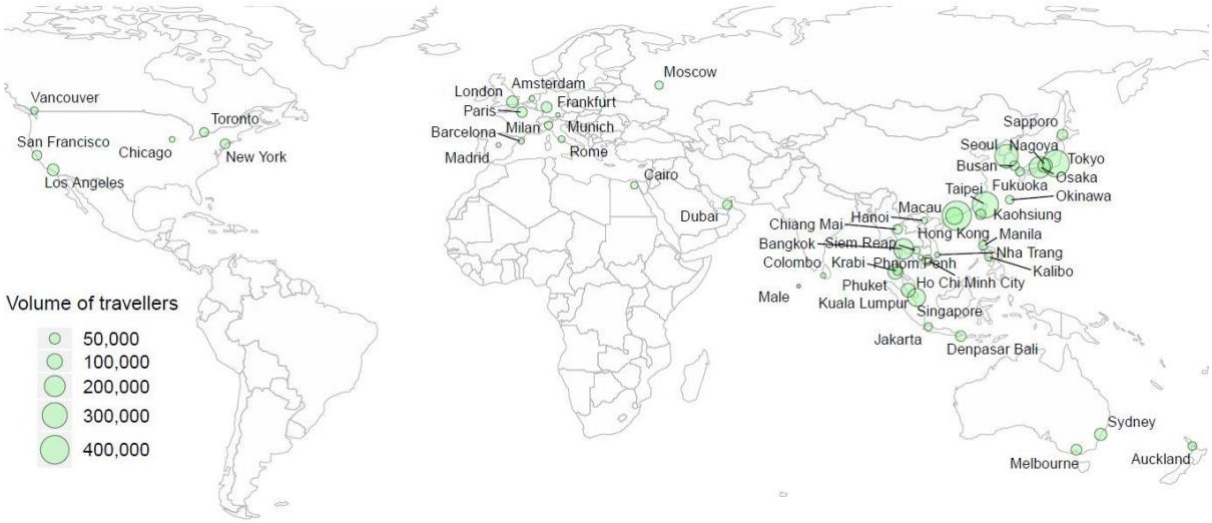


Figure 26 'Assessing spread risk of Wuhan novel coronavirus within and beyond China, January-April 2020: a travel network-based modelling study' with Chinese CDC and Bluedot

Source: https://twitter.com/WorldPopProject/

Today, the virus has spread to the farthest reaches of the world, affecting both urban centres and rural areas. The increasing spread of the virus has resulted in strict regulations and restriction on movement of people and goods within regions, nations, and internationally. This has significantly impacted the ability of individuals to work and associate, putting a strain in meeting daily obligations. This entry seeks to **investigate how a global community constantly on the move**

has been affected by the pandemic, with a focus on **urban and rural areas. Past studies have significantly favoured urban areas without exploring the interrelationships between the urban and rural.** We therefore also explore **the (in)balance between the urban and rural in basic service provision by scrutinizing the linkages and networks therein using space, territory, migration, and policy as a lens.**

The study makes use of secondary data obtained from articles and newspaper clippings and first-hand testimonials from contacts that gave us a peek into their situations. To best capture the human experiences, we relied on stories and online interactions using an interview schedule which guided discussions with people from different contexts: Indonesia, Peru, Chile, Japan, Italy, Kenya, and Ethiopia. The demographic was diverse to best understand the logic behind decisions made during the pandemic.

A people in transition: migrating people

The world's nations are working towards halting the spread of COVID-19 due to its impact on the entire human population. Countries have either taken partial or total lockdown measures such as: restricted movements for essential goods and services, bans on gatherings, closure of non-essential businesses and industries among others. While these measures have aided in combating the spread of the Coronavirus, they have equally resulted in the partial shutdown of the economy, leading to loss of jobs and reduced income. This situation has driven some people who have lost their source of income to migrate temporarily to rural areas and escape the trauma of living in the urban area with limited social life and no income to access basic services and goods.

Amidst the pandemic, Europe has been grappling with a migration crisis that began well before the virus. One of the first measures nation states introduced in the face of the crisis included the closure of borders which significantly impacted programs aimed at the reunification of families, voluntary return of immigrants to their home countries, and the relocation of unaccompanied minors. The estimated numbers of new migrants into the EU for the year 2020 by the United Nation Refugee Agency totalled 22,000 people with thousands stuck in transit (European Economic and Social Committee, 2020). With this, new concerns related to public health were introduced to the migration conversation. The pandemic has significantly influenced discussions related to mobility and migration and in some extreme cases has been used as a scapegoat in promoting populist narratives further elaborated in the post truth entry. This manifested in different ways across the globe. In Italy, Salvini blamed the spread of the virus on the African immigrant, whereas in Hungary Orban apportioned blame to the Iranian immigrants, while Trump termed the virus 'the

China Virus' (The Guardian, 2020; The Independent, 2020). In different African states, Europeans and Asians have been singled out and harassed.

Rural urban exodus

In a global world with people constantly in transition, what are the implications of the pandemic progressing—considering COVID-19 being aptly described as the 'symptom of globalization' that cannot be contained? One might think that this virus, potentially affecting all of us, represents a symmetrical crisis. But this is certainly not so, keeping in mind the difficulties experienced in rural and urban areas and especially in informal settlements such as favelas and slums. The response to containment of this virus is skewed. This crisis is asymmetric, and little is reported on the effects as experienced by rural communities. The conversations around the impacts of the pandemic on rural areas is subsumed both from public opinion/interests and the government's response (A. Guillen, personal communication, May 6th, 2020).

Another group that bears the brunt of the effects of the pandemic are the urban poor. In Peru, the 'Caminantes' (walkers) who consist of a significant number of the urban population find themselves living in cities below the poverty level. The Caminantes in Peru and others in different urban areas across the world are faced with the loss of work and income, putting at risk their ability to sustain their daily needs. This has spurred a wave of migration (as seen in the image below) of people opting to return to the countryside at all costs, to reach their villages, their families and their homes, spurring a significant reversal of the trend that has led to the depopulation of rural areas since the 1940s.



Figure 27 People in Peru walking from a city to the countryside

Source: https://gestion.pe/peru/coronavirus-peru-fabiola-munoz-tenemos-poco-mas-de-40-contagiados-de-covid-19-en-grupo-que-se-movilizo-por-la-carretera-central-nndc-noticia/

What is safer? Urban or rural

We carried out a survey to 40 respondents from 14 countries to assess the situation in different contexts and determine the well-being and perceived safety during the pandemic. Responding to the perceived safety of regions, only 57% of the survey respondents attributed safer environments to rural regions within their countries. The other 43% cited the inadequacy in service delivery in rural areas as a key concern despite the significantly lower densities within rural areas.

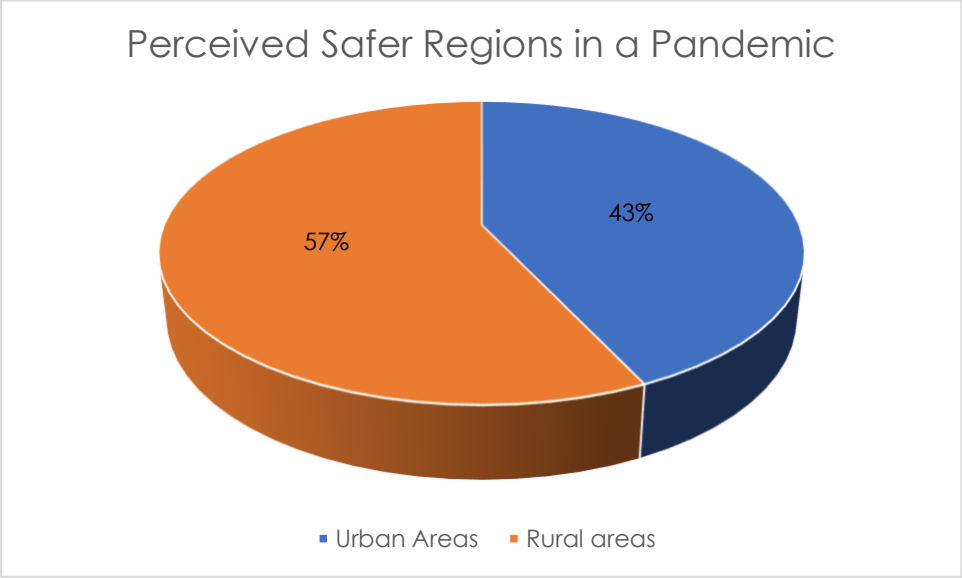


Figure 28 Diagram of Perception of Safety within regions during the pandemic from primary data

Source: Authors (2020)

The respondents also address the level of ease of movement within countries and regions. Whereas international movement is reported to have been adversely affected by the pandemic, there are different situations within countries as efforts are made to ease the lockdown allowing a certain level of movement depending on the stage of the spread of the virus. However, all respondents intimate that the worst affected were people who rely on public transport to commute.

The COVID-19 spread coincided with the Chinese New Year celebrations at the beginning of the year before the outbreak was officially declared a pandemic; with Easter, for Christians; the carnival; and Ramadan and Eid-al Fitr celebrations for the Muslims. These celebrations are often marked with significant movement between urban and rural areas. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the National Indonesian Government imposed travel restrictions prohibiting the exodus of

people from the urban to rural areas as well as across regions. Similar restrictions have also been reported in other parts of the world.



Figure 29 Service Advertisement in Indonesia for not going home during Ramadan and Eid-al Fitr

Source: Okezone.com

Urban rural nexus in a pandemic

BOX 1:

In the era of globalisation, when everything seems strongly connected and interdependent with each other, the lockdown will have a significant impact. On the one hand, the lockdown policy has cut several chains that have existed in an era of openness and globalization, and on the other hand it is increasingly important to establish several other relationships that are in line with policies in the pandemic era.

Urban-rural relationships vary significantly from one context to another and as a result are known to take different forms. The links between the urban and the rural are influenced by many factors including but not limited to: demography, dependency on production, cultural factors, technology, market forces etc. As a result of these relationships, the boundaries separating the urban and the rural have become less pertinent. This has been demonstrated by the level of porosity in the spread of the pandemic. There is a functional interdependence between the urban and the rural and mutual benefits can be obtained from better

urban-rural relations away from what Brenner (2018) refers to as the overgeneralized, acontextual concepts of "the" city without the appreciation of the context.

Urban areas offer opportunities from a social, cultural, and economic perspective while rural areas offer greater opportunities for recreation and access to locally produced food. They equally provide great opportunity for interaction but in the same breath offer what Haas (2020) refers to as "a fertile ground for contagion." Cities are known for their densities and their networks on the global, regional, national, and local scale. Today, cities are registering significantly higher transmission rates as compared to their national averages. Whereas for some, social distancing and working from home can be operationalized, for the urban dweller in the informal setting this is not outrightly possible. Urban areas grapple with challenges related to accommodation as a result of inadequate housing stock, access to education facilities, access to health services, access to food and waste management. The pandemic and the subsequent public health restrictions have significantly impacted the labour market. The city dwellers are at risk of widespread hunger as a result of disruption of work opportunities and the disruption in the food supply chain. In different contexts, in Italy for instance, the lockdown impacted the flow of the 'seasonal worker' (The Conversation, 2020). This disruption in labour provision was mostly felt in the rural areas with agricultural land, and directly impacted the city residents' well being. On the other hand, in Sub-Saharan Africa, cities face the risk of widespread hunger with a predominantly informal labour market being out of work due to the collapse of urban incomes with relief measures meeting the need of only a fraction of the urban poor. Another employment sector that has suffered a dramatic collapse is tourism, with significant consequences on the rearrangement of the forms of subsistence of entire communities: the drastic drop (or disappearance) of visitors in many areas has led to the loss of jobs. This in some cases is leading communities to take refuge and find sustenance in traditional productive activities (farming and agriculture). To cope with the situation, dramatic measures have been introduced, with some tourist rural areas in Japan opting for crowdfunding campaigns (Hiroyuki, 2017; Kumar, Kenji, & Hoda, 2018; The Japan Times, 2020a).

In many parts of the world, rural areas have remained isolated as a result of government measures to contain contagion: in the Chilean and Bolivian highlands, for example, access to and from these areas has been restricted and the population has found itself isolated overnight. In many cases, this has worked in containing the levels of contagion but has left the population with far greater problems (difficulties in supplying food other than self-produced food, difficulty in selling what is produced, lack of adequate health care systems and challenges in accessing hospitals). The situation is further compounded by poor communication alternatives with these areas, due to unreliable Internet signals.

There are significant disparities in service delivery due to in-balance in economic growth between urban and rural areas with the effects being even greater between affluent and less affluent neighbourhoods. Provision of public services in the healthcare, education, transport, waste management and social services sectors have significantly favoured urban areas. Some governments however have made attempts to provide economic support to rural areas. In Peru, for example, a rural aid fund has been established. "The Bono Rural of 760 soles is aimed at almost two million rural households in the most isolated and poorest areas of the country," by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation. The government launched programmes to maintain and restore reserves and irrigation canals to provide work for villagers in the hope of re-launching the local economy.

Is social welfare an urban, rural or global question

Local, regional, and national governments must determine from a human rights perspective how best to reinforce solidarity and collaboration across networks. Local governments have been scrambling to develop policies in response to the different impacts of the pandemic. A key sector that has drawn much attention for both the urban and rural dweller is social welfare. This is especially important for vulnerable groups. The pandemic has put a strain on the social safety nets across the globe (The Japan Times, 2020b). Further elaborated on entry 7, lessons on urban politics.

Society needs to determine how best to incorporate inclusion policies within existing frameworks. Special attention should be given to priority populations (urban poor, homeless, sex workers, immigrant labour workers) forced to operate outside the confines of the existing structures. The pandemic has rendered a section of the population jobless resulting in the loss of income and an increase in the number of homeless people; the latter is linked to their inability to pay monthly rents, inadvertently putting families and individuals at risk of not accessing necessities. In the United States of America for instance, the pandemic has made it clear that a huge percentage of the population are without access to critical services ranging from sick leave to health insurance, with a number being rendered jobless as employers grapple to meet the social distancing measures (Turret et al., 2020). With an estimated 33.5 million people in the USA applying for jobless and unemployment benefits, the policy makers responded with an emergency support fund aimed at boosting the jobless benefit and stimulus checks for taxpayers (The Japan Times, 2020b). Europe on the other hand introduced wage support programs managing to cushion their constituents through new social welfare payments for employees and self-employed people who have lost their employment as a result of the pandemic.

Ireland for instance has a target fund for individuals between the age of 18 and 66 in employment before the 13th of March to cater for the layoffs and shorter shifts (Republic of Ireland, 2020). Travel restrictions imposed at international, national, and regional level by authorities have left families destitute or stranded waiting for governments to intervene by granting humanitarian flight out of hunger and fear of contagion. Long lines of people on foot with a few blankets and little food, facing hundreds of kilometres on foot, challenging fatigue, risk of contagion and checkpoints, to return to their states, regions, and provinces of origin. In Italy for instance, shortly after the decree was issued by the government that declared northern Italy a red zone, an exodus ensued that resulted in crowded trains ferrying thousands of people, mostly workers and students, 'on the run' to southern Italy fleeing the city. A return of sorts to family before the paralysis of the country. This necessitated an extension of the red zone to the whole of Italy and the southern regions-imposed quarantine on people arriving from the north. Still, the exodus continued. Demands for lucidity and responsibility were put forward by the governing class of many southern provinces, aware that the virus that has bent the health system in Lombardy could have had far more disastrous consequences in the regions of the boot, whose health and welfare structure enjoys less strength and capacity. The family networks for many regions and state are key in meeting the gaps in welfare provision.

The situation is however significantly dire for countries in the global south without significant social welfare frameworks, forcing citizens to rely heavily on family networks and good will. In the past, the financial and economic crisis was mitigated through the introduction of austerity measures that included the reduction of public expenses (with rural areas being worst affected) and significant cuts in funding for social services (Wehr, Leubolt, & Schaffar, 2012). There is a need for a shift of sorts in the conception and perception of social welfare away from the commodification and privatisation of these basic services elaborated from lessons on urban politics.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity for reflection on the urban rural nexus and the linkages to address concerns that often remain marginal. The migration trends witnessed are a representation of a discomfort that goes beyond the virus. There is also need for a united front in addressing solidarity concerns in relation to migration. Rural economies must be bolstered to cushion them from adverse effects in case of a crisis. Case in point, communities that rely heavily on globalization and relational networks have incurred significant upheavals as a result of the crisis. The situation has amplified the gap between the urban and rural; poor and rich. This brings to the fore the need to determine what concessions can be made within the existing capitalist regimes to ensure

gaps in inequalities are reduced, and better care is given to people and nature. The manifesto elaborates on possibilities for a way forward.

VIDEO by Authors (2020)

https://youtu.be/_8lzM92mN78

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2.9 VIEWING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THROUGH A POPULIST LENS AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF POST-TRUTH REALITY

(Marjan Marjanović)

Pandemic crisis, post-truth, and populism

The time of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, is proving to be exceptionally fruitful for post-truth politics and dissemination of populist ideas. Post-truth refers to 'circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief' (Oxford University Press, 2017). However, 'post-truth' is not about "whether specific statements accurately represent or twist reality" (Waisbord, 2018, p. 19); it rather denotes "the absence of conditions in the public sphere for citizens to concur on objectives and processual norms to determine the truth as verifiable statements about reality" (p. 20). In other words, we have a reality in which, as Hannah Arendt (1978) illustrates, "nobody believes anything any longer," or in which one believes everything one hears since there are no shared objective standards of what constitutes the truth (Illing, 2018; Rorty, 1979).

These circumstances also provide fertile ground for the upsurge of populist narratives. Populism is grounded in the binary vision of politics that sees it divided along the lines of identity, such as social position or race (Muller, 2016), into two opposing and irreconcilable groups (Waisbord, 2018): "the popular" and "the elites" (Laclau, 2002; Moffitt, 2016). Since there is no possibility for a commonly defined basis to perceive the reality in the post-truth milieu, populist political actors do not have to worry about the accountability of their claims. While some of those claims may be grounded in scientific facts, their perceived validity does not result from the legitimacy of scientific reason, but from the soundness of its appeal to emotion – to the struggles of the common person.

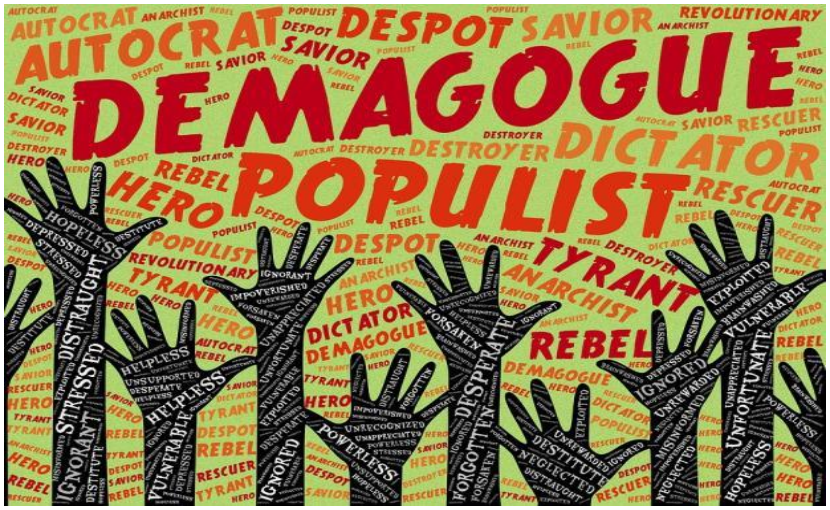


Figure 30 Populism has been on the rise (image source: Pop Politics Aus)

For many, this may appear as 'nothing new' (Hartley, 1996), since misinformation has been plaguing our societies for centuries now. The consequences may be severe, however. On a more general level, there is a rising mistrust in the ability of public institutions to address the crisis, which is undermining even the most reasonable efforts to control the spread of the virus and minimize the death toll. On the ground level, we are witnessing a widespread panic, misconduct, stigmatisation, and lack of solidarity, all of which endanger peoples' lives in their own way. Although such impacts should not be dismissed, it is not enough to assume that they are just the consequence of proliferating populist narratives during the crisis period, but they should also remind us that these narratives can have important implications even in times of normalcy if they are grounded in the politics of post-truth. Therefore, the ongoing pandemic offers a good opportunity to study the highly pronounced effects of populism and post-truth, as well as the story that they tell about our societies.

Moreover, as it is with any crisis, it should not go to waste.[29] Today's changing social dynamics open up space for a social change that can also impact the dogma that post-truth politics generate. This entry will, therefore, aim to describe the main characteristics of populist narratives in the wake of the current crisis and reflect on the possibility for our societies to 'innovate' in relation to the reality of post-truth. Our approach includes the development of a typical story about the pandemic in an imaginary country by drawing from various accounts[30] of populism and post-truth coming from different national contexts.

29 The quote 'Never let a good crisis go to waste' is often falsely attributed to Winston Churchill.

30 Various accounts of populist narratives surrounding the pandemic were collected from 22 world countries and turned into 'a typical populist story' about the COVID-19 crisis told in the light of post-truth reality. The story combines not only facts, but also fake news and false beliefs—all aimed at affecting public sentiment. As in a usual post-truth narrative, it is impossible to tell apart what is true from what is not, while the focus remains on its emotional appeal.

A populist tale of the pandemic[31]

Ever since we entered a state of emergency in mid-March, every afternoon at 8pm, all over the country, people walk out onto their balconies to applaud the healthcare workers for their contribution in the time of need. The pandemic has also seen a lot of praise being given to the 'ordinary' service workers for keeping the system that provides for basic needs. I have to admit that this comes as a surprise, since these workers do not usually enjoy much public appreciation for their work. Moreover, it is also evident the government has been trying to promote its own lacklustre response to the pandemic by focusing on the sacrifices of the medical community and making them part of their political narrative. However, the opposition does the same, using the plight of healthcare workers to expose the inability of the government to deal with the crisis.

On the other hand, the threat of economic crisis appears to be taking precedence over the health crisis in many ways. Throughout, there are numerous protests against the lockdown as the pressure from the economic sector to reboot the economy is increasing. There are rising calls for the abolishment of social distancing and isolation measures since they would have a great impact on the economy—with time, they may generate more deaths than the virus itself. A destroyed economy seems to be much worse than protecting a bunch of old people from dying.



Figure 31 Economic issues outweigh the concerns for public health (image source: The OC Register)

Moreover, while many private employers have already been endangered by the outbreak of the pandemic, the oppressive measures taken by the government have made it nearly impossible for them to function. Private

31 Please note that the tale does not represent a factual account of the reality nor reflects the views of the author.

businesses need public support in these times not only because they are the backbone of our economy, but because, if they stop operating, many people will lose their jobs and will not be able to feed their families. Many local authorities and private employers also raise their voices against those whose businesses are considered to be essential, since it gives them an 'unfair' economic advantage, while others struggle for survival. However, some of them, having a strong backing of the establishment, continue operating as usual although they should be officially closed. Coupled with the rise in the grey economy, this has caused the backlash of taxpayers who are still not allowed to work.

Many are asking for freedom from the strict confinement measures imposed by the government. Both right-wing and left-wing politicians reiterate their concerns with the constraints that these measures have put on individual freedom, but it seems that the government only gives voice to those who think the virus is dangerous—hence all the oppression. If all those people are really worried about the virus, they should stay at home, and allow those who are not afraid of it to carry on with their usual lives. Maybe we should all have a vote on this? This should be a democratic society after all.



Figure 32 Calls for reinstating individual freedom are louder and louder (image source: The Telegraph)

The government has seized the opportunity presented by the pandemic to tighten its grip on power and advance a polarising socio-cultural agenda in the country. The ruling populist party cynically exploits the crisis to take advantage of an uneven political playing field and sweep the incumbent head of the state into another term while the opposition is in coronavirus lockdown. They promote

their allegedly proper response to the crisis by highlighting that the country has been able to successfully fight the pandemic and rise above the complexity of the political system and the lack of funding. At the same time, their political opponents use the crisis to gain popularity by criticising the lockdown measures and blaming the government for both the economic recession and the rising death toll. In general, the pandemic has put not only the public health but also the democratic health of our society at stake. It has ignited domestic tensions and revealed political currents that could jeopardise the future of democracy in the country. The dominant political narratives are mostly domestic spats concerning disagreements on pandemic policies. However, a deeper look reveals that tensions are rooted in long-standing political conflicts and offer a clue to the fortunes of governing parties post COVID-19.

Furthermore, the pandemic is helping populists construct a political narrative in which the country is seen as abandoned by our neighbours and other countries that we historically considered to be our 'friends.' There is also a lot of misinformation attempting to undermine the faith in the effectiveness of supranational formations such as the EU or the WHO. For example, the WHO is often perceived as a globalist organisation, supporting the hegemonic interests of modern colonialists, instead of having a genuine interest in helping us to deal with the crisis.

Overall, there is definitely a bigger and bigger split in opinion over how the government is handling the pandemic. It seems to me that there is a general paranoia about the situation. Although the political discourse is largely inclined towards calming social panic, everything appears contradictory and confusing. In general, there is a lack of reliable information about what the steps for ending the crisis are, what the next moves of the politicians will be, what we can do to stay safe, or keep our jobs.

Populism vs populism on the battlefield of COVID-19 pandemic

Our brief venture into the populist and post-truth narratives surrounding the pandemic has brought a plethora of different issues under the spotlight. The whole story of COVID-19 has never evolved solely around the apparent crisis of public health; it has also shed light on many different views, interests, and concerns, brought together against a background of managing the pandemic. While not all of them can be grasped comprehensively, we will draw our conclusions along two lines of reasoning. First, we explore the political dimension of the pandemic in the light of populism and post-truth. Secondly, we conceptualise the pandemic (and the upsurge of populism in the wake of it) as

a potential Badiouian Event in order to explore the possibility for a new societal order to emerge post-COVID-19.

The political dimension of the pandemic

Our first conclusion about the pandemic is the obvious one (De Cleen, 2018): populist politics of the post-truth world exploit ignorance and strengthen prejudice. If we take things one step further, we can also conclude that the pandemic has been strongly politicized. It started with the freedom of market choice and the individual freedom of democratic choice apparently taking primacy as dominant socio-political ideals over the care for public health. On the other hand, populist narratives were taken into a new arena where old political enemies could battle out their differences with seemingly novel arguments. However, the underlying reality of post-truth has defined those differences to be more of the moral, rather than of mere political nature. This implicates the kind of populist politics that can be labelled as antagonistic—in which the political opponents of yesterday have turned into the ideological enemies of today.

The ensuing political battle has gone beyond the usual populist narratives and has taken the trajectory towards a form of Goebbelsian propaganda that does not only aim to promote an ideological cause, but also places the overarching web of morality as the 'new' category of division between the elite and the popular. The elite is not constituted anymore by the self-serving privileged who stand against the interests of the popular, but it represents the Archnemesis (the Bad), a fundamental danger to the very survival of 'the Populous' (the Good). Chantal Mouffe (2013) labels this political climate as "post-democratic" and "post-political." It is the form of anti-politics in which political opponents are not recognized anymore as legitimate voices in the democratic debate (York, 2018). The case of the COVID-19 pandemic portrays this situation very well. The mortal threat posed by the Coronavirus is juxtaposed with the threat of economic collapse in populist narratives that give almost villainous characteristics to the Other and thus negate its political voice. This turns the political debate into a grand story of morality and takes it outside of democratic institutions into a limbo of ignorance in which political arguments hold no legitimate democratic relevance.

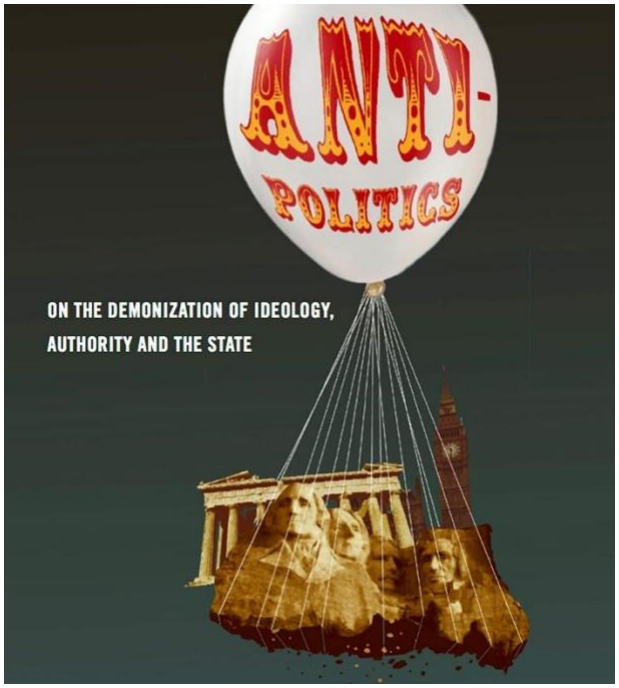


Figure 33 The COVID-19 pandemic exploits a new wave of populism that embraces anti-politics (image source: Amazon)

However, it would be wrong to attribute the entire reality of today's politics to populist and post-truth narratives only. While that is just part of the story, the situation brings much more hope than it seems at first. What is more, the opportunities for social innovation and collective action appear all but abundant. In the previous entry, Bärnthaler demonstrates how the pandemic crisis has also planted the seeds for reinventing politics to make binding decisions that are the result of democratic deliberation. It appears that, under the veil of socio-economic perturbance, a more pragmatic type of politics, heralded by the renewed interest in the foundational economy and democratic decision-making, has been on the rise. This primarily results from the practical need to deal with the pandemic and continue managing our societal systems in the wake of it. Therefore, the resurgence of pragmatism can also indicate that we may witness something of *a post-truth boomerang* – grounded in the agency of the individual to define its truth when faced with real consequences for its 'being.' In other words, due to the pandemic, more pragmatic conceptualisations of truth (as posited by pragmatists like William James or John Dewey) may emerge in democratic deliberation as the answer to the uncertainty of post-truth, while meritocracy/technocracy can have a greater role to play in political decision-making.

Coronavirus pandemic as a Badiouian Event

Seemingly, the coronavirus pandemic could be seen as a potential Badiouian Event. An Event is described as 'something akin to a rip in the fabric of being or of the social order' in which the inconsistent multiplicity which lies beneath a

particular social order is able to appear subjectively, thus unfolding new representations that produce Truths, Subjects, and new social systems (McLaverty-Robinson, 2014; Meillassoux, 2011). The pandemic has suddenly shaken the normalcy, not just in the contexts of nation-states, but also globally. However, the pandemic is still rather a mosaic of multiplicities than an event that could be framed under its singularity. The multiplicity presented in the above narrative often intertwines various aspects of sudden disturbance of economic, social, and political normalcy. Within this "mosaic of multiplicities," it might still be early to argue the role of populism in the pandemic as something new. On the contrary, populism presented a déjà vu political tool of the whole political spectrum for creating binary divisions while the pandemic served more as a platform rather than as an event. For instance, the terminology presented in media often incorporated war-related or conflict-related terms thus inducing the polarization of the potential event.



Figure 34 A Badiouian Event should bring about a social change (image source: 123RF)

However, the intensity of the clash of populisms between government on the one side, and opposition in its various forms on the other, could be a new thing. Moreover, the impact of populism on citizens during the pandemic seems to be not that powerful in comparison to the pre-corona normalcy. Why? A plausible answer might be exactly in the already-seen mechanism of populism which, when framed in the discourse on pandemic as a new "potential Event," could not work. In other words, the populism surrounding the Coronavirus pandemic is only a continuation of ongoing global populism dynamics that could be previously seen in the discourse on the migration crisis and later in the pre-corona 'Greta Thunberg movement' that focused on the environmental crisis. However, what separates the pandemic from them is that we are now caught in a triple crisis: 'medical (the epidemics itself), economic (which will hit hard whatever the outcome of the epidemic is), plus (not to underestimate) the

mental health – the basic coordinates of the life-world of millions and millions are disintegrating, and the change [can] affect everything' (Žižek, 2020)

A true Badiouian Event is both traumatic and transformative and it should cause the emergence of a new order, or a new system (McLaverty-Robinson, 2014). At the moment, it seems that the current situation is leaning towards it. Besides the ideas explored by Bärnthaler in the previous entry, we can also note the emergence of different political initiatives during the pandemic (such as the populist movement Progressive International that aims to replace neoliberal capitalism with new global order and non-capitalist institutions) as a signal of potential change. However, it might still be early to make stronger claims about it since the Coronavirus pandemic is still going on. The question of post-truth might be even more ambiguous than ever. If Badiou noted that all truth is post-evental, could this mean that all post-truth is too?

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The Execution of Socrates in Pandemic Times

(Marjan Marjanović)

"Cheers!" hailed Socrates before gulping the cup of poison down his throat. He drank the vile liquid as though it were a draught of wine[32] and not the poisonous beverage of hemlock. We, his closest friends, watched in disbelief. There is no coming back from this. Many of us started to weep slowly.[33] The man himself, however, was already on his feet, walking around hastily as if he was in a hurry to reach his eternal rest. But little did we know that there could be no rest for a man like Socrates, even in death.

"Don't shed your tears mates," called the gadfly as he tried to reassure us of his choice, "Old age would probably be an unpleasant time for an elderly chap like me.[34] Imagine me suffering a terrible death by catching this crazy virus that lurks around and from which old people never recover." He was right. Even in this moment, we were all (man of the hour included) wearing facemasks, keeping distance, being careful not to get infected somehow.



Figure 35 The Death of Socrates by Jacques Louis David, ca. 1782 (image source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

32 Based on The Story of Greece: Told to Boys and Girls by Mary MacGregor and Walter Crane

33 Based on *The Suicide of Socrates, 399 BC*, retrieved from http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/socrates.htm

34 Based on the book *The Trial of Socrates* by I. F. Stone

"No blokes," he continued in a somewhat cheerful voice, "There is no greater honour for a man than to be his own executioner, of course, if he decides that life is not worth living." Alerted by these words Camus looked up, a spark shining in his eyes.

"And the unexamined life is definitely not worth living!" exclaimed Socrates with strong vigour in his voice, which was somewhat unexpected from a man of his age. Then he was silent, in deep thought, as if startled by his own words. We were all silent, heads bowed down.

"You should have fled Athens," cried Plato suddenly, "there was still time!"

The gadfly stopped in his stride and turned to his student: "No kiddo, that was never an option. I could never flout the law. It is the norm that we all accepted to obey, and it should be obeyed not only when it suits us, but most certainly when it doesn't—for it is our legal responsibility to Athens[35]!"

"But they are not right," Plato continued to protest, "The law is flawed!"

Socrates smiled: "You may be right, but the law cannot be called into question only when it steps on us. If the law was questioned at all times and by everyone, we wouldn't be in this situation now."

"Exactly," agreed someone from the group, "It is the law of majority, that's why it is correct."

"It is never the opinion of the majority, nor of the popular, that produces the right policies," the dead man corrected his student, "But only genuine knowledge and professional competence![36] Remember that lads! For if it was not for able and competent men and women, we could have suffered the same fate today as we did some thirty summers ago when the Great Plague devastated this city."

"And one thing that we learned from the plague," Socrates continued explaining with his rattled voice, "Is that commitment to the law in a time of crisis is not only required but utterly necessary! For the law is not there only to control us, it is the vehicle that helps us to claim our freedom and security." His voice was getting shakier with each new word that he pronounced.

"You all remember our reading of Thucydides and his account of the Peloponnesian War in which he reports the complete disappearance of social morals during the time of the plague as people became indifferent to every rule of religion, ethics, or law which only exacerbated the catastrophe,"[37] Socrates continued wearily, "That is why we cannot rely on individual solidarity in a time

35 Based on *Crito* by Plato

36 Based on *Memorabilia* by Xenophon

37 Based on *History of the Peloponnesian* War by Thucydides

of crisis, but require well-elaborated and deliberated norms of behaviour that should be obeyed by everyone."

And with the last gasp of breath, the great man managed to proclaim: "Remember this chaps: in a democracy, the best and most genuine way for a man to serve himself, his friends, and his city—during times of war, plague, or other societal upheaval—is by being loyal to, and by speaking publicly about, the truth!"[38]

Then he felt dead.

We all stood up in silent reverence. "The wisest and most just of all men is dead," proclaimed Plato before proceeding to lament over his guru's dead body: "It should be remembered now and for all that his execution only demonstrates the deficiencies of democracy and of popular rule[39] which is in Athens now, and of those that will be here and elsewhere in the future.

38 Based on the play *Socrates on Trial* by Andrew Irvine

39 Based on the book *The Trial of Socrates* by I. F. Stone

3. A MANIFESTO FOR A BETTER POST-COVID-19 WORLD

(Abdellatif Atif, Angeliki Paidakaki, Carlos Escarpenter Martinez Canavate, Christine Muchiri Njuhi, Clara Medina García, Dawit Gebrehiwet, Dora Bellamacina, Eshete Sitotaw, Farzana Yasmin, Federica Rotondo, Frank Moulaert, Genaro Alva Zevallos, Grace Valasa, Hongkai Chen, Isye Susana Nurhasanah, Joan Nyagwalla Otieno, Juliet Njeri Ritta, Kammerhofer Arthur, Marjan Marjanovic, Martina Bocci, Mohak Jhawar, Monica Martinez Fernandez, Muluberhan Biedemariam Tassew, Ninelia Markarian, Nur Hamidah, Pieter Van den Broeck, Richard Bärnthaler, Sonia Mollica, Sylvia Inziani, Vidya Spay, Wossen Gebreyohannes, Yescha Danandjojo)

COVID-19 is showing the fallacy of the neo-liberal age

Our ways of living, acting, and thinking are subject to—historically contingent—material politico-economic, and socio-cultural framework conditions and path dependencies. In the city, urban infrastructures are a central example in this regard. They shape our everyday practices: from mobility, dwelling, and leisure to care, working, and shopping. If there are no cycling lanes, we cannot use the bicycle to satisfy our need for mobility. If there are no green spaces, we cannot meet our demand for recreation without having to leave the city. If there is a lack of open urban space, physical distancing becomes impossible.

However, these collective systems, necessary for basic needs' satisfaction and provision of wellbeing, have been fundamentally undermined by a radical individualism that emerged in the neoliberal era in the 1980s. The individual (consumer) became the central locus of attention. Individual market choice (in line with rational-choice theory) replaced common political decisions. The individual replaced the collective subject. Privatisation, the retreat of the state and the commodification of ever-new areas of life have been logical consequences of this strain of thought. Within this dogma, it is the individual that is to blame if the virus cannot be contained or if a transition to a more ecologically sustainable mode of living is not to be achieved. These actions are no longer conceived as a collective endeavour. Individual responsibility replaced collective responsibility. Market logics characterised by an ability-to-

pay morality replaced democratic deliberations and the negotiation of those values that structure our lives together. Democracy turned into a supermarket, the city into a magnet for international capital.

COVID-19 has revealed this way of thinking as what it is: a dangerous fallacy. Coping with crises, be it COVID-19 or the climate crisis, cannot be left to market forces and the individual alone. COVID-19 demonstrates that we need to regain the ability to deliberate among a plurality of actors—to discuss, disagree, argue, gain new perspectives, disagree (again). And, ultimately, find compromises on how we want to live together, not necessarily as friends, but at least as equals and certainly not as enemies. COVID-19 has revived a new sense of community, mutual respect, and help. It has restored the insight that we are deeply embedded in and dependent on collective systems and those who maintain them—from infrastructures and health services to communities and (often) strangers (cashiers, delivery workers, nurses, sanitation workers, …). Therefore, we need to build new forms of and strengthen collaboration between, a diversity of actors on multiple levels to shape our common paths towards the future.

We cannot go back to normal because normality was the problem

The COVID-19 crisis is simply an expression of a more significant crisis that humanity is going through: **a civilisation crisis**. We must unlearn considering ourselves as superior beings on earth and to species. We all are part of the earth; she does not need us, but we do need her. So, we must live with her. We must unlearn that development is only synonymous with economic growth, competitiveness, and productivity. It is also in the immaterial: health, fellowship, joy, the beauty of building something in commonality, productivity as the fact of doing more with less, protecting ourselves in solidarity, giving us love.

During the 2008 economic crisis, we witnessed the rise of social movements outraged by neoliberal policies. Were these protests a fight for a fairer world, or did they arise from the recovery need of the artificial, comfortable, and individualistic world that had been sold to society?

The 2008 crisis created the perfect conditions for the emergence of neo-populism, a thought based on the rise of the emotional factor, nurturing a brutalised and credulous society lacking critical capacity. The same community that, today, prefers to support characters such as Greta Thunberg, as the prophet girl of the apocalypse dramatically upset with the world, instead of acknowledging scientific arguments.

Compared to the COVID-19 outbreak, the climate crisis has never been recognised as a crisis, maybe because society has created the perfect framework to guide our decisions based solely on our passions and discrediting the scientific. Or, perhaps, because the climate crisis does not affect the minority that dominates and commodifies most of the planet's natural attributes and has decision-making power. Isn't that why, today, they force us to use the term 'resilience,' to manipulate these vulnerable groups into accepting the persistent inequalities of this system and its effects, such as climate change?

Today's predominant politics are obsolete, inflexible, and inhuman, revolving around the state, institutions, and capital. Let's not let this pandemic be a pretext to continue with failed recipes for economic reactivation policies that only benefit the minority of privileged individuals and corporations that have only produced greater inequality. We need to change politics into one that is dynamic, adaptive, and interdependent, like life itself. For this, we could incorporate biology, ecology, and life sciences. In this way, we would live in a society that practices a policy of life, for life, and to live life.

As many people have been saying, we cannot go back to normal because normality was the problem. It is up to us to rethink of what world or worlds we want for future generations. Perhaps it is about that: accepting that it is possible to live with different worlds respectfully and that, together, we can build universal ideas based on dialogue and conflict, with critical regard towards previous hegemonic impositions.

In the case of a crisis, the juxtaposition between individual and community desires is enhanced. When resources are limited, people frequently depend on governments to provide an organised rescue plan. This initiative also evokes a moral dilemma as individuals maintain the right to choose how to comply with the legislation. Their practices are often driven by a cost-benefit evaluation of their needs, with the social values as a whole.

Therefore, it is essential (for individuals, companies and governments) to create a structure that delineates accountability while maintaining principles that underpin each community's foundation. Realigning incentives are required to develop reserves in the best times to provide an efficient buffer and downturn response mechanism.

Rethinking within a 'bigger nature'—people taking the lead, solidarity-supporting states, and the market back in its place

People have proven to be able to organise, adapt, and take the lead in crises like this, mainly through cooperation and mutual collaboration. New partnerships and cooperation at multiple levels must be strengthened to successfully emerge from this crisis and lead to a reorganisation of communities, where people can truly take a stand as educated, adult, and resilient individuals.

Governments are vital in coping with crisis and democratically directive when needed, as well as supportive of healthy communities in general. They should provide the material, social, economic, political, cultural basis for communities to thrive and be democratic, pluralist, diverse, alive, and accessible—refocusing their investments from merely serving markets and their influential players to supporting foundational economies, healthy and active communities, and bottom-linked governance.

Markets are assumed to be the pinnacle of human wisdom and technological improvements. In reality, large parts of societies have become subordinate to commodification. Building on heterodox thinking, markets should be reduced to mere resource allocation systems embedded in pro-social networks, solidarity economies, grounded democratic decision-making, and rich cultural practices, rather than enclosing nature and humans in vicious extractive growth.

Big governments, multinational corporations and global markets have created autonomous, unearthed, and socially detached spheres. The interactive and interscalar global-local dynamics and expressions of the pandemic have proved that "big" governments, corporations and markets depend on the most local sphere, whether they like it or not, so they must start giving it the attention and importance they need.

Urbanisation and anthropocentric worldviews impact on the largely reduced people's contact with their environment. When COVID-19 and the wild nature force to restrict the activities of the human being, we saw the actual colour of our mother earth. It is high time for humankind to rethink and adjust its position as part of a more prominent nature. A starting point is seeing the planet as a global common that needs to be taken care of.

Our notion for a future agenda

COVID-19 has been a disruption of the way we think about our cities as well as rural areas. This pandemic has proved that every nation, whether developed or not, needs to rethink how they undertake planning and development of their territories. It has provided an opportunity to rethink governance systems, urban-rural linkages, community solidarity, international labour and trade, climate change, the provision of basic services, and the wellbeing and safety of residents. A shift to a more nature-embedded attitude is needed both for the environment as well as that of humanity. To prepare the post-COVID-19 world, the new ‘normal’ needs a radical agenda.

1. The presumed positive effects of COVID-19 on climate change in terms of more ecologically sustainable living conditions need to be interpreted in their broader socio-political context—by recalling long-standing challenges about political inertia, power struggles, and institutional assets.
2. Transformative endeavours need to shift their focus from market incentives to collective rules, institutions, and infrastructures.
3. A city’s functionality needs to be measured in terms of its ability to provide welfare critical goods and services instead of their ability to attract international capital, tourists, investors, and highly mobile knowledge-workers
4. The agenda should focus on addressing the disproportion in service delivery—non-commodification of basic services. There is a need for immediate action for access to better health care for the urban poor and rural communities.
5. The closure of borders has revealed the extent to which food systems, which could (and should) be localised, are dependent on international labour and trade. Creating more sustainable and resilient food systems requires vision, effort, and long-term investment, and they need to be in place when new disasters strike.
6. Self-organisation of communities should be stimulated to develop innovative interventions in the use of public spaces and mobility, the provision of different open areas at the neighbourhood level and scaled-down investment in people-driven mobility such as walking and cycling in cities.
7. Affordable housing should be a human right, in which the voice of marginalised communities should be heard; these communities should benefit from any development programs aimed at their improvement.
8. Local-scale solidarity networks should be co-constructed and sharing values should precede actions in this process. Solidarity actions

grounded on collective values have a reliable power to reproduce communities and be institutionalised.

9. Inter-community relations and diversity should be fostered since they play an essential role in the capacity of communities to reform themselves and overcome challenges like the potentially socially destructive pandemic.
10. Proper care of physical and mental health during the (and post) pandemic is essential not only on a personal but also on an institutional level. It is also an excellent opportunity for people to see and act upon faith-based organisations.